

# Millfields Primary School and Nursery

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111079
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	325289
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Paul Bamber

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	223
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr N Ascroft
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Ann Gill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 October 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Marsh Lane Nantwich Cheshire CW5 5HP

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 September 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	325289

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The pupils who attend this slightly larger than average school come from a wide range of backgrounds. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consists of one Nursery and one Reception class. The school manages the extended provision both before and after school. There is a smaller than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is also below average. There is a very small percentage of pupils in public care. The school has been awarded the National Healthy Schools Award.

The headteacher was appointed in January 2007 and a new assistant headteacher was appointed in April 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides pupils with a satisfactory quality of education. In the Nursery and Reception class, children's development is in line with expectations. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' overall progress is satisfactory. However, there are variations in their rate of progress between classes, which are directly linked to differences in the quality of teaching. Standards are broadly average in Key Stages 1 and 2, although there are relative weaknesses in writing, especially that of boys. The headteacher and governors are leading the school strongly, tackling underperformance and have a shared determination to raise standards, improve pupils' achievement and to provide an exciting and fulfilling curriculum.

Pupils' personal development is good. They are well behaved, keen to learn and confident in expressing their opinions and ideas. Many pupils put theory on healthy lifestyles into practice by eating sensibly and taking plenty of exercise. For example, they participate in sport-related after-school clubs and regularly walk the 'golden mile' laid out in the playground. Pupils' enthusiasm has been influential in securing the school's National Healthy Schools Award. Their obvious sense of well-being is nurtured by the good quality of care they receive. All pupils benefit from this, but the effective liaisons between the school and external support services provide particularly good support for those who find learning or following school routines more difficult than most.

Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Currently it is not strong enough to ensure that pupils achieve consistently well or reach higher than average standards. Pupils point out that they feel they learn most when they are involved in lessons and learn together rather than being 'talked at and made to copy things down'. They are equally sure that 'teachers are friendly and do their best to help us when we get stuck'.

The curriculum provides pupils with many opportunities to visit places of relevance to their studies and of wider interest. In addition, their sense of citizenship and their cultural and social development are enhanced through visits from, for example, members of minority ethnic groups and the local emergency services. They also benefit from the experience of staying away from home in residential centres.

The school was subject to a focused review by the local authority (LA) in May 2007. The review's findings highlighted some decline from the standards and provision reported in the school's previous Ofsted report. The headteacher and governors have worked diligently to put in place procedures, systems and resources that have the potential to make effective improvement. Unavoidable barriers to smooth progress in achieving these improvements have meant that not all the relative weaknesses identified either in the 2005 inspection report or the 2007 LA review have been overcome. This means that improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory rather than good. For example, subject leaders are still insufficiently focused on improving pupils' standards, achievement and the quality of learning within their areas of responsibility. There have been many recent improvements to management systems, in the use of test data, in the quality of provision in the EYFS and in the overall quality of teaching. However, these have been in place for too short a time to have had an impact on helping pupils to achieve better, to have a more exciting curriculum or to reach higher standards. This means that the school's capacity to demonstrate sustained improvement is no better than satisfactory.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

The EYFS manager, who has been in post for just a few weeks, has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in Nursery and Reception. However, many of the improvements put in place have had too little time to result in children's accelerated development. On entry to the Nursery, children have skills that are broadly in line with those typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress overall towards their early learning goals. When they enter Year 1, most reach national expectations for their age. They exceed those expectations in their personal, social and emotional development. However, their development is less rapid in writing and mathematical calculation. Children's behaviour and enjoyment of learning are good because staff offer them exciting activities that interest them. For example, in the Reception class, children are seen eagerly investigating shells in the sand. Classrooms and outdoor areas are well laid out and resources are used well to promote learning. In the Reception class garden, children have first-hand experiences of growing flowers and vegetables. Teachers' plans take account of the six areas of learning and children in the Reception class receive their entitlement to a daily phonics session. Effective assessment is based on observations of children to enable activities to match their needs well. Children have good relationships with adults and with each other. They are allocated a key adult which helps them to feel safe and secure. Staff have good relationships with parents. A typical parental view was expressed in the comment, 'The Nursery is so inviting that you want to stay and play too.'

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and raise achievement throughout the school, especially in boys' writing.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good enough to enable all pupils to achieve well.
- Strengthen the role of subject leaders so that they are more focused on improving the quality of pupils' learning and the standards they achieve.

A small proportion of schools whose overall performance is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily. They enter both the Nursery and Reception classes with skills that are similar to most children of their age. From these starting points, pupils make satisfactory progress and leave Year 6 with broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. In Key Stage 1, standards over the last five years have been broadly average, but in 2007 they fell to below average, mainly because this was a lower-attaining year group whose standards on entry to Nursery had been lower than usual. Pupils throughout the school attain considerably higher standards in reading than in writing and this is especially evident for boys. It is noticeable that many older pupils still print rather than join letters. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. Those few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as and sometimes better than their classmates. There is evidence from school records that pupils' rates of progress have been patchy according to how well they have been taught. Standards in art and design are above typical expectations and pupils talk enthusiastically about drawing and painting.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Most pupils are well behaved and know the difference between right and wrong. They are polite and courteous to one another and to adults. They know how to stay safe and are well aware of the dangers posed by smoking, substance abuse and the Internet. Pupils report that any incident of bullying is dealt with effectively. A group of Year 6 pupils is developing an 'anti-bullying production' to be presented to pupils from other schools in the local theatre. Pupils benefit from the physical activities provided by a wide range of after-school clubs, for example, dance, judo and rugby. Pupils readily take on responsibility. Older ones act as playleaders and support younger pupils well. The school council has been involved in the purchase of equipment to be used at playtimes. Pupils make a good contribution to the local community through fund-raising and participation in events such as Nantwich in Bloom' and the Arts Festival although their understanding of community issues on a wider scale is a little limited. They make satisfactory progress in their basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to develop their business skills through 'Schools PLC Business Enterprise' which gives them a wider insight into the world of work. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with lessons ranging from satisfactory to good. Inspection findings indicate that inadequate teaching evident in the past has now been eliminated. Effective management by the headteacher and governors has significantly contributed to this improvement. Where teaching is at its best, pupils are fully involved in and contribute to their learning in well paced lessons that have clearly focused objectives. In these good lessons, pupils are challenged appropriately, whatever their ability. They share their ideas and learn from each other. Assessments are accurate and teachers' marking is helpful. In satisfactory lessons, pace tends to be slower, pupils learn more passively and tasks do not always match their needs precisely. This means that pupils' progress is satisfactory rather than good. Most teachers help pupils to behave well by emphasising the conduct they want and by setting clear expectations. In a few instances, they draw attention to unwanted behaviour, although this tends to exacerbate rather than minimise minor disruptions. Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive. This is particularly helpful in encouraging less confident, lower-attaining pupils to take a full part in lessons and to celebrate the progress they make. The dedicated and largely effective teaching assistants play a significant role in supporting these pupils' satisfactory achievements.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum meets national requirements. The school has this term introduced a skills based approach to provide pupils with activities of greater relevance and interest. This includes increasingly strong cross-curricular links to enable pupils to use the skills they learn in writing, mathematics and ICT to support their work in other subjects. In recent months, the school has invested heavily in ICT equipment and good use is made of the ICT suite and the interactive

whiteboards available in all classrooms. A strong focus on creativity enriches the curriculum and provision in art continues to be a strength of the school. There is a wide range of visits and visitors and an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, for example drama, gardening and art clubs. Residential visits take place in Year 2 and Year 6 and contribute well to pupils' enjoyment, enhancing their personal development. Personal, social and health education has a strong focus on healthy eating and lifestyles. The recent curricular improvements are helping to make lessons more interesting, but it is too early for the impact of these initiatives to be evident in terms of pupils' higher attainment or better achievement.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The quality of care and the pastoral support provided for pupils are good. However, the quality of academic guidance and support is no better than satisfactory. Teachers are skilled at building pupils' confidence and self-esteem. For example, a 'Nurture' group provides a supportive environment for vulnerable pupils and is greatly appreciated by them and their parents. The needs of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are satisfactorily met. Procedures to promote child protection, safe recruitment of staff, health and safety and to reduce risk are in place. Parents express satisfaction about the outcomes of their discussions with teachers regarding any concerns they have. Older pupils are involved in assessing their own progress against their learning targets in English and mathematics. Systems to track pupils' progress have improved since the last inspection and are beginning to provide helpful guidance to staff.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The effective partnership between the headteacher, governors and the LA over the last 18 months has arrested a decline in the school's provision. This has been achieved by realistic and robust self-evaluation, which has very accurately identified weaknesses in management, pupils' standards and achievement and the quality of provision. A pragmatic action plan has been devised and the progress in overcoming several barriers to improvement has thus far been satisfactory. There is a strong determination among the newly appointed senior leadership team to drive up standards and improve achievement by ensuring that teaching is of consistently good quality and that pupils have access to a range of exciting and relevant experiences. The building blocks to achieve this are in place, but as yet the outcomes are little in evidence. Governors are effective and over the past year have carried out hands-on audits to ensure that, for example, their newly endorsed marking policy has been fully implemented. Individual governors contribute significantly to pupils' growing sense of citizenship, to their understanding of business practice and to ensuring that they are well cared for. Financial expertise has been used effectively to ensure that the school has a well managed budget and offers satisfactory value for money. There has been focused training to help teachers and managers to promote higher standards, to use assessment data more effectively and to keep up to date with latest government and LA initiatives. While this has resulted in good improvements, for example in EYFS provision and management, the impact of subject leaders' work on enabling pupils to achieve better has not been entirely successful. The increasingly close partnership with parents means that the school receives their support for a range of its activities and is beginning to



respond much more to parents' needs, for example in providing highly valued before- and after-school care and in offering training in ICT.

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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?	3
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	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	3

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
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	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

On behalf of the inspectors who inspected your school recently, I would like to thank you very much for your very friendly welcome. It was very obvious from the easy way in which you chatted to us about school and your work, and from your good behaviour, that you are developing into helpful young citizens. You are well cared for and the staff help you if you have any worries or are upset.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. It provides you with interesting visits to go on. The after-school clubs and the 'Rise and Shine' club before school give you a lot of opportunities to be fit and healthy and develop interests and they fit in well with your parents' arrangements. We were impressed with your art work around school.

While school helps you to learn satisfactorily and the adults who run the school have good ideas about how the school can improve even more, I have asked the headteacher and the governors to do three things especially to help you learn even better. These are:

- to help you to improve your writing, especially the boys
- to make sure that all your lessons help you to learn as well as you can
- to help the teachers who are in charge of subjects to make sure that what they do helps you to reach higher standards and to make good progress in your work.

Thank you for your help during our visit and I hope you will work hard and enjoy everything that school offers you.