

Millhouse Infant School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114915
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338477
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Nichola Perry

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Davies
Headteacher	Ms Wendy Foster
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent observing learning. All nine teachers were observed in nine sessions. Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior teachers, the home/school mentor, governors, staff and groups of pupils. They looked at pupils' work and displays and at documentation, observed the school's work and looked at school documents, including the school development plan, records of progress monitoring, safeguarding and welfare arrangements. Inspectors scrutinised 40 parent questionnaires.

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

- how robustly the school teaches reading so that standards in reading are maintained in line with those in writing
- how effectively leaders monitor the progress of boys, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- how effectively the school uses feedback to pupils to increase their rate of progress
- how the school's leadership develops pupils' awareness and understanding of the UK's multi-cultural community.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized infant school with an attached 52-place nursery. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds with only a few from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average in every year group. A significant number of families in the catchment area experience social needs. A high number of pupils join or leave the school part way through the taught year.

There are close links with the local children's centre, which offers pupils access to 'The Flying Pigs' breakfast and after-school clubs as well as toddler and parent support groups. A holiday scheme, which runs throughout school holidays, is also available for pupils but it is inspected separately because it is not managed by the governing body. The school has experienced a significant staff turnover during the last full academic year and into the current year.

The school follows a curriculum which places emphasis on an international dimension; it is currently seeking International School Status. The school has gained Healthy Schools status, the Activemark award and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

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

Millhouse Infant School and Nursery is a good school. It has some outstanding features. The headteacher's leadership continues to be outstanding. She inspires others to refine the ways they work together so that senior leaders are increasingly able to take on greater responsibility in aspects of leadership. The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is excellent and a significant strength of the school. As a result, pupils' behaviour is good, and often outstanding. Pupils are polite, get on well together and are thoughtful to others. They show very good appreciation of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. An outstanding partnership exists between the school and parents and carers. Parents are extremely positive about their children's experience of school. Nursery and Reception class parents are particularly pleased with the positive start to their children's education. The school's leadership effectively treats all pupils as individuals so that pupils of all backgrounds and abilities are involved successfully in learning to the best of their ability. Pupils' attainment is average overall and all groups achieve well in relation to their starting points, and sometimes exceptionally well.

High priority is given to assessing pupils carefully. Pupils progress well because they benefit from good teaching, although boys attain generally less well than girls, particularly in reading. Practical activities are used successfully so that pupils, and especially the boys, enjoy learning through a wide variety of approaches. In many lessons, additional classroom support contributes strongly to high quality learning. However, this is not always the case so that the quality of learning for some pupils is at times less effective. Assessment information is used consistently to plan lessons. Clear learning objectives are linked effectively to pupils' targets so that they know what skills they are expected to learn. Lessons are planned in year groups to ensure consistency. The Nursery and Reception classes now plan jointly which is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Pupils are aware of their individual targets for reading, writing and mathematics and staff regularly discuss these in lessons so that pupils know how they can meet them. Targets are now shared regularly with parents.

Regular, planned meetings to discuss pupils' progress ensure staff and senior leaders can clearly identify pupils who have made expected or better progress. Information gained is used well to plan appropriate strategies to support individuals or groups of pupils. However, strategies to raise attainment in boys' reading have not yet brought about significant improvement because boys do not have enough opportunities to practise their reading skills. Nevertheless, the leadership team and governors are successfully driving improvements. Among many improvements since the last inspection include provision for children in the Reception classes, which now builds successfully on the good practice in the Nursery class, and significant improvement in attendance, which

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is now average. Self-evaluation effectively supports focused development planning. Together with the developments since the last inspection, this shows that the school is well placed to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve standards for boys, particularly in reading, by providing more frequent opportunities for them to practise their reading skills in school.
- Develop the skills of all classroom assistants to those of the best so that in-class support is consistent across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils of all abilities make at least good progress from starting points that are significantly below those expected nationally. As a result, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 is average overall. Many pupils attain above expected levels of expertise in key areas of learning because teachers have high expectations for them. This has been consistently the case for many pupils in writing and mathematics. In 2009, standards in writing improved significantly to above the national average and standards in mathematics have been mostly above average in recent years. Standards in reading have been average over time, except for a dip to below average in 2008 due to fewer pupils reaching higher levels. Assessment and work seen during the inspection show that attainment in Year 2 is above average in writing and mathematics and average in reading. Although no significant differences were seen during the inspection, school assessments and tracking procedures show that boys attain less well than girls, particularly in reading. Lessons during the inspection showed that provision is effective in helping those who find learning difficult to make good progress. The school provides very well for those who arrive part way through the taught year so that they are helped to make good progress.

The curriculum provides effectively for pupils' personal development. Teaching ensures that these important aspects of learning are made relevant to pupils' own experiences, as seen in many lessons across the school. Pupils demonstrate really positive attitudes to learning and concentrate hard. As a result, they learn well and make good progress. For example, pupils consolidated their learning of basic skills very effectively at the end of a lesson when correcting a piece of writing done by their class teacher. They were highly excited at doing this and very quickly pointed out her mistakes. This also enabled the teacher to assess how well pupils had progressed during the lesson. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because this is given a high priority throughout the school. Self-confidence and independence are developed very effectively from the Nursery upwards. Pupils form excellent relationships with adults because staff value their contributions highly and give them positive feedback about their behaviour and work. Pupils contribute to the community well and love the responsibility of being 'Guardians' on the playground to look after younger children at lunchtimes. Pupils learn to value everyone effectively, including those in other countries who are less fortunate

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than themselves and the school council selects charities to support each year. Pupils are extremely aware of how to be safe and take on safe ways of working. Pupils' cultural development is encouraged well through topics such as 'taking a walk in Africa' as well as music and art from around the world. Many pupils keep fit through daily 'fitbod' sessions and they are very knowledgeable for their age about foods which are good for them. The good progress pupils make in developing literacy, numeracy and information, communication and technology skills (ICT) and their well developed personal skills mean they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

A key reason why pupils achieve well in all aspects of their learning is the effective teaching they receive. Teachers use effective methods to ensure that pupils develop key skills well. Questioning is used very astutely to extend pupils' thinking and ideas. In one outstanding lesson seen, expert use of resources, questions and challenge was extremely effective in helping pupils develop their thinking skills and imaginative use of language. Boys were particularly motivated by this practical approach. In another lesson

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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where pupils were writing postcards from their 'trip' to Italy, they were encouraged outstandingly well through use of resources and clear lesson objectives to produce some super writing, using expressive vocabulary and correct punctuation. Assessment is used consistently well to plan lessons and identify where pupils need extra support. Pupils' targets are readily available for them to refer to in lessons and teachers make regular reference to them. Very good ongoing feedback to pupils about how well they are performing ensures they have a clear idea about how to improve their work. The school's agreed style of marking is excellent and very accessible to young pupils but this is not always used consistently by all staff.

The international nature of the curriculum and its strong focus on developing language, literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is helping pupils learn effectively. Writing, in particular, is very well emphasised across all subjects and pupils have many opportunities to practise their skills. This is why pupils' writing is above average. Although reading skills are taught well, there is a less obvious emphasis on reading so that pupils have fewer opportunities to practise these skills. Effective opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world and their creative skills through a range of investigative activities. Pupils thoroughly enjoy all topics planned for them, including special event days. Pupils took great pleasure in the 'junk orchestra' day where they made a range of international instruments and decorated them imaginatively. Pupils' personal, social and emotional development is supported very well through effectively managed group discussions which help to deepen their knowledge of how to handle difficulties.

From the day they start school, pupils' pastoral needs are met exceptionally well. Induction into the school is particularly well organised. There is good care for any pupil with a medical problem. The very close liaison with outside agencies supports pupils' well-being effectively. Work with pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and their families is deeply embedded and very effective, especially through the exemplary work carried out by the home/school mentor. Parents and carers can access training or support when they need it and regular sessions are held for parents so that they can learn how to support their children's learning.

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?

Leadership is dedicated to continuous improvement. All aspects of improvement

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planning focus strongly on appropriate priorities for the school and set clear direction to ensure that it systematically consolidates and improves. Recent significant staffing issues reduced the impact of planned developments. However, it is a mark of the headteacher's outstanding leadership skills that the impact on the school was minimised and standards did not decline. Teaching is rigorously monitored. Pupils have equal opportunities because the school works consistently to break down barriers to learning through rigorous tracking of pupils' progress and the work of staff to meet pupils' individual needs.

Governors work efficiently with staff and provide effective challenge to the school. They know the school well and are involved successfully in planning for the future. They ensure child protection and safeguarding procedures meet requirements well. They ensure that systematic records are maintained of staffing checks and that all adults receive regular training in child protection.

The leadership works particularly thoughtfully to make sure that the school and wider communities are united wherever possible. For example, pupils regularly visit the elderly in the local community. All aspects of community cohesion are evaluated to enhance pupils' understanding of the multi-cultural nature of the United Kingdom and that of the wider world. Pupils learn well about diversity by engaging in a wide range of celebrations from other faiths, such as Diwali and Eid. They also learn well about wider world cultures through their imaginary trips, for example, to Japan, and also through email contact with a school in Bali. Leaders work hard to enable pupils to compare and contrast their own culture with that of others through first-hand experience of communicating with children in other parts of the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
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

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children achieve well in the Nursery and Reception classes. They make at least good progress from their starting points, which are significantly below those expected, and reach below average standards on entry to Year 1. Basic skills are developed effectively through practical approaches to learning. Many activities develop their key skills where they choose what they want to do. For example, children can explore a wide range of materials successfully because resources are used so well. Children learn to listen and use language to express their own thinking because staff use questioning very skilfully, thereby helping children to develop enquiring minds. Excellent assessment highlights what children can do and what their next steps in learning are. This very thorough knowledge of each child's stages of development ensures learning activities focus on individual needs so that children improve rapidly.

Personal development and behaviour are excellent because adults ensure that the children's welfare is supported consistently well. Staff have high expectations of the children and organise provision and resources well. There is a very strong focus on independence. For example, children extend their own learning by selecting from activities or equipment which are readily available to them. Children share happily and learn to work co-operatively because staff encourage and model this behaviour. For example, story time is used perceptively so that children learn to wait their turn and listen carefully to others. Leadership is now good. Boys are now starting to acquire early reading skills to match those of the girls, although this has had insufficient time to make a significant difference to their attainment.

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

Analysis of the parents' questionnaire shows high levels of satisfaction with what the school provides for their children. Among those parents who returned a questionnaire, there was total unanimity regarding their children's enjoyment of school and that their children are safe. The overwhelming majority feel that their child is making good progress and are positive about all aspects of the school. One parent summed up their thoughts by saying, 'We are very pleased with the progress our children have made. We are always kept informed and neither we nor our children could fault the school'. A few

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parents identified behaviour as a concern. Inspectors could not find any evidence to support this opinion.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Millhouse Infant School and Nursery 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 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 249 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	68	13	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	65	14	35	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	45	19	48	3	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	55	16	40	2	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	50	18	45	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	55	15	38	3	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	40	21	53	1	3	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)	18	45	20	50	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	48	17	43	4	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	35	19	48	5	13	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	50	16	40	3	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	60	13	33	2	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	60	14	35	1	3	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.



25 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millhouse Infant School and Nursery, Basildon, SS15 5QF

Thank you for helping us to find out about your school. We really enjoyed watching you working and playing, and talking to lots of you. You go to a good school. It is a really happy and friendly place to be and there are lots of good things about it.

You make good progress in your work.

You behave well and thoroughly enjoy school.

Your headteacher and senior teachers have very good ideas about how to improve your school.

Your teachers teach you well and work very hard to make lessons interesting.

All the staff care and support you extremely well and listen to you so that you feel really safe in school

Your school gets on really well with your parents and carers and other people who help you learn.

We have asked your headteacher and the other teachers to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things are:

- to help all the boys to do lots more reading so that they can read as well as the girls
- to make sure that all the extra help you get in the classroom is helping you to learn as well as you can.

You can help by continuing to listen carefully to all your teachers, coming to school every day and enjoying all the super things that you are learning at Millhouse School.

Yours sincerely

Nichola Perry

Lead Inspector

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