

Millbrook Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122109
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314216
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Marion Thompson

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	453
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jed Queally
Headteacher	Rob Astley
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Churchill Way Kettering NN15 5DP
Telephone number	01536 517049
Fax number	01536 417467

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large junior school, where the great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small number of pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is exceptionally low. The headteacher took up his post in April 2007, following a period of disrupted leadership.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school, which is improving rapidly as a result of the clear sense of direction provided by the recently appointed headteacher. Staff and governors are working hard to improve provision in order to raise pupils' achievement. Over the past few years, pupils have not made as much progress as they should from their well above average starting points on entry to the school. Progress in mathematics was especially slow. Over the last year, pupils have begun to make better progress, especially in writing and mathematics, and achievement is now satisfactory overall. These improvements are a result of strategies the school has introduced, for example to improve punctuation in writing. Pupils now reach standards that are above average by the end of Year 6, although they still have more ground to make up.

Satisfactory teaching and a sound curriculum contribute to the steady progress most pupils make. This includes those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils are motivated to learn by their good relationships with their teachers and other staff. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers do not use the information that they have about pupils' progress to plan work that meets the needs of all pupils. Occasionally, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use their initiative, work independently, solve problems or undertake investigative work, especially in science and mathematics. As a result, despite recent improvements, a small minority of pupils, especially the most able, still do not achieve as much as they should. Academic support and guidance are satisfactory overall and in some classes, especially in Year 6, are good. However, too often teachers give too little indication of what the pupils need to do to improve when marking their work.

The school is aware of what it needs to do to improve because the headteacher has introduced more rigorous checks on what is happening in classrooms and improved systems for tracking pupils' progress. Senior leaders are now more involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and are working hard to refine their leadership skills. Consequently, staff and governors are clear about the way forward.

Pupils' good personal development is a result of the good pastoral care and secure environment provided by staff. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning contribute to the progress they make. They enjoy Millbrook, work hard and behave well, paying due attention to safety. They are developing an awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle, although they do not all demonstrate this in practice. They get on well with each other and are becoming thoughtful and considerate young people.

Pupils value the opportunities that Millbrook offers, especially its good music provision, which makes a strong contribution to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Because they know their views and actions are valued and acted upon, pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community, for example through working as school councillors. Their preparation for the future is sound. Pupils have good basic skills, but their ability to work collaboratively and to take the initiative is limited by lack of opportunity in lessons.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in English, mathematics and science, especially for more able pupils, by providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in investigation, problem solving and independent working.

- Ensure that teachers use all the available information about individual pupils' progress to plan work that matches their particular learning needs, especially those of the more able pupils.
- Support staff with leadership responsibilities in developing their skills in monitoring and evaluating the provision in order to plan for improvement.

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 their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils achieve satisfactorily and reach standards that are above average by the end of Year 6. They generally do better in English than in mathematics and science. Progress is most rapid in Year 6, where teaching is good. This year, pupils are on track to reach their realistic targets in English and mathematics. Achievement in writing has improved in all year groups, because the school has introduced activities that motivate the pupils to write and has promoted strategies to improve sentence construction, punctuation and organisation of work. Achievement in mathematics, which was an area of relative weakness, is beginning to improve. However, calculation and problem solving remain relatively weak. More able pupils do not make enough progress, especially in investigation in science and mathematics, because opportunities for this work are too limited. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, because of effectively targeted support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school, and this is reflected in their good attendance, good manners and polite attitudes. They particularly appreciate the attractive grounds and the information and communication technology (ICT) suite. Pupils are developing well as responsible and mature young people. They make a positive contribution to the school community through their work as monitors, and their social awareness is manifest in the concern they show for others. The annual fundraising day for 'Thandigudi', a village in India, is a good example of this. The pupils' good moral and social development is also apparent in their good behaviour and generally friendly relationships. Cultural and spiritual awareness are developed well, especially through a wide range of musical activities. Pupils are aware of the need to stay healthy, although they say that they prefer crisps and sweets to more healthy food. They move about the school in a safe manner and generally use equipment sensibly.

In lessons, opportunities for pupils to work independently and use their initiative are limited and they do not spend much time working collaboratively. This means that in these aspects of personal development they are only satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education and later working life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Relationships between staff and pupils are good and this leads to pupils having positive attitudes to learning. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and lessons are calm and orderly. Most lessons have clear learning intentions, although pupils are not always fully aware of what they are. In most lessons, teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties to make sound progress. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not use information about pupils' progress to plan work that is challenging enough, especially for the more able pupils. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to learn independently or to engage in investigations or problem solving activities. Marking too often does not provide clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Provision for ICT is satisfactory. However, teachers' planning does not always meet the needs of individual pupils. The setting arrangements for literacy and mathematics go some way to addressing this, but even in these sets, the work is not always challenging enough for some pupils. Music is a real strength of the school, and large numbers of pupils are involved in choirs, orchestras and learning musical instruments. Pupils also benefit from the satisfactory range of clubs and activities at lunchtimes and after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for and feel secure in going to adults for help. This is a key feature in their good personal development. Rare bullying or racism incidents are dealt with effectively. The school works closely with external agencies to provide good support for vulnerable pupils. Procedures to ensure pupils' safety and security, particularly important during alterations to the buildings, are sound. Support for pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory. Academic guidance and recently introduced systems for tracking pupils' achievement are satisfactory overall, and improving. Many pupils know what their targets are, but their understanding of how to achieve them is too varied across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has successfully engaged staff and governors in a renewed drive to improve provision and raise achievement. As a consequence of his accurate evaluation of how well the school is doing, a clear plan for improvement has been drawn up. Some of the recent initiatives are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement, with some improvement this year in mathematics, for example. This demonstrates that the school has sound capacity to improve further. Staff carry out their management responsibilities to a satisfactory level. They are now more involved in checking the quality of teaching and learning, and are working hard to improve their skills. Governance is satisfactory overall. Governors provide good support for

the school. Monitoring of the work of the school is improving rapidly. Recently introduced tracking systems are providing governors with clearer information about pupils' progress and they are gaining confidence in providing the school with a higher level of challenge. Progress since the previous inspection has been slow until recently, but has now picked up pace.

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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 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	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millbrook Junior School, Kettering, NN15 5DP

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed hearing your views about your education. Your school provides you with a sound education, which is improving rapidly. These are some of the things we found.

By Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are above average and you make satisfactory progress. Your achievement in mathematics, which has not been as good as in English, is improving. Your satisfactory progress is due to sound teaching and a satisfactory curriculum. You have good relationships with your teachers and other staff, who work hard to provide you with a secure environment, so you develop positive attitudes to learning. You enjoy coming to school. Your attendance and behaviour are good. Your spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good and you enjoy the wide range of opportunities the school provides for you in music. The headteacher, supported by staff and governors, is working hard to make sure you make more rapid progress.

- In order to improve things further, we have asked the school to:
- improve your work in English, mathematics and science, especially for those of you who find work easy, by providing more opportunities for you to work more independently and to develop your skills in investigation and problem solving
- ensure that teachers use information about how well you are doing to pitch work at the right level for you, especially if you learn quickly
- provide school managers with training, so they can carry out their responsibilities more effectively.

A number of your parents and carers took the trouble to reply to our questionnaire, so please discuss this letter with them.

Best wishes

Marion Thompson Lead inspector



9 May 2008

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