

# Emerson Valley School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131190
<b>Local Authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	315746
<b>Inspection dates</b>	31 January –1 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Collins

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	415
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Lyn Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Janette Brown
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Hodder Lane Emerson Valley Milton Keynes MK4 2JR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 507914
<b>Fax number</b>	01908 507915

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<b>Age group</b>	7-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Almost three-quarters of the pupils of this much larger than average-sized school are from a White British background. The remaining 25% of pupils come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds, but mainly Black African and other White backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is smaller than the national average and the percentage with moderate learning difficulties and disabilities is slightly above average. There are fewer than average numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals. Numbers of pupils starting and leaving the school at other than the usual times is rising. The school has Healthy School and Investors in People status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good, improving school. In a relatively short time the outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher and her deputy have successfully moved the school forward. Issues over teaching, standards and achievement have been tackled successfully. As a result, improvements in the consistency of teaching, the curriculum and the increasingly effective use of assessment data have led to rising standards and improving achievement across the school.

The Year 6 national test results since 2005 have continued to improve. From average standards when they enter school, pupils make steadily improving progress through the rest of the school because of more consistently good teaching. By the end of Year 6, in spite of increasing numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and higher than average mobility, current assessments show that pupils are achieving well. Inspection evidence shows that standards are rising and Year 6 pupils are on track to reach their challenging targets.

Good tracking and monitoring systems ensure the school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. This information is used effectively to plan focused support in literacy and mathematics for particular groups of pupils that enables them to achieve well. The monitoring of standards and achievement is used well by the school to set realistic and challenging targets for improvement.

Given the school's recent record of improving the quality of teaching, leadership and management and a trend of rising standards and achievement, the school has a good capacity to improve.

Improvement since the last inspection is good but the school recognises that progress in writing is not as consistent as in other areas, particularly in its use in other subjects. A better learning climate has been established through improvements in behaviour and teaching, and the new curriculum is more focused on meeting the needs of different groups within the school. At present, however, planning does not always meet the needs of pupils with moderate learning difficulties within all classes.

A very large majority of parents express strong support for the school, many speaking of how happy their children are to come to school. One parent wrote, 'Children are given lots of opportunities to thrive and learn'. Pupils themselves expressed their enjoyment of learning, talking of how teachers make learning 'interesting and fun'. They enjoy the challenges made on them, saying that 'when the work is hard you learn more'. Behaviour is excellent and they concentrate well and work hard. They are maturing into confident young people. The 'Playground Pals' and school council, for example, take their responsibilities seriously and see themselves as making a significant contribution to the life of the school.

Academic and personal developments are well supported by a good curriculum. Provision for pupils with learning and physical disabilities and those few pupils for whom English is not their first language is good. Regular physical education (PE) lessons and sporting clubs and activities make a good contribution to pupils' enjoyment and taking healthy exercise. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of making healthy choices and are aware of the need to be safe, for example in PE lessons in the hall. Recent improvements in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) has increased pupils' enthusiasm for learning as was readily evident in a very successful open morning for parents and carers to see it in use across other subject areas.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing through the provision of more opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in other areas of the curriculum.
- Raise the quality of teaching by improving planning of the curriculum to meet more effectively the needs of all groups of pupils within the classroom.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Latest test and teacher assessment results for 2007 show that, despite a dip in 2006, the trend of rising standards over the past three years is being maintained. In 2007 standards by the end of Year 6 were average at the expected levels in English, mathematics and science and above average for the higher levels in mathematics. Current tracking and assessment data shows that improvements continue to be made. Last year achievement was satisfactory but current tracking data shows that this has improved across the school and is now good. Pupils in Year 6 are now achieving well and making good progress in literacy, mathematics and science. Standards in reading have improved over the past three years but those in writing somewhat less so. The school has recognised the need to improve standards and achievement in writing and its current plans have begun to address this issue. The few pupils at an early stage of learning English make good progress towards their targets because of the well-targeted support they receive.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Outstanding features within personal development and well-being are the excellent behaviour of pupils and their very positive attitudes towards learning. Pupils are friendly and confident and say they feel valued and respected. Their enjoyment is evident in the enthusiastic way in which they talk about the many things they like about the school and their good attendance. Pupils say they feel safe because of the support the school gives them through their playground pals and the way they are encouraged to support each other. Most pupils feel that bullying is not a problem and have a clear understanding of what to do if it occurs. Pupil's good awareness of healthy lifestyles is shown by their healthy food choices at lunchtime as well as their enthusiastic participation in physical activities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils consider the needs of others through charity fund raising and the new Eco-Squad is raising their awareness of the world around them. While most pupils are developing good skills for their future economic well-being, for example in ICT and calculation in mathematics, the school is aware that more remains to be done on improving the use of writing skills.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are now regularly good and often better. Teachers create a purposeful working atmosphere where pupils understand what they are expected to achieve, enjoy their learning and are willing to work hard. Pupils are attentive and eager to contribute to discussions. Lessons are lively and proceed with good pace. Very good questioning challenges pupils giving good opportunities for them to develop their ideas. Pupils listen well to each other and share their ideas with a partner, raising their confidence and self-esteem. The good use of ICT is

helping to support learning in many subjects. Lesson planning is good, but sometimes lacks consistency in planning to meet the needs of groups of pupils with moderate learning difficulties within the class. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, relationships are very good and, as a result, pupils respond well. As one child commented, 'Teachers try to make every lesson fun and enjoyable'. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed, providing well targeted support for a wide range of small groups.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is well planned to meet the academic and personal needs of most pupils. It has some outstanding features, for example music, sport and the use of ICT are particularly good. The introduction of French is a successful feature of the school's developing curriculum. The school's involvement in national initiatives like Sportsmark, Eco schools and Healthy Schools also contribute well to pupil's personal development and well-being. Pupils have opportunities to make connections between subjects but the use of writing skills in other areas of the curriculum remains an area for development. Learning is enriched with special curriculum events such as Sports Week, Science days and Roman Day. The use of staff skills to run and;quot;Wednesday workshopsand;quot; is an example of the innovative and creative ways the school is developing its curriculum. This is further enhanced by regular visits locally and further afield. Year 5 and 6 pupils benefit from annual residential trips, which support their personal development well.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good with clear procedures understood by all adults. Good liaison with other agencies helps to meet the needs of pupils with disabilities or other vulnerable pupils, resulting in sensitive and successful inclusion. Teachers and support staff work well as a team providing a good model for pupils. The learning mentor is an effective resource. Pupil's personal development is enhanced by the opportunities she provides to raise their self-esteem and confidence. There are good induction procedures and Year 3 pupils say they are made to feel welcome and know who to go to if they have a difficulty. Transition for pupils moving onto secondary education is also well established and effective. The school is developing good tracking and assessment systems that enable it to give well-focused support to particular groups of pupils in literacy and mathematics, enabling them to achieve well. Pupils know their targets and good marking is used by teachers to help pupils progress in their learning. Whilst academic guidance is good, it is not yet used consistently to support the planning of work of pupils with moderate learning difficulties within the class.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The outstanding leadership of the new headteacher and deputy headteacher are leading the drive to raise standards. They have quickly created a shared vision and powerful sense of direction that is moving the school forward. As one parent put it, 'The school has improved hugely since the new headteacher'. Governors are providing good support and actively holding the school to account for its decisions.

Subject leaders in English, mathematics and science are now increasingly effective in developing their oversight of standards and achievement. They are making a more positive and successful impact on the work of the school. A clear view of the areas for improvement is evident and leaders are managing these developments well. The impact of year group leaders is also developing well. As a result, standards and achievement are now rising and teaching and learning have improved. At the same time, the school recognizes the need to improve further, particularly in writing and planning to meet the needs of different groups within the classroom. The current development plan provides a good strategy to improve teaching and raise standards further.

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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?	2
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

12 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Emerson Valley School, Milton Keynes, MK4 2JR

We are very grateful for the way you helped us when we came to visit your school. Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and how much you enjoy school. The school council and others told us you like your teachers because they make learning fun. We agree with you and your parents that there are many good things about your school.

Here are some of the things we think your school does well.

- The headteacher, other teachers and the governors are doing a good job in running the school.
- We agree with you that the school takes good care of you so that you feel safe.
- You are doing better in reading, mathematics and science than you have done in the past.
- We agree with you that you have good teachers.

These are things we think the school could do better.

- Help you to improve your writing by giving you more opportunities to use your writing skills in other subjects.
- Plan lessons that are better matched to the particular needs of different groups of pupils in each class.

We think these will help your school to get even better. You can help by continuing to work hard and keep trying your very best. Ask your teachers for help when you do not understand anything, we are sure they will help.

Good luck to you all in the future.

John Collins

Lead Inspector