

Mill Lane Junior Infant and Early Years School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107639
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	324609
Inspection date	2 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Roger Gill

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	150
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs H Megahy
Headteacher	Mrs Mary Conaghan
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Mill Lane Batley West Yorkshire WF17 6EG
Telephone number	01924 326724

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	2 February 2009
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Fax number

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Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' progress using the school's own tracking information; academic guidance in the form of assessment for learning; and pupils' sense of community cohesion. Evidence was gathered from the school's judgements about attainment on entry, test results, teachers' records, observations of teaching, scrutiny of pupils' current work and discussions with the acting headteacher, staff, pupils and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors 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

This is a smaller than average school in an area of some social and economic deprivation. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a morning nursery and a full-time Reception class, which admits children in September and January. An average number of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average with many speaking English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The movement of pupils, in and out of school, is high in some classes. Since the last inspection about half the staff has changed, including the headteacher. The deputy headteacher is the acting headteacher until the headteacher designate takes up her post next term.

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 which has maintained its level of provision well since its last inspection, despite some substantial changes. This success demonstrates a good capacity to continue moving forward. Parents generally hold favourable views about the school. A typical comment is that Mill Lane is, 'a school that has a brilliant atmosphere for all children's needs.'

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. This good personal development benefits from the thoughtful care that pupils receive. The climate in school is one of fun, support and collaboration. Pupils say that they feel healthy owing to the frequent opportunities for sport and the advice about eating and drinking that they are given. The concentration on the faces of pupils in dance club, the thoughtful approach to safety by older pupils when playing in the snow and collaboration promoted by play leaders depict school life that is enjoyed by the majority. Behaviour is good, which is a success because there are some pupils who find it hard to control their emotions and behave well.

Standards are average and achievement is good by the end of Year 6. In a small school like this, pupils' standards in Year 2 and Year 6 can vary from year to year depending on the make-up of the cohort, including the length of time that they have been in the school. Nevertheless, inspection findings agree with the school's judgement that achievement is good overall despite these variations. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make equally good progress to that of their peers. This is because the work set for them is broken down into small steps and teaching, ably supported by teaching assistants, is successful in helping them to achieve well. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language progress well. This is often because beginners are able to work with a bilingual support assistant to talk through an idea in their mother tongue.

Progress is often better in reading and mathematics than it is in writing. Fewer pupils reach the higher levels in writing. In this respect the more able pupils could do even better in acquiring skills to serve them in good stead later on. Members of the leadership and management team have begun to implement plans to tackle this, but it is too soon to see the full effect.

Teaching is good because it has a positive effect on pupils' learning in English, mathematics and science, despite the improvements still needed to raise standards in writing. It engages pupils' interest well along with a good curriculum that is often taught in themed units that blend subjects together in interesting combinations. Pupils like this approach to the curriculum and their parents sometimes respond by sending in artefacts and information to add breadth to the topics studied. Themed weeks such as those for mathematics and science promote exciting opportunities for pupils to work together and enjoy their learning. Furthermore, pupils' understanding regarding community cohesion is developed well through topics such as 'Living in a diverse world.' This work is reinforced well when pupils celebrate each other's festivals such as Easter, Eid and Diwali.

A few parents have reservations about the relative lack of challenge in some lessons, particularly for children who could, in their view, tackle harder work. This has been identified through the school's own effective systems of self-review and the inspection agrees with this analysis. Pupils are given targets to achieve and the marking of their work points out aspects for improvement. However, teaching is not consistent with regard to the rigour with which these targets are pursued and discussed, particularly for pupils capable of above average attainment. As a result,

some pupils are not clear about what they have to do to reach, for example, a high level in writing.

The acting headteacher and governing body lead and manage well. They have bridged the gap between substantive headteachers effectively so as to maintain pupils' achievement and ensure that the school continues to give good value for money. The school is good at promoting equality and diversity. Pupils of several ethnic backgrounds work alongside each other very well. There is a strong sense of harmony throughout the school. The quality of care, guidance and support is good overall. The school provides very good care for pupils. Moreover, the collaboration with other local schools has a good influence on pupils' academic and personal development. The school meets the current government requirements for safeguarding pupils. Methods of school self-evaluation are good and, as a result everyone knows the school's strengths and what needs to be improved. The school improvement plan contains the right areas for improvement to make the school even more successful. This includes pupils' writing and their knowledge of targets. Governors visit the school regularly, which allows them to gain a good appreciation of its ethos and pupils' progress.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage promotes good achievement in children's learning. Levels of ability on entry vary considerably from year to year: often below and sometimes well below expected levels when children start in Nursery. Most recently, at the end of 2008, attainment overall was at nationally expected levels by the end of Reception, but below those levels in some key skills such as writing and calculation. Nevertheless, children make good progress overall. Arrangements for children's welfare are effective and these result in good personal development. Classrooms are well organised, allowing children to experience an interesting curriculum. Teaching is good because it combines continual opportunities for indoor play with, for example, short, sharp sessions on letters and their sounds. In Reception, for example, some children played alone pegging out animals on a washing line to show what order they finished in a race. Others, being taught well, tried writing a sentence after having mastered letter combinations in three-letter words. By contrast, the development of choice when children play outside is slightly limited. They do not always have wet weather clothing and the Reception classroom is a little too far away from the outside space to allow continual access. Nevertheless, leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good because it assures children's good achievement while tackling relative weaknesses like this. The school knows that the outside space issues prevent learning from being outstanding and is working well towards resolving them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly for the higher attaining pupils.
- Improve the consistency of teaching with regard to the challenge pupils receive and the way in which they are helped to understand their next steps in learning.

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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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit because everyone was so friendly. You go to a good school, which is doing well to keep at that level despite all the changes that have happened recently.

The children that spoke to us during the day were convinced that they feel safe and well cared for. You are all lucky because there is a good mix of children from different backgrounds at Mill Lane. That means, among other things, lots of festivals to celebrate throughout the year. Teaching is good in the way that it helps you progress well. You do well in reading and mathematics but teachers could help you do better in writing. I know that you enjoy writing because I read many pieces of your work, but there is room for you to reach higher standards.

You say that everyone in school is kind and polite and I agree. Your personal development is good because all the adults care for you well. The themed events, like mathematics week, give you good chances to share and collaborate. Clubs such as dance and sketching add breadth to an already good curriculum. Your school works well as a mini-community on a daily basis, while topics such as the one about diversity across the world help you to see everyone as members of one big community.

I am suggesting two things for the school to do to become even better. First, standards in writing need to be raised, especially for those of you who have the ability to reach a higher level. Second, teaching in every lesson needs to expect the best from all of you and tell you clearly about your next steps in learning.

You can all help by making sure that you know exactly what targets you are aiming at (not just in writing) and, as importantly, what you need to do to reach them.