

Bromsgrove, Millfields First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116663
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	312360
Inspection dates	31 January –1 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew McDowall

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alistair Moseley
Headteacher	Alison Dowling
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2005
School address	Swift Close Bromsgrove B61 7BS
Telephone number	01527 831885
Fax number	01527 576208

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized school. Approximately nine out of ten pupils attending the school come from White British backgrounds. Consequently, the percentage of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups is well below average, as is the number of pupils with English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is close to the national average, as is the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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 quality of education. It is popular with parents, who appreciate its warm and friendly atmosphere. Pupils really enjoy school. This is illustrated by a parent who said, 'My sons run to school every morning, they really enjoy it'. Pupils make good gains in their personal development and the pastoral care provided by the school is very good.

When they start at the school, children have varying skills and abilities, though they are generally in line with expectations. They get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and are well prepared for their move to the next class. Pupils make satisfactory progress as a result of satisfactory teaching and reach standards that are broadly average, although progress in mathematics in Years 3 and 4 is slow. Some of the teachers' assessments of pupils' levels of ability are inaccurate, and this is the main reason why progress is only satisfactory. This lack of clarity regarding what pupils can do and what they need to learn next is resulting in teachers sometimes setting work that is mismatched to pupils' needs. The marking of pupils' work is satisfactory, but variable in quality and does not provide enough information to pupils about what it is they need to do next to improve.

The curriculum is satisfactory, there is a rich and interesting range of extra activities for pupils. These enable them to develop self-confidence and a positive outlook on life. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as is their behaviour. They have a good understanding of how to eat healthily and enjoy the many opportunities that they have to play and exercise. The very good pastoral care provided by all staff ensures pupils are well supervised and know how to stay safe. Like their parents, pupils are confident that staff will provide help should they need it. The school successfully involves parents in their children's learning. Extensive links with, and contribution to, the local and international community provide pupils with an outstanding understanding of their place in society. They make an excellent contribution to the school community when older pupils look after younger pupils at playtimes and in the way they work exceptionally well in mixed-age groups during enrichment activities. Pupils are well prepared for their next school and have a growing understanding of the world of work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a high profile in the school and this ensures good communication with parents and children. Recent improvements to the building and the outside environment have enhanced the accommodation. These are being utilised well to provide better learning opportunities for pupils. Leadership and management are not good overall because the school improvement plan and systems to monitor the work of the school are not sharp enough to promote good progress. Leaders are sometimes unclear about what it is they are setting out to achieve, or what progress is being made towards school targets. Regardless of this, self-evaluation is satisfactory because informal systems enable leaders and managers to have a sound view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Challenging targets are set, but these are not always achieved because checks on the progress pupils are making are not regular enough. The good team spirit, along with recent improvements to the curriculum, good developments in accommodation and improvements to provision in the Foundation Stage demonstrate the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress during their time in the Reception classes, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. The activities provided are practical and exciting and teaching is good. Staff successfully identify children with particular needs and make sure activities help children of all abilities to make good progress. Children have good opportunities to learn their letter sounds and to use these in their early writing. The outside space is used well and provides a rich learning environment for the children. Children particularly enjoyed the messy activities with mud and taking torches into the tunnel which they had constructed as part of their work on 'things you find under the ground'. Occasionally, activities are too teacher directed and limit opportunities for pupils to make decisions for themselves.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics in Years 3 and 4.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring all teachers assess the skills and abilities of pupils accurately and use this information to set work that enables pupils of all abilities to make good progress.
- Sharpen the quality of the school's self-evaluation processes and improvement planning so leaders are clear about what they are trying to achieve, and staff receive more regular feedback on their work.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are broadly in line with expectations for their age at the start of Key Stage 1. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and are reaching average standards by the end of Year 2. The end-of-Key Stage 1 assessments indicate that standards have been above average in recent years. However, current work in the pupils' books indicates that standards are broadly average. Pupils make satisfactory progress in reading and writing in Years 3 and 4, but their progress in mathematics is slow. The school has recognised this and action is being taken to bring about improvement, but it is too soon to see the impact of this work. Standards at the end of Year 4 are broadly in line with those expected of pupils of this age. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are confident, courteous and helpful. They take care of each other very well and try to solve any problems they may have themselves, before referring to an adult. Attendance is good because pupils enjoy all aspects of the school and value the support of friends and staff. They understand and abide by the school rules because they are centrally involved in creating them. The school council has been instrumental in promoting an awareness of healthy lifestyles. Pupils are active in the local community through activities such as music and singing, as well as regularly raising funds for charity. The school's ongoing links with a school with a wider cultural diversity in Redditch and a school in The Gambia enable pupils to develop a global perspective and a

good understanding of different cultures at home and abroad. Pupils learn to work in teams and solve problems in preparation for adult life. Working with a range of visitors helps to promote their understanding of different jobs such as those in art and sport.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and create a good learning atmosphere in lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants and make good progress because the work they are set matches their needs well. Pupils enjoy being given practical things to do. This was evident in an art lesson where pupils used an excellent range of natural resources as a stimulus for their drawings. Teachers manage pupils very well and provide good opportunities for pupils to talk and cooperate in lessons.

Although teachers' planning is detailed, it sometimes describes activities pupils will do rather than what they will learn. At other times, planning does not make clear what pupils of different abilities will learn in the lesson. Teachers' skills in assessing pupils' learning are variable. Records of progress are patchy and teachers miss opportunities to assess and reinforce pupils' learning in lessons. Consequently, assessment information is not used consistently to plan work for the range of pupils' abilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The wide range of enrichment activities provided by the school makes a good contribution to pupils' positive attitudes to their learning and good understanding of their place in the wider world. 'Friendly Friday' and a range of special topic weeks in the school year enable pupils to develop good social skills and have time to study subjects in more depth. The curriculum is not good overall because provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is only satisfactory and does not promote good progress in these important areas. Recent improvements to the provision for ICT are beginning to have an impact. Pupils say they enjoy and appreciate the good range of after-school clubs. The school successfully involves parents in their children's learning and, as a result, many pupils gain from the work they do at home.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is very good. Consequently, the school is a safe and orderly place. Staff are committed to ensuring pupils thrive in a warm and supportive environment. Incidents of bullying and harassment are rare and promptly and effectively addressed by the school. Child protection procedures are robust. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are well catered for and intervention strategies are effective in supporting identified pupils, such as those with physical difficulties. There are good procedures for preparing pupils for transition between the key stages.

The guidance given to pupils about their progress lacks focus and precision because of inconsistencies in systems for assessment. For example, the school has recognised that assessment information that underpins the way in which the school checks on the progress of

each pupil in mathematics is flawed and does not provide an accurate picture of standards and achievement in this subject.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and senior management team successfully promote pupils' good personal development and pastoral care. This is illustrated by the good links with parents and improved provision for before- and after-school care. Day-to-day management of the school is good. The headteacher has successfully involved teachers in tracking pupils' progress and this is beginning to have a positive impact on expectations. Challenging targets are set each year, but the school does not check how pupils are doing often enough.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive and active in the school. Recent changes in membership of the governing body have been managed well. Their limited involvement in monitoring the work of the school and lack of precision in school improvement planning means they are unable to hold the school to account for its actions.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	2

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	1
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

2 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Millfields First School, Bromsgrove B61 7BS

I would like to start by saying a big thank you to everyone for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently to see your work and talk to the teachers. Yours is a satisfactory school.

We were very impressed by your friendliness and good behaviour. You told us you enjoy school and that the staff look after you well, and this makes you feel safe in school. There is a good range of after-school clubs and the links you have with other schools in England and Africa are good; these help you to understand people from different backgrounds.

Your school is good at helping you to grow in confidence and become keen and eager to learn. You all make satisfactory progress in your work.

We have asked the school to do three things to help it improve.

- The first is to help those of you in Years 3 and 4 to improve your work in numeracy.
- We have also asked the teachers to improve the way they check how you are doing so they can be sure to set work that is not too easy or too difficult for you all.
- Finally, we have asked the senior teachers and the governors to set clearer targets for the school and to check your work more often to see whether any changes they make to the school are helping you all to improve.

You can help by remembering your targets whenever you are doing any work and by checking your work for yourself to see if it is as good as it can be.

Thank you again for being so helpful and good luck for the future. I hope you raised enough money for the well cover for the school in The Gambia.

Yours sincerely

Andy McDowall Lead inspector

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