

Mill Lodge Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104057
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	336225
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Clive Lewis

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Christine Thomas
Headteacher	Mr David Shakeshaft
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent the majority of their time in school directly inspecting learning. They visited 12 lessons and observed all the teachers at least once. They held meetings with groups of pupils, governors and staff and informal discussions with parents. They observed the school's work by sampling pupils' books, teachers' planning documents, tracking and assessment data. They also analysed questionnaires from 59 parents and carers, 100 pupils and 12 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality and consistency of teaching between Key Stage 1 and 2
- the quality and use of the school's assessment and tracking procedures
- outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

Mill Lodge is an average-sized primary school. Social and economic circumstances are varied. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, although it varies from year to year. The school currently has no pupils with a statement of educational need. The headteacher joined the school at the start of the new school year.

The school has achieved the Healthy Schools award, the Artsmark Gold, the Activemark and an Investors in Communities award.

An independently managed pre-school breakfast club, a Nursery and an after-school play centre are provided on the school site. This organisation will be the subject of a separate inspection and the report will be available on the Ofsted website.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Mill Lodge is a good school. It has a number of outstanding features. It has a good understanding of how well it is doing and what needs to be done next and has a good capacity to maintain and sustain improvement. The headteacher provides a clear sense of purpose and direction, clearly linked to school improvement. Strong teamwork between the headteacher, senior staff and the local authority has ensured that teaching and learning have improved, assessment and tracking systems have been strengthened and clear priorities have been set for further improvement. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are very supportive of the school. One parent commented: 'I am delighted with Mill Lodge; my children enjoy school and I am always informed of what they are doing and how they are progressing'. Staff want the best for each child and, through working closely with families, strive to achieve this goal. Throughout the school, all groups of pupils, including those who find learning difficult make good progress. Standards in the latest national tests were exceptionally high and observations and school data confirm that pupils continue to make good progress and current standards are above average.

Arrangements for the evaluation and monitoring of teaching and learning are good. Consequently, the quality of teaching in most lessons is good or better. As a result of good assessment procedures, teachers and other adults plan well to meet the needs of all pupils. However, although marking of pupils' books has improved recently, there is still some inconsistency across the school.

Because excellent attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support, pupils' personal development is good. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe and of the need for healthy lifestyles. Parents and carers say their children enjoy coming to school and pupils agree enthusiastically, and this is clearly reflected in the above average levels of attendance. Behaviour is excellent and a credit to the pupils and the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The curriculum ensures that pupils receive a good variety of exciting activities and experiences through visits, residential stays and visitors to school. Pupils particularly enjoy the wide range of after-school activities and clubs, including physical activities. However, current resources for information and communication technology are insufficient to provide pupils with regular, good quality opportunities to develop their computer skills. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and data analysed rigorously to ensure any pupil falling behind is identified quickly and support provided. The school makes a strong contribution to promoting community cohesion based on a clear analysis of its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of marking so that all pupils all understand what they can do to improve their work
- Strengthen provision for information and communication technology by improving resources and ensuring that pupils receive regular and good quality opportunities to develop their computer skills across the curriculum

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The school has recovered well from the drop in standards in 2007. Standards have improved significantly and results in the latest national tests at Year 6 were exceptionally high. The school's data demonstrates clearly that pupils make consistently good progress in their time in the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective support provided by class teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies.

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and Year 6 pupils stated that they will be sorry to leave in the summer. This enjoyment is clearly reflected in the above average levels of attendance. Pupils understand what constitutes an unsafe situation and are confident that issues they raise will be dealt with promptly and effectively by staff. Their outstanding behaviour makes a very strong contribution to the good and, at times, excellent progress that they make in most lessons. They behave considerately towards each other and respond quickly to any additional guidance from staff about how to conduct themselves. Pupils are interested in the school's health promotion strategies, such as the daily 'Smoothie Bar', and understand the main threats to their health and how they can be avoided. They willingly take on responsibility and, through the school council, play a constructive role and have a positive influence on decisions about school life. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are curious about the world around them and embrace new experiences which broaden their understanding. They have a very good insight into similarities and differences between their own and others' cultures, appreciate cultural diversity and challenge racism.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers use their strong subject knowledge effectively to enthuse and challenge pupils and, in doing so, promote good progress. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives that are routinely shared with pupils, so that they are clear about their learning. Teachers make good use of resources, including new technology, to motivate pupils and enhance their learning. Good classroom management ensures that pupils work well together and that there are no marked differences in the responses of boys or girls. Carefully targeted questioning draws out pupils' ideas and develops their thinking and reasoning skills. Support by teaching assistants makes a significant contribution to the quality of learning. In a number of classes, teachers' marking of pupils' books is exemplary. However, this aspect of teachers' work is still inconsistent across the school because not all teachers regularly point out what steps pupils could take to improve their work. The whole-school assessment and tracking systems provide staff with secure data on pupils' progress as they move through the school. These systems have been strengthened under the new headteacher. As a result, teachers have a much better understanding of how well their pupils are doing and of the action that needs to be taken to ensure that all reach the challenging targets that the school sets for them.

The curriculum provides carefully adapted activities to ensure all groups of pupils experience success. Staff are making links with different subjects to make learning more meaningful. However, a lack of reliable resources means that pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to fully develop their information and communication technology skills across the curriculum. The curriculum is enriched with a good range of visits and visitors and a wealth of extra-curricular activities, which are much enjoyed by pupils.

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Effective collaboration with other schools further enriches the curriculum.

The school has excellent and well-organised arrangements for the care of all pupils, especially for those who face particular difficulties, are troubled, or are at risk of underachieving. Every pupil is valued and cared for as an individual. The support for those who need additional pastoral care, or help with their work, is outstanding and is a real strength of the school. It gives these pupils the confidence to learn and enables them to make the same good progress as others.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher has successfully communicated his high expectations about continuing to improve provision. He has identified and is tackling areas requiring improvement with rigour, while building effectively on the school's existing successes. He has galvanised the enthusiasm of staff and developed a strong team, determined to do the best for each child. As a result, teaching is good and planning is founded on robust evidence and based on good quality data. The governing body is influential in determining the strategic direction of the school. Governors are fully and systematically involved in evaluating its work. They have rigorous systems to ensure that pupils and staff are safe and that staff at all levels discharge their duties effectively. The school has a highly positive relationship with most parents and carers. This effective liaison with parents and with other partners contributes significantly to improvements in pupils' achievement and well-being. The school promotes equal opportunity in all its work and has good strategies to overcome variations between groups that occasionally arise. It adopts recommended good practice for safeguarding pupils across all areas of its work. Well-developed quality assurance and risk assessment systems take due account of pupils' and parents' and carers' views. The school makes good provision for community cohesion. It has good links with the local community. It has developing links with two other schools in the U.K. and, through the primary cluster, currently a teacher from a partner school in China is working in the school for one day per week, teaching Mandarin. The school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for the youngest children is good and they make good progress as a result. Children enter the Nursery class with skills that are broadly in line with those typically found. They clearly enjoy school and have settled into the routines well and play happily together and individually. In both the Nursery and the Reception classes, children undertake a variety of whole class and group activities and, in most cases, co-operate well when working with others. They delight in learning and seeing new things and take responsibility for organising their own activities. They know who to go to for help or support. There are good relationships with parents and carers, initially through home-visits and, once children start school, through daily contact at the start and end of each day. Pastoral care and welfare arrangements are effective. Consequently, children are safe, well cared for and aware of how to be healthy. Children who face early difficulties with their learning are identified quickly, are supported effectively and are integrated fully into all activities. The interesting, well-equipped and welcoming environment successfully reflects children's backgrounds and the wider community. Activities are well planned and based upon thorough and accurate observations and assessment. Provision for the outdoor curriculum is good: the spacious and secure outdoor area is well-resourced with a good range of free-choice and adult-led activities which effectively extend all six areas of learning. This allows children to explore things with purpose and challenge and encourages the development of their independent learning skills. Leadership is good. Adults are well-deployed to support children's learning and welfare and their good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance promotes children's learning, social, physical and economic well-being well. Assessment has improved recently and there are now more accurate systems in place

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for the assessment of children's levels of attainment on entry and the long-term assessment and tracking of their progress. Staff monitor and record children's progress on a day-to-day basis effectively and observations and achievements are recorded in individual progress portfolios.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are extremely satisfied with the school. Every parent and carer who responded felt that their child enjoys school, that the school is led and managed effectively, and that the school makes sure that their child is kept safe. In all other areas the overwhelming majority expressed positive views. However, a very small minority felt that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team did not find anything to justify these views. It looked very carefully at pupils' behaviour, in classrooms and outside, and found it to be excellent - a real strength of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mill Lodge Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 229 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	68	18	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	56	25	42	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	47	23	39	8	14	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	53	26	44	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	56	24	41	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	56	25	42	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	46	31	53	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	26	44	28	47	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	54	24	41	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	37	27	46	8	14	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	39	31	53	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	49	29	49	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	61	20	34	3	5	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Wednesday 10 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mill Lodge Primary School, Solihull, B90 1BT

I would like to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. My colleagues and I very much enjoyed our visit. We enjoyed watching lessons and talking to some of you. You attend a happy and friendly school. It is like that because your headteacher and staff are leading the school well. They care for you very well and give you good support to enable you to learn and enjoy your lessons. They make sure that you understand how to look after yourselves and keep safe and you do this well. Two of the main reasons for the good progress you make, in school, are your excellent behaviour and your outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. You work hard and try to succeed in all that you do. Well done! You told us that you really like your school and there are lots of things to do and enjoy. We agree with you.

We have asked your school to do two things to make it even better:

Improve resources for information and communication technology and give you more opportunities to use computers across the curriculum

Make sure that when teachers mark your work, as well as telling you how well you have done, they tell you what you could do to improve.

I wish you well in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Clive Lewis

Lead Inspector

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