

Millhouse Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114912
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326091
Inspection dates	11–12 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Ruth Frith

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Jenny Haken
Date of previous school inspection	15 December 2005
School address	Tavistock Road Laindon Basildon Essex SS15 5QF
Telephone number	01268543584
Fax number	01268544641

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Millhouse Junior School is similar in size to many schools. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Currently, pupils start school with attainment broadly similar to that usually seen in pupils of this age. However, the older pupils in the school started with attainment below that usually seen. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average whilst the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Most pupils are White British. A small number of pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and a few of these are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. A very small number of pupils are either in local authority care, or looked after by members of their extended family. There has been an acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher in post since September 2008. The school has the Activemark award.

Before and after school care is provided on the premises by an outside agency. It is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately.

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 is correct in its view that it provides a satisfactory standard of education. Currently, there is a sense of urgency to improving teaching and learning, and to raising standards. The work of senior leaders has certainly made a positive impact here. Pupils now achieve satisfactorily and make sound progress. Although there has been some underachievement in the past, this has now been eradicated. This is because of recent improvements in teaching and learning and the introduction of a new system to track progress and identify pupils in danger of falling behind. Pupils who find learning difficult are supported well through additional programmes of work that help to accelerate their progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, staff do not yet make fully effective use of this system in order to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress.

There are positive features in all lessons but teaching and learning remain satisfactory overall. Lessons follow a set pattern throughout the school. Learning objectives are clearly identified and shared with pupils. Consequently, pupils have a good understanding of what they should do and learn. Frequently, the ends of lessons are used well to assess pupils' understanding and consolidate key learning points. The teaching of Year 5 and 6 pupils in groups of similar ability for English and mathematics is helping teachers to set work which more closely matches their capabilities. Nevertheless, some lessons still lack sufficient pace and challenge and expectations are not always high enough. The legacy of pupils' underachievement can still be seen in the exceptionally low English and mathematics standards of the current Year 6; however, standards in science are better than this but are below average. Standards lower down the school are broadly average reflecting the impact of the satisfactory and sometimes good teaching.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Many pupils enjoy what they do at school, are interested in lessons and behave well. Attendance is satisfactory and there has been a good improvement over the last term. The curriculum has some strong features that encourage pupils' involvement in a range of stimulating activities but remains satisfactory overall because standards are not high enough in English and mathematics. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme provides pupils with a good understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives. Pupils with complex needs receive good support and guidance. This is essential in helping them to make the progress that they do. Pastoral care and academic guidance are good so pupils feel safe in school and know what they need to do to improve their work. Parents are generally supportive of the school and appreciate how staff help their children, but are not fully involved in the school's development or their children's learning.

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory and help to ensure that the school provides sound value for money. The acting headteacher has a clear view of what needs to be done and, with the support from staff from the local authority, has taken swift action to address weaknesses. New systems to monitor pupils' progress and the effectiveness of the school's work are in place but the information gained is not yet used to best effect to enhance the rate of school improvement. The school's satisfactory self-evaluation does not yet actively involve all staff, governors, parents and pupils in identifying what the school does well and how it can improve. The recent improvement and leaders' strong determination to address the issues raised in the last inspection show that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by making rigorous use of the systems for tracking pupils' progress to ensure that all pupils do as well as they can.
- Raise the quality of teaching to good or better by ensuring that lessons provide a good pace of learning, high expectations and sufficient challenge for all pupils.
- Improve leadership, management and governance by consistently using the monitoring and evaluation systems recently put in place, in order to accelerate further the rate at which the school improves.
- Ensure that all staff, governors, parents and pupils are fully involved in identifying what the school does well and where it can improve.

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

Pupils of all abilities achieve satisfactorily. In 2008, the Year 6 national test results showed exceptionally low standards in English and mathematics and below average standards in science. This reflected underachievement for these pupils across Key Stage 2. However, because of recent improvements in teaching and learning, pupils' progress is now gradually improving, particularly in English and mathematics. The impact of this improvement is seen in the satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress that pupils make in lessons and in the school's tracking data. Progress in reading, writing and mathematics is at least satisfactory and this can be seen in the broadly average percentage of Year 3 and 4 pupils who are working at the levels expected for their age. Although currently making at least satisfactory progress, Year 6 standards in English and mathematics remain exceptionally low because of inadequacies of provision in the past. The percentage of pupils working at levels above that expected for their age remains below average. The school almost met its realistic and challenging English and mathematics targets in 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' behaviour is also good. They are polite and friendly to visitors and treat one another with respect. Their understanding of Britain as a diverse society is satisfactory. Pupils are increasingly involved in reflecting on their own performance, how they can improve their progress and how to become good citizens. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and they are aware of how to use the internet safely. They enjoy school and are positive about all aspects of it. As one put it, 'Millhouse is a lovely school and there are no bullies.' They become tolerant and caring individuals who willingly take on responsibilities such as selling fruit and cheese at playtimes. This, together with the emphasis on improving the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), helps them to build a sound foundation for later life and the next stage of their education. The school council takes its role seriously. Members are pleased that they now have the new goal posts that they asked for. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy, both by eating a balanced diet and by taking part in the many opportunities to keep

fit. Pupils demonstrate care for others by singing for elderly members of the community at Christmas and supporting a range of charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Due to the high priority the school has placed on improving the quality of teaching and learning, there have been significant improvements this year. There is some good and sometimes outstanding teaching, but it is satisfactory overall. This is because some teaching lacks sufficient pace and challenge to ensure that all pupils make consistent good progress and expectations are not always high enough. Planning is generally good and ensures that learning builds systematically on previous learning. Teachers' good classroom management is based on positive and caring working relationships. This enables teachers to deal skilfully with the few pupils who sometimes find it difficult to maintain their own good behaviour. In the most effective lessons, staff help pupils to judge how successful they have been and provide helpful feedback when marking their work. They also encourage pupils to share their ideas and answers with each other so they are all involved rather than waiting for someone else to answer a question. In weaker lessons, there is too much teacher talk and pupils are given insufficient opportunities to develop as learners and practice their skills. Pupils make satisfactory use of ICT to support their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is planned appropriately to meet the needs of the pupils, particularly in the mixed-age classes. Currently, it is being reviewed in order to provide more stimulating approaches to teaching and learning. For example, the recent 'Try something different' week gave opportunities for pupils to work across the age ranges to learn about France, the Olympics and diverse sports. This is beginning to help pupils to see how skills learned in one subject can be transferred to another. The good PSHE programme helps pupils to develop their social skills and to know how to keep safe and healthy. Visits and visitors support work in personal safety. A good range of extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum and gives pupils good opportunities to develop skills such as dance and gardening. All pupils learn to speak Spanish, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to learn about global communities. Also, there are insufficient opportunities to learn to play a musical instrument. Gifted and talented pupils are identified, and although the curriculum supports the needs of all pupils appropriately including those who find it hard to learn, it has not yet raised standards enough, particularly for the older pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All the required safeguarding procedures are in place and pupils feel safe in school. Policies are kept up-to-date and are well reflected in the school's work. Pastoral care is good. Staff work hard to improve attendance with recent success. The monitoring of attendance is effective and staff, pupils and parents are now much more aware of the links between attendance and achievement. This has resulted in a concerted effort by all to ensure pupils attend as regularly as possible. The support for the school's most vulnerable pupils is particularly strong and has

a positive effect on their personal and academic development. The home/school mentor is a valued resource who contributes much to the self-esteem and well-being of pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable. Effective work with parents and pupils has had a particularly positive impact on behaviour and on the improving attendance. A wide range of support programmes, including 'Rainbow Group' sessions and art therapy, help those who find it hard to learn or have emotional or behavioural difficulties. Support staff are well deployed on these programmes. This contributes to the improving progress of all pupils. The school is always looking for ways to support pupils and the recent introduction of learning mentors means that pupils with specific needs, such as help with homework, have someone to turn to. Individual targets in literacy and numeracy have been introduced and pupils know what they need to do to improve, but these have not been in place long enough to have had a full impact on standards and achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Recent work from the acting headteacher and senior leadership team together with effective support from the local authority is giving purposeful direction to school improvement. There is a clear vision and strong determination to improve quality, raise standards and promote pupils' personal development and well-being. Key areas of strength and weakness are identified through the satisfactory self-evaluation of the school's work but this has been undertaken mainly by the acting headteacher and does not sufficiently include all staff, governors, parents and pupils. Suitable priorities have been highlighted and appropriate strategies introduced so that the school is now on a clear path of improvement. Significant improvements have been made to the way pupils' progress is monitored but insufficient time has passed for these to have had a full impact on pupils' standards and achievement. Nevertheless, pupils are now on course to meet their challenging targets. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. Staff understand the context of the local community and have suitable plans to improve links with parents and the wider community. Governors understand what needs to be improved and what staff do well. Robust structures to guide their work in committees ensure they now have sufficient information with which to hold the school clearly to account.

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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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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

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	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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	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	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millhouse Junior School, Laindon, Basildon, SS15 5QF

Thank you for making our recent visit to your school so enjoyable. We liked talking to you, looking at your work and being in your lessons. We think your school is satisfactory and improving. If you read on you will see some of the things we found out.

You make satisfactory progress but you could do even better so we have asked your teachers to make sure that teaching and learning are always at least good so that you make good progress and reach higher standards. We have asked them to concentrate on finding out how well you are doing from starting school to Year 6 in order to identify those of you who might be falling behind or those who need more challenging work. We know you will help by continuing to do your best and being fully involved in your learning.

We are really pleased that your attendance is improving. Well done! We know many of you come to school regularly and on time but some of you find this difficult. Please try not to miss important lessons and get left behind. We are also pleased to see that you enjoy school and behave well. You get on well with each other and make friends. You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and this is influencing what you eat and how much exercise you take. You feel safe in school because staff look after you well.

Mrs Haken is working hard to manage the school until you get a permanent headteacher and staff and governors are helping her. They have agreed to involve more people in identifying what the school does well and what can be improved. We hope that you will be involved in this too. They will also keep checking so the school improves as quickly as it can.

Thank you once again, and we wish you well in the future.

Ruth Frith

Lead inspector