

Montgomery Infant School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114751
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311695
Inspection date	19 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Roger Brown

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Andrews
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Rudland
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Baronswood Way Colchester Essex CO2 9QG
Telephone number	01206 570231
Fax number	01206 540489

Age group	3-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues; the success and impact of the Foundation Stage provision; the achievements of the children in Key Stage 1 and the level of progress that they make during their time at the school; and the effectiveness of the curriculum in supporting and developing all children's learning. Evidence was gathered from discussions with staff, children and a governor; brief lesson observations; a scrutiny of documentation and samples of children's work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in as much detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than average. Most children are from the adjacent Ministry of Defence base. One consequence of this is that over half the children move on, or join the school during each year. Fewer than 10% of the children who are in the current Year 2 started at this school. The majority are White British with a small proportion, around 12%, who come from other cultural and ethnic backgrounds. About 10% of the children do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of children who need additional support is above that found nationally. The average level of development for children starting at the school is usually below national expectations in most respects. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. The words 'fantastic,' 'great,' 'wonderful' and 'excellent' are all used frequently by the parents in their unanimously positive and wholehearted appraisal of the school. Following its previous inspection four years ago, the school was identified by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools as, 'one of a number of particularly successful schools.' This has not changed. The school has sustained its success in all areas and continues to be a beacon of excellence, and very clearly has the capacity to continue to be so.

The excellent staff are not daunted by the difficult circumstances of working with an ever-changing and highly mobile population. Indeed, they revel in the challenge. Few children remain at the school for more than two years. This makes the outstanding progress that the children make in all areas even more remarkable.

The school's success lies in the highly effective use it makes of its systems and procedures. Great teamwork and careful attention to detail ensure that it runs smoothly. The consistently above average standards the children attain require teaching skills of the highest order. Teachers' planning is detailed but flexible and relevant to the needs and interests of the children. Teaching assistants support the teachers skilfully, reinforcing positive attitudes and high expectations. Thorough and regular assessments, supported by detailed analysis, inform planning. Teachers make meticulous use of the tracking system. This plots the progress of each child's development in speaking and listening, reading, writing, mathematics and science. By using this system, teachers ensure that, although the children and the nature of the class groups keep changing, their specific individual requirements are always being met. The system provides clear evidence that every child makes at least the expected level of progress in all areas. Almost all make better than expected progress in all areas, and most, particularly those who stay for longer in the school, make excellent progress. Staff are acutely aware of the wide disparities in children's language skills. They do much to raise children's confidence and recognise that even better skills in speaking and listening would boost standards in all areas.

The outstanding curriculum forms the backbone for the teachers' work. It is not set in stone; in practice, it is always changing and evolving. It is structured to allow specific skills, such as those in literacy and numeracy, to be developed systematically. At the same time, broad topics weave together different elements of other subjects. Teachers bring their own enthusiasms and interests to the work, helping to motivate and engage the children. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used imaginatively to extend the children's understanding and to help capture their interest. The constant analysis of children's progress allows the staff to be flexible with the topics. When one is working well, it is extended. When it is not, it is cut short. Imaginative extra-curricular activities, including clubs for families as well as those just for children, enhance the curriculum and help to hold the children's attention. This helps interests developed at school to permeate and become sustained in their lives.

The level of attendance at the school is very high. Children enjoy coming to school and want to learn. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent. They are polite, confident and thoughtful. They readily explain that a 'look' from an adult is all that it should take if they are doing something wrong. As a result, their personal and social skills are excellent. They are extremely well prepared for the next step in their education because, by the time they leave, they have good basic skills. The children talk enthusiastically about the importance of healthy eating, exercising regularly and keeping

themselves safe. There is a wide range of activities that help them to make a significant contribution the wider community. Events such as last summer's Fijian Festival broaden their horizons. Consequently, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Staff are sensitive to the fact that many children have fathers who are serving overseas. They provide great support for the children and their families, something that several parents wrote about in praise of the school. The care, support and guidance children receive are excellent. All statutory requirements are met in full.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. Inevitably, the ever-changing school roll, makes it very hard to sustain parent governors in post but the core of the governing body is excellent. They monitor, guide and support the school conscientiously. The long-serving headteacher sets the tone of the school. She encourages and assists her staff to take a lead, use their initiative and is willing to take calculated risks when somebody wants to try something new. The highly effective school systems keep the leadership well informed about what is working well and what is not. No ideas are sacred and only those things that work well are used again.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is outstanding. By the time they move into Year 1, most children have reached and some exceed the levels typical for their age. Excellent induction arrangements help the children settle swiftly into the warm, caring and stimulating atmosphere. The children work and play happily together in attractive and imaginatively resourced areas, both indoors and outside. Teaching and learning are outstanding, ensuring that all children make excellent progress. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are exemplary. Simple, but highly effective, assessment procedures enable staff to monitor the children's progress and help to guide them in planning activities for the next steps in their learning. The children are involved in planning and choosing their work. Topics such as 'super heroes' and 'dinosaurs' clearly motivate and engage their interest. ICT is used very creatively. This is not just in the school but also keeps parents informed with links to websites and activities they can follow through with their children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Find more ways to develop the children's speaking and listening skills.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

20 March 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of Montgomery Infant School and Nursery, Colchester CO2 9QG

Thank you for being so friendly when I visited your school. I would like to share with you what I found when I spent time in your lessons and talked with you and your teachers.

I think you go to a great school. Your parents wrote to me saying that they think so too. It was easy to tell what a wonderful school it is. I was impressed by the way you behave so well and are so polite. Mind you, when the Year 2 boys showed me the 'Montgomery look' which adults use if you even think of doing something wrong, I could see why you would all want to behave and make this such a happy school.

What impressed me the most, though, was the progress that you make with your work. I could see that your teachers and all the adults in the school work together so well to help you develop such an enthusiasm for your work. I think that the learning programme they have developed for you is wonderful. The way teachers develop your ideas, give you great opportunities to work outdoors, as well as inside, is really exciting. Then there are the clubs; I have never come across an infant school with such a great range of clubs as your school has. I would like to have seen one of the family clubs in action as I think that is a fantastic way of helping you to learn.

When I was discussing your achievements with your teachers, I asked them to try to look at the ways to help all of you to develop your speaking and listening skills more. I know that Mrs Rudland is always telling you, 'If you can talk a story, you can write one.' Well, I think that helping you to listen carefully and put your thoughts into words is the best way for you to raise the standards of your work to even higher levels.

Finally, I must mention the Foundation Stage. What a great start it gives you to your time in school!

Thank you once again for your warm welcome.

All the best for the future.

Roger Brown Lead inspector