

Monkston Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133259
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	316048
Inspection date	11 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Christopher Parker

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	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kate Burridge
Headteacher	Mr Tom Winter
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2003
School address	Wadhurst Lane Monkston Milton Keynes MK10 9LA
Telephone number	01908 671 034
Fax number	01908 679 582

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the pupils' achievement in writing, the impact of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and pupils' attitudes and enjoyment. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average. Three quarters of the pupils come from White British backgrounds. A wide range of minority ethnic groups is represented in the remaining quarter of the school population. One in ten of the pupils speak a language other than English at home. Currently, 26 pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or statements of special educational needs is broadly average. In some year groups there are far more pupils with learning difficulties than in others.

The school has been open for six years. The pupils currently in Year 6 will be the first to complete their primary education at Monkston.

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 school with a number of outstanding features. It is extremely well led and managed by the headteacher and senior management team. The overwhelming majority of parents are pleased with the wide range of opportunities the school offers resulting in, as one parent commented, their child, 'thriving and growing in knowledge and experience'.

The very effective work of the senior management team and the staff has a considerable impact on the pupils' excellent personal development and well-being. The pupils behave very well in lessons because of the incentives and encouragement they receive. They speak enthusiastically about CBG (caught being good), Monkston points and individual and class rewards. One pupil commented that it is 'seriously rare for anyone to behave badly'. The pupils have great confidence in the adults in school who they say are always on hand should they need to turn to them. The pupils have adopted a very positive approach to healthy living. Alongside the opportunities for physical education within the curriculum, many older pupils participate in aerobic exercise before the start of the school day. An increasingly high proportion of pupils take part in the extensive range of after school activities. Rigorous monitoring of the take-up of these activities shows the impact of the success of the school's strong commitment to an extended curriculum that promotes healthy lifestyles. The school is similarly successful in encouraging a large proportion of pupils to walk or cycle to school. Discussion with pupils confirms the school's evaluation of their attitudes, that they greatly enjoy lessons. They say that frequent use of laptop computers has made learning 'really fun'.

The school's success in promoting excellent personal development and well-being, the very positive conditions for learning and the good teaching combine to ensure the pupils achieve well. The growth of the school, a reorganisation from combined school to primary and considerable variation in the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties in each year have resulted in some fluctuations in the results of national tests. Standards reached by the end of Year 6 are average in English and often above average in mathematics and science. The school's very thorough monitoring of its performance shows that pupils make good progress from the time they enter Year 1. Often their achievement significantly exceeds expectations. The school uses its comprehensive analysis of each pupil's progress and each cohort's performance to identify where it can make improvements. The senior leadership team have been very successful in improving achievement in many areas but progress in pupils' writing is not yet as good as in reading.

In order to raise standards in writing the curriculum leadership team has incisively reviewed all elements of the teaching and learning of writing. The new subject leader has a precise action plan to bring improvement. Decisive steps have already been taken. Challenging targets have been set to improve overall performance in English and, this term, individual writing targets for pupils have been refined so that they know exactly what they need to do reach higher levels. More opportunities for writing in other subjects are interwoven into the excellent planned curriculum themes. The school is making full use of the renewed framework for literacy as the basis for all English lessons. In a lesson in Year 6, pupils were constantly prompted to extend their language by using words that are more interesting. There were good examples in Years 4 and 5 of lessons promoting speaking and listening through drama to help pupils prepare for writing tasks. The pupils' writing is marked and commented on in considerable detail. For example, in Year 5, the teacher clearly indicates the extent to which the success criteria for the lesson have been met and also highlights how the pupils can improve in their next piece of

work. Pupils say they find the teachers' comments very useful. It is clear that their use of laptops for writing is helping them edit and improve their work.

Working closely with parents, the school provides a laptop for all pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6. This not only generates considerable enthusiasm and enjoyment for pupils but allows parents to become involved in their work when they take the laptops home each evening. The school has checked what impact the laptops have made to pupils' ICT skills over the last two years. They have found that standards have increased dramatically with two-thirds now reaching the higher level by the end of Year 6. Pupils also feel that the ease with which they can research, for example, science themes at home before they begin work at school is helping them to a better understanding. In keeping with the school's commitment to self-evaluation, an assessment of the broader impact of this initiative is to be carried out by the Open University.

The school is working, through its clear and excellently structured development plan, to remove barriers to learning. As well as ensuring all older pupils have access to a laptop, the parents of the youngest pupils are encouraged to 'stay and play'. Nurturing groups in Years 1 and 2 and the work of the learning mentor have helped small groups of pupils to make rapid progress so they can catch up with their peers. Pupils with learning difficulties are very well supported in lessons and make good progress as a result. Those pupils who speak a language other than English at home do particularly well in national tests.

Although writing standards are not as high as those in other areas, the pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being through the very wide range of activities they participate in. For example, an enrichment day to raise financial awareness, made a strong contribution to their mathematical and social development. The pupils are very proud that this event featured in a television programme. This and many other examples of enrichment show how the senior leadership team skilfully bring together an excellent curriculum and very strong support and guidance that result in excellent personal development and well-being. Rapidly improving standards in science and ICT, also illustrates the considerable commitment and very strong capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Many children start school with less well-developed skills than expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress and, over the last two years, have reached a similar level of development to children in most schools. In previous years, children moved to Year 1 with much less developed skills. This marked improvement has been achieved by carefully observing each child's progress and providing specific help to those who need it so that they catch up with their peers. Greater involvement of parents through drop-in sessions and workshops has also proved beneficial.

At the start of the school year, pupils settle quickly and are introduced to the routines of working with adults, selecting activities themselves and moving from inside the classroom to the outdoor area. The adults successfully engage them in activities that help to develop their skills by providing a wide range of activities to interest and motivate them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure pupils make consistently good progress in writing and reach standards that are above average in English.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

21 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Monkston Primary School, Milton Keynes, MK10 9LA

This letter is to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection and to thank you for taking the time to talk to me. You go to a good school and are able to learn in a friendly atmosphere where the adults take good care of you. You are able to turn to them if you need help. You behave well and those of you I talked to said bad behaviour is very rare.

You are doing well in lessons. You concentrate on your work and make good progress. You do well in mathematics, science and ICT. However, some of you could do better in writing so I have asked your teachers to give you all the help they can to become very good writers. They have already planned to give you much clearer targets for writing.

The teachers make lessons interesting and lively. Some of you told me how much you enjoy having a laptop and that it makes learning fun. The school provides an excellent range of opportunities for you both in and after school. Your personal development is excellent because you take part in so many of the activities on offer.

I enjoyed being in your school. I hope that in the future it is even more successful in helping you to do as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker

Lead inspector