

Milton Mount Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125916
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	315355
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	411
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill Williams
Headteacher	Brian Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	Grattons Drive Pound Hill Crawley RH10 3AG
Telephone number	01293 537158
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school mainly serves the private residential area in which it is situated. Most pupils are White British, although an above average proportion come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being of Indian heritage. Compared with most schools, a slightly higher proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, although numbers vary in different years. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and the proportion entitled to free school meals are below average. The school has won the following awards: ICT Mark, International Schools, Activemark, Healthy Schools and Sustainability Award (awareness of the need for sustainable and renewable energy sources). Since the previous inspection, the school has changed from a combined first and middle to a primary and it does not now have a Year 7. There has been a relatively high turnover of teachers in recent years. The long serving headteacher is due to retire at the end of the term and a new appointee takes up post this September.

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's effectiveness is satisfactory. However, it has some excellent features because pupils excel in information and communication technology (ICT) and an exceptional international education gives them a keen awareness of life beyond their own environment. The school also has significant strengths in the way in which the headteacher and staff create an ethos and environment in which pupils enjoy learning. Pupils' personal development, including behaviour, is good and they have strong opportunities for developing their creative, sporting and enterprise skills.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory due to the progress they make in basic skills. Children make a sound start in Reception and, by Year 1, their standards are average, including in literacy and numeracy. Pupils make good progress, overall, in Key Stage 1 and, by Year 2, standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In recent years, there has been an uplift in standards in Year 2 because of improvements to teaching this year group. This is raising attainment and giving children a better start to their junior education. The school recognises a rise in expectations is needed as these pupils pass through the school. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2 and overall standards are average. By the end of Year 6, they are above average in English but average in mathematics and in science. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress. More capable pupils' progress is generally satisfactory but slows when they are given insufficient challenge.

Although teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, there is not enough consistently good teaching to speed up the rate of pupils' progress. Teachers manage pupils well and provide interesting learning contexts but inconsistencies in the use of assessment mean that work is not always matched to pupils' capabilities and work is sometimes too hard or too easy. There are, though, some stunning examples of artwork and poetry in Key Stage 2 and high quality curricular links between writing, art and the humanities enable pupils to write well for different purposes. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the extremely good range of extra-curricular sporting activities. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community through their charity, school council and eco work. Pupils know how to stay safe and have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy.

Pastoral care is strong but academic guidance is weaker. The school has started to improve assessment systems, although it is fully aware that tracking systems are not yet fully effective. Recording systems do not give a clear view of pupils' progress from the time they enter school and leave. The process of setting targets is appropriate for most pupils but senior leaders are mainly responsible for evaluation and there is insufficient involvement of other staff. This prevents speedy action when pupils are slow moving or even falling behind.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is innovative and school leaders have accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, the school is beginning to pick up after a period when there were some staffing difficulties. However, middle managers do not have enough opportunities to monitor and evaluate the impact of their colleagues' work in raising achievement and this is slowing the rate of improvement. Governors are very supportive and give a satisfactory level of challenge.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Staff provide a caring and secure environment so that children quickly settle into school and grow in confidence. Children arrive with a wide range of skills, particularly in communication, language and literacy, but their overall attainment on entry is broadly average. Activities engage children's interests so they want to learn. Their happy, smiling faces show clearly their enjoyment of learning. They make satisfactory progress and, by the time children begin Year 1, they reach the expected levels, including in reading, writing and mathematics, although few exceed them. The school has improved provision in phonics and writing this year and this is starting to raise standards in these areas. The quality of teaching and assessment systems is satisfactory. Teachers regularly assess children's individual progress but there is no clear tracking system to help staff and school leaders to evaluate how children achieve from entry to the end of Reception. This prevents staff and school leaders from readily monitoring and evaluating the impact of provision to make sure individuals and groups make good progress. Play activities are well planned for the majority but are not always challenging enough for more capable children. Occasionally, when the whole class is taught together, there is not enough direct teaching of basic skills. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and science by improving the consistency of good teaching by matching work closely to pupils' prior attainment, including for more capable pupils.
- Improve assessment and recording systems to make better checks on pupils' progress so this can be readily evaluated and, where necessary, improved.
- Improve systems so that middle managers have a greater impact on raising achievement in their subjects.

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 make satisfactory but uneven progress across the school. Standards are broadly average on entry to Year 1, although there is less attainment at higher levels than found nationally. Pupils make good progress, overall, in Key Stage 1 with satisfactory progress in Year 1 and fast progress in Year 2. In Year 2, teachers have high expectations and are skilled in matching work to pupils' prior attainment.

Standards in Year 6 began to improve in 2007 after a drop in previous years and were above average in English, although average in mathematics and science. Targets were exceeded in English because writing has been an area of focus. The school has largely eliminated past areas of underachievement in mathematics caused by some weaker teaching, although progress still slows when work is too hard or easy. The school is beginning to improve science but still fewer pupils are reaching higher levels than should do.

Pupils with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language are provided with appropriate levels of support and make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

As one parent commented, 'The school is a happy environment where the children thrive.' Pupils' extremely good awareness of healthy lifestyles is reflected in their enjoyment of sport. Their eager participation in the 'Park n stride' scheme and 'Fruity Friday', and the high numbers taking part in after clubs for sport and physical activities, reflect their strong commitment to fitness. The school council provides pupils with an influential 'voice' that has led to beneficial changes in the school. Pupils enjoy making decisions and taking responsibility. Pupils show an excellent awareness of global issues such as caring for their environment and set very good examples in recycling, conservation and charity fund raising. They are given clear guidelines for good behaviour and the consequences of inappropriate actions. As a result, pupils work well together in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and reflects the harmonious relationships that prevail throughout the school. Attendance is above the national average, which reflects pupils' enthusiasm for attending school. Pupils' progress in basic skills means that they are satisfactorily prepared for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There is some good teaching but this is inconsistent through the year groups and different subjects. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and create a cheerful atmosphere. Teachers use a range of approaches to help their pupils by listening and watching and by active participation. They often emphasise practical applications and so make learning relevant to pupils' daily lives. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and they know how to inspire confidence and enjoyment. Teaching assistants support pupils effectively. However, within this positive picture, pupils' work does not always build on previous learning and work is too hard for some and too easy for others. For example, in some mathematics sets, there is not enough planning for the range of abilities. Marking is regular and generally helpful but does not consistently show precisely what is needed to make further improvements so that all pupils can achieve at their highest level.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad and often exciting and includes a modern foreign language for all pupils in Key Stage 2. It enhances the personal development of pupils and encourages them to want to learn. High quality learning opportunities in ICT stem from the very systematic development of pupils' computer skills. Projects often cross subject boundaries and give pupils some high quality learning opportunities in art, geography and history and environmental awareness. Links between subjects and practical experiences bring learning alive, especially in writing. Pupils have particularly strong opportunities to develop their creativity through art and imaginative writing. The school has a wide range of very worthwhile and well attended activities outside normal hours. Overall, provision for basic skills is only satisfactory because of inconsistency throughout the school. There is not enough planning to make sure pupils' work always builds on what they can already do.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils value the good standards of care shown by staff. This, together with effective arrangements for safe guarding pupils, helps them feel secure. There is a clear focus on supporting the pastoral needs of pupils and the few with emotional and behavioural problems are helped particularly well. There are good arrangements for making sure children settle into Reception and for easing pupils' transfer to secondary school. Academic guidance is less developed. Assessment is regular but recording systems are cumbersome. The school does not have a clear, overall picture of pupils' attainment on entry to the school or a system which enables school leaders and staff to readily evaluate their progress through the school. The process of setting targets is satisfactory but pupils themselves are not always clear about what they need to do to improve and their targets are not always adjusted once achieved.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Most parents are very pleased with the school. The headteacher has developed a positive school ethos where teachers, pupils, parents and governors work in partnership. There are agreed structures for leadership responsibilities for subjects, phases and key aspects across the staff. Self-evaluation systems are generally satisfactory but senior leaders undertake most of the monitoring of teaching. Subject leaders play their part in supporting colleagues but are not given enough opportunities to observe their colleagues teaching. Systems are in place to assess the progress pupils make but the school recognises that tracking systems are not robust enough to pinpoint exactly how well different groups are doing. The school sets clear targets for each pupil but the monitoring of pupils' progress towards these targets is not sufficiently rigorous at middle management level. There is also work to do to make sure teachers consistently use the targets to move children on in their learning.

Teachers' morale is high and staff show a willingness to adapt. They recognise the need for stronger assessment and support for improving their teaching. Governors have ensured sensible financial planning occurs and, through training, are developing their ability to challenge the school more rigorously on achievement matters. Given the recent rate of progress, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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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	3
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	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	1
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	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?	2
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

5 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Milton Mount Primary School, Crawley RH10 3AG

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We especially enjoyed looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and talking with some of you. You are a credit to yourselves and the school – well done! This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school.

The school provides you with a sound education and here are some of the things we found out about your school:

- You make good progress in English and some of your poetry is first class.
- You make good progress in mathematics in Year 2.
- You develop excellent ICT skills and have really good opportunities for sport and art.
- Your headteacher and teachers have made your school a caring and attractive place and everyone in the school takes good care of each other.
- You behave well and work hard and this helps to make your school a happy one.
- You have excellent opportunities to take part in after-school clubs, for learning about the wider world and for caring for your environment.

Here are the things we are asking the school to improve:

- Make sure the work you are given in mathematics and science is never too hard or too easy so you always make good progress in these subjects.
- Ensure school leaders, teachers and governors keep a closer check on how well you are doing.
- Help teachers in charge of subjects to be more involved in raising standards.

You can help your teachers by making sure you continue to work hard at improving your work.

Thank you again for your part in making our time in your school so very enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Chadwick Lead inspector

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