

Mansel Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131272
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	315769
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ann Gale
Headteacher	Mrs Yvonne Adams
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Culver Close Porlock Road Millbrook Southampton SO16 9HZ
Telephone number	023 8077 6162
Fax number	023 8077 6163

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Mansel Park is an average-sized primary school situated in the Millbrook estate on the western outskirts of Southampton. The school opened in September 2006 following the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools; however, the headteacher was not appointed until Easter 2007. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage. A high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), and almost half of these have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Mansel Park Primary provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. Following a period of uncertainty, the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools is proving to be a success. This is, in no small measure, due to the vision and determination of the new headteacher. She has been instrumental in driving forward initiatives that are beginning to improve pupils' achievement.

Few parents or carers returned their inspection questionnaires. Those received were generally appreciative of the improvements made since the amalgamation, and particularly since the appointment of the headteacher. 'The school has changed, the children's behaviour is so much better and the learning has improved remarkably,' typifies these comments. Not all parents are happy and some comments reflect concerns rooted in the period of uncertainty during the early stages of the amalgamation process.

The school is making good use of intensive support from the local authority to help raise standards. The decline in Key Stage 2, which preceded the amalgamation, has been halted. The Raising Attainment Plan sets out clear and challenging targets for the school to achieve. Standards are, however, below average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily and make steady progress. The school is good at giving extra help to pupils with learning difficulties and and/or disabilities, and these pupils make good progress. However, the school is yet to meet the needs of its more able pupils. One of the reasons why standards are below average is that there are few pupils exceeding the expected level for their age.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. One of the ways in which the headteacher is building a secure basis for future improvement is by ensuring that there is a good atmosphere that encourages learning in classes. This is underpinned by the good behaviour and relationships evident throughout the school. However, this platform for improvement is not yet complete because pupils are not skilled enough in evaluating their own learning and in working independently. Nonetheless, they clearly enjoy their education, and have a good awareness of issues that affect their well-being, such as living healthily and acting safely.

Teaching is satisfactory. There is good teaching in all key stages, but practice is inconsistent in many aspects of teaching, consequently pupils' progress is variable. Some teachers' assessments of their pupils are not accurate. This means that they do not always pitch work at the right level, particularly for the more able. The quality of guidance provided when teachers' mark pupils' work also varies. In lessons, the challenge and pace of learning fluctuates considerably from class to class. The curriculum is satisfactory, and enriched with extra activities to help make learning more interesting.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The leadership has created a welcoming environment for the pupils in which all feel safe, well cared for, and valued. One pupil summed this up well when saying, 'What I like best is the teachers. They are always there when you need help.' The headteacher provides good leadership. She monitors the school's effectiveness rigorously and shows a clear determination to drive up standards. Her senior managers give her good support. However, there is little subject leadership because teachers are still acquiring the skills necessary to help them carry out these jobs. Despite this weakness, the school has a good capacity to improve because of the platform created by the headteacher and the improvements already underway.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get a good start in Reception. The school has noticed an improvement in the attainment of new entrants over the past two years. Nonetheless, attainment on entry is below what is expected of four year-olds, particularly in basic literacy and numeracy and in knowledge and understanding of the world. The children make good progress, and come close to the goals expected by the time they transfer to Year 1. This is the result of good teaching and the wide range of interesting and exciting activities provided. The children particularly benefit from the very good individual attention they get. There is a very good ratio of adults to children, and these adults are skilled in helping children to make progress. There are good opportunities for children to make choices and develop their social skills and confidence. However, there is not enough discussion about what the children might learn while working on their tasks, and the impact of adults' work to promote children's independent learning is sometimes reduced when they over-direct it.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching is more challenging, particularly for the more able pupils, by sharing and adopting existing good practice.
- Develop the leadership role of teachers to incorporate leadership of subjects.
- Ensure that pupils develop skills in evaluating their own progress and in becoming more independent as learners.

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

At the end of the school's first year, standards in Key Stages 1 and 2 were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. This reflects the low starting points of the pupils assessed, and also the lack of higher-attaining pupils. In general, the more able pupils continue to underachieve. The headteacher is well aware of this. She is beginning to tackle the problem by using good systems to monitor the pupils' progress and target those in need of an extra boost. This approach already benefits the lower-attainers. Pupils with learning difficulties and and/or disabilities make good progress because they have clear targets for improvement and receive good quality help from well-trained teaching assistants. Work to help support pupils with emotional and behavioural problems is proving successful and results in these pupils being more able to focus on their studies.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Aspects of their spiritual awareness, such as understanding their own learning, are less well developed. Pupils have a reasonable appreciation of their own cultural traditions, but are less aware of the customs and practices of other societies. Attendance is improving, but is below average overall. The school has a challenging attendance target for this year, which it is on course to achieve. Pupils develop satisfactory skills in citizenship through, for example, the school council and opportunities

provided for them to take greater responsibility as they get older. Some train as 'Bully Busters' and are effective in helping defuse playground disputes. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next phase of their education and in becoming life-long learners. Their good social skills are offset by their lack of independence in learning and below average levels of basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching has improved since the arrival of the new headteacher. Senior staff are working closely with teachers to improve pupils' learning. However, in many aspects of teaching, there is too much variation in quality. Teachers strive to make lessons interesting and fun. For instance, in a poetry lesson seen in Year 5, the teacher used exciting video footage and read W.H.Auden's 'Night Train' in a lively voice. The pupils responded by showing great enjoyment as they beat out the rhythm of the poem with their fingers with broad smiles on their faces. The challenge and support for pupils with learning difficulties is good. Well-trained and committed teaching assistants provide good guidance, which helps these pupils to achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Since her arrival, the headteacher has evaluated the curriculum and is revising it to make it more interesting, particularly for the older pupils. Over the past year, there have been major changes. Instead of lessons in single subjects, the school now links subjects within interesting and exciting topics. Consequently, pupils enjoy their work more and their behaviour and attitudes have improved. In response to low standards, the school has revised its planning for literacy and numeracy, and pupils are now making better progress in these areas. A range of school visits, together with sporting, drama and general interest clubs, enriches the curriculum satisfactorily. Although this level of enrichment is similar to what is found in most other schools, it represents a significant achievement within the context of this school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare meet requirements. The pastoral care of pupils is good. There are effective links with a range of external providers, such as family agencies, and mental health care, which help to meet the needs of both pupils and their families. The 'nurture group', well managed by the learning mentor, plays an important role in the lives of pupils who are finding it difficult to cope. The school monitors pupils' attendance very closely, and a range of initiatives is helping improve both punctuality and attendance. The school identifies pupils at risk at an early stage. Skilled teaching assistants, including emotional literacy support assistants, assisted effectively by the good special needs coordinator, ensure that these pupils are well cared for.

The academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory. Pupils know the targets that they have to achieve, but the systems for setting and reviewing their targets are inconsistently applied. Similarly, there is some good practice in teachers' marking of pupils' work, but teachers do not always ensure that pupils act on the useful comments made in their books.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Within a short space of time, the headteacher developed an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She is now implementing a raft of measures designed to bring about improvements in achievement and to raise standards. One of her priorities is to improve the leadership skills of all of her staff, and a current initiative to develop their skills by training them to provide coaching for colleagues is helping lay the groundwork by broadening their overview of the school.

Governance is satisfactory. The governors are committed to and supportive of the school. However, they rely too much on the school for information and are not involved enough in holding the school to account for its actions.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	NA
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	2

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	3
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	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	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	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

20 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mansel Park Primary School, Southampton, SO16 9HZ

On behalf of your inspectors, I would like to thank you very much for being so helpful when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and looking at your work.

We think that your school is satisfactory, with some things that are good. Here are some of the things we liked best about your school.

- It is a happy place to be in. Everyone is friendly and welcoming. Your behaviour is good and you get on well with each other and your teachers.
- You know a lot about how to keep healthy and safe.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are well looked after.
- Whenever you need help, there is always someone there for you.

All of the other people who help run your school want it to be even better. To help them, we have suggested some important things that they should do.

- We would like your teachers to make you think really hard in lessons at all times, particularly those of you who sometimes find your work easy. We would also like them to keep a close check on how well you are meeting your targets and make sure you always do your corrections. We are sure that you are ready for these challenges!
- We would like all the teachers to become skilful in taking charge of different subjects.
- We would like you to become better at organising your own work instead of relying on adults to tell you what you have to do. We would also like you to become good at judging exactly how well you are getting on. These skills will help you to do even better.

Your teachers cannot improve the school without your help. We need you to come to school on time and more often, and we hope that your families will help you to do this.

We wish you lots of success in the future. Yours sincerely

Mike Thompson

Lead Inspector