

Mountnessing CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115117
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311840
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Cosway

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Geoffrey Upson
Headteacher	Mrs Fiona Reid, Mrs L Mulcahy (interim, part-time)
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2003
School address	279 Roman Road Mountnessing Brentwood Essex CM15 0UH
Telephone number	01277 353160
Fax number	01277 352269

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Mountnessing Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is smaller than average. The school population is mainly White British. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average and there are no pupils at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is close to the average nationally. It has a '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: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school has gone through difficult times in the recent past, losing a number of key members of staff. All parents appreciate the work of the temporary, part-time headteacher, who has taken the school forward despite the difficulties and restored teachers' morale. One parent summed up the views of many: 'We have been extremely lucky in obtaining an interim headteacher who has made a huge impact, building bridges and turning the school around.' Leadership and management are satisfactory, although some teachers are not yet making a full contribution to the leadership of the subjects for which they are responsible. The governors are endeavouring to appoint a permanent headteacher and this is a priority for the school.

The quality of education is improving and is satisfactory. As a result, pupils make steady progress and their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' attainment in Year 6 is well above the national average in mathematics. It is above average in English, but some pupils are not making enough progress in developing their writing skills. Consequently, fewer pupils attain highly in English than in mathematics. Pupils' personal development is good, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They like school because everyone is friendly and helpful and they find lessons interesting. They behave well and relationships are good. The good health education programme helps them to lead healthy lives.

Teaching is satisfactory. The good ethos in the school ensures that pupils concentrate in class. Teachers plan work that is generally matched to pupils' needs and they use information and communication technology (ICT) well to interest them and help them to succeed. However, not all teachers provide enough written guidance to pupils on how to improve their work and there are occasions when inappropriate work is set, so that some pupils struggle to understand what to do. The curriculum is satisfactory and there is an adequate range of after-school activities. The systems for care, support and guidance are satisfactory, but pupils' academic progress is not tracked or evaluated rigorously or regularly enough.

There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection because of the interim headteachers' leadership, which has strengthened monitoring in the school, improved teaching and developed the role of the governors. There is satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children arrive in the Reception class with skills slightly above national expectations. They make sound progress because staff help them settle quickly. Children behave well and enjoy their learning because of the good relationships that are quickly established. Teaching is satisfactory because it provides a variety of activities appropriate to the needs of children of this age. The outdoor provision is restricted by the lack of protection from the weather. The number of adults in the working area ensures that children have adequate support. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and the children's progress is tracked and recorded regularly. By the time children complete their year in Reception, almost all have reached the expected standards in literacy and numeracy for their age and many are above.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the leadership skills of staff and put in place a permanent senior leadership team.

- Develop pupils' writing skills so that they communicate more clearly and accurately.
- Extend the use of assessment information so that pupils' progress is tracked more rigorously.
- Improve teaching further, in order to ensure that pupils are always engaged, appropriately challenged and given helpful guidance on how to improve their work.

A small proportion of schools whose overall performance is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. At the end of Year 2, standards have been uneven in recent years, reflecting the effects of small numbers in the year groups and pupils' starting points. Standards are currently above average in literacy and numeracy. At the end of Year 6, standards in the national tests have risen steadily over the past four years and have been above the national averages. This success has come despite the staffing problems that the school has suffered. It is the result of the positive ethos that the school generates, in which it is good to learn, as well as some effective teaching. However, attainment was low in science in 2007. Because of staffing difficulties, relatively little science was taught to the older pupils last year. Teaching of science is now good and standards are above average this year. Attainment in mathematics is well above average. Pupils have very good number skills. Attainment in English is above average, but pupils' reading skills are better than their writing, which sometimes lacks accuracy and clarity.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils like coming to school and enjoy learning, partly because of the friendships they form and the opportunities to work collaboratively. Their enthusiasm helps to explain why attendance is above the national average. The Christian values that the school promotes help to ensure that pupils behave well and are clear about what is right and wrong. They have good relationships with adults and classmates. Pupils participate in a good amount of sport and physical activity and eat healthily whilst at school. They know how to keep themselves safe. They are certain that there is no serious problem with bullying. If it did happen, they know how to get help.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school community, with an active school council and range of class responsibilities. They raise money for charity and sing at concerts, but their contribution to village life is limited. Overall, their contribution to the community is satisfactory. Pupils are prepared well for their futures by the many opportunities to work collaboratively and the standards they reach in English and mathematics.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall and some is good. Teachers throughout the school manage their pupils well. Their classrooms are bright with good use of displays to celebrate achievement. Technology is used well to make teaching and learning interesting and stimulating. Teachers use their inter-active whiteboards well, linked to computers, to make teaching points and pupils

enjoy coming to the whiteboard to take an active role in the lesson. Teachers use questioning well to assess how much pupils have understood and encourage them to extend their ideas. Pupils who find learning difficult are supported well by teaching assistants. Not all teachers give enough guidance to pupils on how to improve their written work and basic errors are not always corrected. There are occasions when pupils are not clear what they have to do or the work set is too difficult for groups of them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory range of activities, which help pupils to learn in a fun and interesting environment. The curriculum has been well planned in order to overcome the difficulties imposed by having two year groups in each class. There is good provision for teaching ICT and physical education. The curriculum extends to classes in French and German as well as a good programme of personal, social and health education. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, including sports and computer clubs, but there is a relatively small number of educational visits and theme days to enhance the curriculum. Pupils speak enthusiastically of the ones that they remember and the first-hand experiences that they enjoyed. In the Reception curriculum, there are insufficient opportunities for learning outdoors.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are safe and secure. Welfare systems are well organised. The school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils. Parents are pleased with the way staff respond to their children. As one wrote: 'The school has been very supportive and caring and has met with us regularly to discuss any issues.' Staff are quick to respond, not only to the needs of vulnerable pupils, but also to all those in their care. However, some aspects of academic guidance are not effective enough. Pupils' progress is not tracked or evaluated rigorously and regularly. Pupils do not have detailed, individual targets for mathematics and English. There is not a consistent marking policy, and so too many comments in books are encouraging without being helpful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has made satisfactory progress since the first interim headteacher took up the part-time post at the start of the current academic year. The appointment of a second interim headteacher has further strengthened the leadership team, pending the appointment of a permanent, full-time headteacher. The systems for self-evaluation are now satisfactory and management has improved. Areas of weakness in the school's work have been identified and teaching is monitored effectively. Governors have been very supportive and are beginning to have a strategic role and to monitor the work of the school. Some subject leaders guide their subject areas effectively, but others have only just taken on the role. Improved management ensures that the school runs smoothly and staff report that morale has risen. Parents are appreciative of the improvements that have been made.

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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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

19 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mountnessing C of E Primary School, Mountnessing, CM15 0UH

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful to me when I visited your school. You told me that you like your school. I liked it too and it is giving you a satisfactory education. I was impressed with how helpful and kind you are to each other and how carefully you listen to your teachers. I enjoyed the lessons that I shared with you and listening to your singing in assembly. These are some more of the good things about your school.

- Your behaviour is good; you work hard and really enjoy being at school.
- You reach high standards in numeracy.
- You learn how to work together, care for others and live healthy lives.
- Teachers make lessons enjoyable.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and all adults care for you well.

I have suggested to your school some things that I think will make it better for you. Your school needs a permanent headteacher. The progress you make should be carefully measured so that you can be given extra help if you are not doing as well as you could. Teachers need to make sure that the work they set each of you meets your needs. Finally, when teachers mark your work, I have asked them to tell you how to make your work better, so that your writing, for example, is more accurate.

You can help by checking your written work carefully, to make sure that you have spelt words correctly, that you have not missed out words and that the punctuation is correct. Make the school a special place by continuing to work hard and behave well.

Best wishes for the future and make the most of your time here!

Paul Cosway

Lead inspector