

Two Mile Ash School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110525
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	325166
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2009
Reporting inspector	John Earish

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	630
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Marilyn Hubbard
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Bennett
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2006
School address	The High Street Two Mile Ash Milton Keynes MK8 8LH
Telephone number	01908 562262
Fax number	01908 263735

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large five-form entry junior school is popular and oversubscribed. Pupils come from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds, with around a third from different minority ethnic groups. The main group is Asian or Asian British - Indian. This is well above the national average. The proportion speaking English as an additional language is also well above the national average. Over 31 different languages are spoken, with eight pupils at the very earliest stages of English-language acquisition. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly those who struggle with reading and writing, is just above that found nationally. Nine children have statements of educational needs. Six children are supported in a Specific Learning Difficulties Base. The school has achieved the Artsmark Silver, Activemark and Healthy School Status. The governors manage a breakfast and after-school club for those attending the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, where pupils of all abilities are helped to grow in confidence and where they achieve exceptionally well and attain well above average standards. The overwhelming majority of parents agree. They had nothing but praise for the school and most expressed views that were extremely positive. One summed up the opinions of a great many in saying, 'I would recommend this school to any parent and I am proud to say my child attends there. I can go to work in the morning knowing my children are safe and happy.'

The school is extremely well run. The headteacher, senior leaders, staff and governors work in very close partnership to check and evaluate the school's effectiveness constantly and to drive forward improvements. Teaching and learning are rigorously monitored and teachers are given support where needed. This is helping to ensure the good and frequently excellent quality of teaching across classes. Work in lessons is usually very well matched to pupils' different capabilities, providing very good challenge for the most able while giving very well-targeted support to those who have learning difficulties or who need extra help because they are learning English as an additional language. This works very well and, because teachers' expectations are high, pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve their best. Pupils are given very good feedback and clear targets for improvement. Older pupils, in particular, have a very detailed knowledge of the levels at which they are working, and almost all the pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work. This is another reason for the school's continuing academic success.

Pupils attain well above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 but not at the expense of their learning in other subjects. All groups of pupils achieve exceptionally well in a wide range of subjects because the curriculum is broad, balanced and of excellent quality. Pupils are adamant that teachers provide interesting and exciting lessons which they thoroughly enjoy. They use information and communication technology (ICT) very well to support their learning across the curriculum. Standards in sport are well above national expectations and the school is highly successful in local sporting leagues and competitions. Physical education is very popular, too, and pupils appreciate the involvement of the sports coaches. A strong focus on art is reflected in the examples of high-quality work on display. Examples of high-quality musical compositions based on samba rhythms were also observed. An excellent range of visits and visitors add to pupils' enjoyment and provide many opportunities for extending their learning beyond the classroom.

Pupils are cared for exceptionally well. There are comprehensive and robust systems for safeguarding and for risk assessment. Excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties in classrooms and in the Specific Learning Difficulties Base means that they achieve as well as their classmates. Pupils learning English as an additional language are fully included in lessons and able to achieve their very best. Pupils thrive in this caring, supportive atmosphere and are very well prepared for their future lives.

Behaviour around the school is excellent and pupils report that they feel safe because bullying is extremely rare. As a result, pupils enjoy break-times and feel very safe in school. They have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles and they follow these principles by making healthy choices at lunchtime. The very well-managed breakfast and after-school club adds much to the pupils' enjoyment of school and make an excellent contribution to their personal development.

The foundations of the school's success are built on a rigorous approach to evaluating every aspect of its performance and the accuracy of its judgements. The exceptional leadership of the headteacher makes all pupils and staff feel valued so that they strive to do as well as they can. Governors contribute very strongly to the evaluation of the school's work by holding the leaders to account for their performance. Community cohesion is of good quality. However, opportunities to develop children's knowledge and understanding of international relationships are less well developed. The development plan sets out ambitious targets to build further on the school's many strengths. It is this drive for further development, on top of such a strong track record of success, that demonstrates the school's outstanding capacity for continued improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities for children to develop a deeper understanding of international relationships through building links with schools and communities beyond Great Britain.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. Children start school in Year 3 with above-average standards. They make exceptional progress in a broad range of subjects and attain well above average standards overall. The most recent national validated tests show that the numbers achieving Level 4 and the higher Level 5 are appreciably higher than the corresponding national values in English, mathematics and science. The most recent unconfirmed results show there has been a further increase in the number achieving the higher Level 5 in English this year. Challenging targets are set and often exceeded. Pupils are helped to make very good progress regardless of background or ability. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils and more able pupils attain the higher level as a result of outstanding teaching and high expectations. Those pupils with moderate learning difficulties in the Specific Learning Difficulties Base and those with special educational needs make equally good progress as others. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also achieve exceptionally well. However, this success is not limited to the core subjects. Pupils achieve exceptionally well in the creative arts, sports and ICT. This has been recognised thorough the award of the Artsmark and Activemark

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils behave exceptionally well and show remarkable care and courtesy. They show an excellent understanding of moral and social issues, and know the value of appreciating and celebrating different traditions found within the school. Pupils not only understand the importance of healthy lifestyles but also adopt healthy practices, as demonstrated, for example, by their enthusiastic and widespread participation in a very wide range of sporting and physical activities. This has been recognised by the award of Healthy School Status. Pupils are not concerned about bullying, because they know what to do if it occurs and trust the school to deal with it very effectively, for example through the use of the 'point the finger' policy. Pupils give a variety of reasons for their enjoyment of school, including the excellent relationships they develop with their teachers and classmates, and the school's outstanding facilities for sport. Their enjoyment is also reflected in their outstanding behaviour and above-average attendance.

Pupils are rightly proud of their excellent contribution to the school and to wider communities. A very high proportion take on positions of responsibility, for example as elected school council members, 'Little Inspectors' and 'Claret Leaders'. The breakfast and after-school club offers an excellent start and end to the day and makes a significant contribution to pupils' enthusiasm for the school. Pupils acquire not only literacy, numeracy and ICT skills that will equip them well for later life and learning, but also exceptionally well-developed abilities to work cooperatively and individually.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The high achievement of pupils reflects the good, and frequently excellent, quality of teaching at the school. Teachers know their pupils very well and, as a result, work is very closely matched to the needs of individuals so that they are able to make rapid progress. This is because teachers' expectations are very high and they encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils are adamant that their work is interesting because teachers make clear what they are expected to achieve by the end of each lesson and they are kept fully occupied and challenged to reach these expectations. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects, use interactive whiteboards with skill and expertise and use questions extremely well to consolidate pupils' previous learning and to challenge their thinking. On the few occasions when learning is not of the highest standard, teaching does not make the very best use of the pupils' very well-developed skills at working independently or in small groups, and progress is not as rapid.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum that motivates the pupils and promotes their enjoyment of learning. As a result, they are very confident and competent learners. There is excellent provision to meet the needs of its different groups of pupils, including the increasing proportion of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who have English as an additional language, for example through expert in-class support or withdrawal groups with specialist teachers. Pupils also learn to appreciate the value of speaking different languages through the school's successful promotion of the 'language of the month' programme. Links between the different areas of learning are very well developed. Pupils use the skills learned in literacy, numeracy and ICT in a very wide range of different and meaningful contexts. There are also excellent opportunities for pupils to participate in and to enjoy an extremely wide range of enrichment activities and after-school clubs. Visitors from the community and outings to places of interest all add greatly to the pupils' enjoyment of learning. Such experiences, together with learning in personal, social and health education, and the emphasis on staying safe and healthy, teach skills that contribute extremely well to their future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding, a view endorsed by the overwhelming majority of parents. A close check is kept on each child's well-being and they are taught how to take care of themselves and how to make healthy and safe choices. Health and safety procedures are effective and are reviewed regularly. Child protection procedures are rigorous and there are

excellent systems to support any pupils who are particularly vulnerable. There are very effective methods for keeping track of pupils' progress and these are used perceptively to set challenging targets. This is another reason for the school's continuing success. Pupils know what they must improve because of the very helpful guidance they receive from their teachers and the very effective use of target setting. These systems also identify any individual pupil who is not making as much progress as they should so that action can be taken. Very good cooperation between the infant and junior school is now ensuring the quality and accuracy of judgments at the age of transfer.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Excellent leadership and management contribute considerably to pupils' outstanding personal development and academic achievement. The headteacher is a very effective leader and she is ably supported by her senior management team. Staff confirmed that she had acted decisively in helping the school to emerge from a difficult period, with the result that pupils' progress is now outstanding. As one said, 'I now feel empowered to make decisions and feel fully accountable for the progress of the children under my care.' Teamwork is a very strong feature of this school and all staff are fully committed to playing their part in ensuring continuing high levels of achievement.

The school's self-evaluation is very accurate and correctly identifies the areas for improvement. Adults have maintained the many strong features identified at the time of the last inspection and have continued to seek improvement. The governors are conscientious in discharging their duties, offering strong support and thoughtful challenge. They are passionately committed to the school's continuing success in serving its pupils and the local community. They manage the breakfast and after-school club very well.

Community cohesion is of good quality. The school has reached out well to the wider community in very many ways and pupils are very well-prepared for life in multicultural Britain. However, links with communities globally are at an early stage of development. Consequently, children's knowledge and understanding of international relationships are less well developed.

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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?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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?	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
The extent to which 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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

14 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Two Mile Ash School, Milton Keynes, MK8 8LH

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school. We very much enjoyed talking to you and watching you in lessons and on the playground. You go to an outstanding school. You told us so and we agree. You should be very proud of this.

The school is exceptionally well run. Your headteacher involves all the staff in helping to make your school even better and they work extremely well as a team. They are especially good at checking how well you are all doing, and this helps to ensure that those of you who need extra help get it. As a result, you all make excellent progress. They try hard to make your lessons interesting and many of you told us that learning is challenging and enjoyable. We were very impressed by how hard you all try in lessons and how keen you are to learn. Your behaviour - in lessons and outside - is excellent. Well done and keep it up!

One of the hardest jobs when a school is so good is to make sure that it keeps on doing well. I know that you will want to help your teachers achieve this by doing your best at all times. Your teachers want to increase your knowledge and understanding of international relationships by developing links with schools and communities beyond Great Britain. Your headteacher told me about her plans, which are really exciting.

We know that you will continue to work hard and we are sure that you will help your teachers and headteacher to make your school even better. We hope that you have great success in the future.

Yours faithfully

John Earish

Lead Inspector