

Moss Bury Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117269
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	338983
Inspection dates	27–28 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Denise Morris

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	288
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Browning
Headteacher	Tom Evans (executive headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2006
School address	Webb Rise Stevenage Hertfordshire
Telephone number	01438 222300
Fax number	01438 222301
Email address	admin@mossbury.herts.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	27–28 May 2010
Inspection number	338983

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. During the inspection, 16 lessons were seen and 12 teachers were observed. Meetings were held with the headteacher and governors, subject leaders, staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage and those in the Hearing Impairment Unit as well as with pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' work, the curriculum and lesson planning, the school development plan, governing body minutes and assessment and tracking data. Most of the staff and the pupils in Years 3 to 6, as well as 91 parents responded to the inspection questionnaires, and inspectors took account of their views.

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

- whether there is enough good or better teaching to raise standards
- the quality of the assessment and tracking of pupils' achievements and whether it provides well enough to meet the needs of all pupils
- the quality of the governing body's planning to sustain improvement.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school. Most pupils are White British and a few are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is larger than in most schools. The school has an attached unit for six pupils with hearing impairment, who are fully included in all the activities offered. Early Years Foundation Stage provision includes a part-time Nursery class and two Reception classes. The school runs a breakfast club every day. There have been several changes of headteacher in the recent past. The current executive headteacher was appointed in the Spring term 2010 and is also the headteacher of a local partner school.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school, which provides a sound education for its pupils. There has been some turbulence in leadership in the recent past, with several different headteachers and this has held back improvement since the last inspection. Leadership and management have now stabilised and the school is beginning to move forward. There has been positive improvement recently in pupils' behaviour, for example, as a result of some good social development through personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils are responsive and helpful. They work well together and older pupils regularly help younger ones. This was particularly evident in the hearing impairment unit where an older pupil took on responsibility for monitoring a younger one to make sure she was happy at school.

Attainment is variable but, in the current Year 6, standards are average in English and mathematics. Standards in science are not quite as strong. Most pupils make satisfactory progress during their time at the school. There has been some rapid acceleration in the quality of writing because of a good structured approach that encourages pupils to use their literacy skills regularly in many other subjects. For example, very good opportunities for extended writing were seen in science and topic books in Years 4 and 5, where pupils regularly write extended accounts. Pupils say that they enjoy school but they do not all come to school as often or as punctually as they could. Although attendance has improved recently, it is still below average.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. They benefit from skilled teaching and a broad range of exciting activities particularly in the classroom, helping them to make good progress in all aspects of learning. Pupils in the hearing impairment unit are happy and fully engaged in all the activities offered. They achieve well at the school, benefiting from very high levels of support and good quality teaching in the unit, which prepares them well for lessons with their peers in the main school. This was exemplified during an early morning session in which adults were pre-tutoring pupils to make sure that they understood their learning. To prepare Year 6 pupils for a literacy lesson with their peers in mainstream in which they were going to write about their recent 'dragon boat racing', staff had pre-prepared photographs, information and tasks to ensure that they understood all the language required to help them succeed.

Teaching in Years 1 to 6 is mainly satisfactory. Some good teaching was seen in the older classes but there is not enough good or better teaching to enable pupils to make better progress. This is mainly because the new assessment and tracking system has not been fully embedded across the school, resulting in a lack of consistent and accurate assessments. More-able pupils are not always challenged by their tasks and, as a result,

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

do not all fully meet their potential.

The new headteacher has identified that middle and senior managers have not been involved enough in systematically monitoring provision and outcomes for pupils. Together they have made a good start in remedying this. The new chair of governors has a very clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is beginning to provide training for other governors to ensure that they understand their monitoring roles and also to strengthen the governing body. Monitoring has not been rigorous enough in the past but recent monitoring by the local authority has resulted in leaders now having a clear understanding of what needs to improve. Standards in literacy are rising, attendance is beginning to improve and the school is working rigorously with the local authority to ensure that this continues. Most parents are supportive of the school and partnerships with local schools are improving and providing increased learning opportunities for pupils, particularly in sport. The school is thus demonstrating a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Embed the new assessment and tracking system fully in all parts of the school so that:
 - assessments are accurate and inform teachers about the next steps of planning and teaching
 - teachers use a consistent approach to setting and using targets in English, mathematics and science so that pupils of all abilities, including the most able, have work that is appropriately challenging.
- Develop leadership roles at all levels, including the governing body, so that there is systematic and rigorous monitoring to bring about the required improvements.
- Work closely with pupils, parents and the local authority's support services to improve and maintain attendance and punctuality.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit before their next inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Attainment is average, with outcomes in Year 2 just below average and in Year 6 similar to nationally expected levels. Achievement is variable but most pupils, including those in the main school with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve satisfactorily during their time at the school. They make good progress in English, particularly in writing, and sound progress in mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Writing skills are improving across the school because of a major focus on this aspect and because teachers model writing well and regularly check pupils' written work. More-able pupils do not always achieve their full potential in other subjects because expectations of what they can do are not high enough. In science, for example, there are too few examples of pupils undertaking experiments and finding things out for themselves. Pupils in the hearing impairment unit make good

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

progress and achieve well. Pupils behave well in and around the school. Relationships between adults and pupils are strong and pupils are keen to please their teachers. They listen carefully in class and work well together.

Though fully aware of the importance of leading healthy lifestyles and making good efforts to eat healthily, not all pupils have the opportunity to do enough exercise, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Most pupils say that they enjoy school and, although attendance is improving, a small minority of pupils do not attend often or punctually enough. The majority of pupils say that they feel safe and secure at school, but a few say that there is not always someone to talk to if they have concerns. The school council is active in promoting improvements to the play areas and pupils regularly raise funds for charities such as the Haiti appeal, but not all pupils have opportunities to take on simple responsibilities. Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes along with improving literacy skills and confident use of ICT ensures that they are satisfactorily 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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

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

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

Pupils say that they really like their teachers and a few parents commented on how supportive teachers have been during the many recent leadership changes. Teachers know pupils well and manage their classes effectively, which contributes strongly to pupils' good behaviour and the calm and harmonious atmosphere in most lessons. In the best lessons, careful thought goes into the preparation and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including the pupils with hearing impairment, so that they are fully involved in all activities. Good questioning is a key feature of the most successful lessons, helping to extend pupils' understanding and skills. This was evident in Year 1, where pupils developed good understanding of the different parts of the Jack in the Beanstalk story because of questions that helped them to think for themselves. For some pupils, including the more able, tasks are not always challenging enough and they are not always encouraged to raise their work to the next level. Changes to the curriculum have resulted in some meaningful links between subjects, which are beginning to make tasks more creative. Marking helps most pupils to improve but the school lacks a consistent approach, resulting in variable quality across all classes. Information gathered through assessment is not used well enough to plan the next steps of learning or to challenge the more-able pupils.

Appropriate arrangements for pupils' health, safety and welfare ensure that they are safe and happy at school. Assemblies contribute well to pupils' personal development, particularly their social and moral awareness, through a well-planned programme that encourages them to work together in harmony. Procedures to improve attendance are just beginning to work, as shown by the recent rise in the number coming to school every day this term. Provision for vulnerable pupils is good and there are appropriate systems to support pupils' personal needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Recent turbulence caused by the many changes to leadership has now settled. Improvements have accelerated since the appointment of the executive headteacher so that the whole school community are now working closely together to improve outcomes for pupils. Together they have tackled issues such as behaviour very successfully. There is now greater monitoring of teaching, and a rigorous programme of training has been introduced. The roles of subject leaders are being strengthened through training so that they are empowered to manage their own budgets and improve their areas. Although

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

they recognise that they have further to go in order to develop their roles, training has focused the governing body on developing their monitoring skills and on ensuring that statutory responsibilities are fully met. They have ensured that safeguarding, including child protection procedures, meet current government requirements. Good links with other local schools and with the local authority are having a positive impact on provision with some joint events, such as the Year 6 'dragon boat racing' day, which helps to prepare pupils for transition. The school effectively promotes equality and tackles discrimination, although leaders recognise that not enough has been done in the past to ensure that more-able pupils always make the progress of which they are capable. The school's strategy for community cohesion is developing appropriately, with some strong and productive links locally promoting pupils' personal development. The curriculum has been strengthened to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for pupils to learn about lifestyles and cultures that are different from their own, for example in the learning of French. The strategy is in the early stages of developing links further afield. The school has its own swimming pool and extensive outdoor areas, which contribute favourably to pupils' learning.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Nursey and Reception classes make at least good progress in all areas of learning. They make some very good progress in linking sounds and letters because of the high profile given to this aspect of learning and the high quality programme of activities in which children engage and which they fully enjoy. Very clear modelling of

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

writing by adults encourages children to use their developing skills to make marks, write labels and notices, and explore and experiment with sounds. This has a positive impact on all aspects of communication, language and literacy. In all other areas, there are good opportunities for children to explore resources and experiment for themselves. For example, in work related to a mini-beast project, children eagerly watched as a caterpillar gradually turned into a butterfly. As the butterfly emerged, children watched with growing excitement and awe as it settled on a stone to dry its wings and then flew away. Children behave well and work and play happily together. They have sufficient opportunities to plan their own learning, resulting in high levels of independence. Planning to meet individual needs is good, as shown by the way that a child from the hearing impairment unit was fully involved in play with her peers because the rich language environment included signs and symbols that enabled her to interact and take a full part in the activities. Regular time and space is provided for children to communicate and talk with each other and with adults. The majority of children are on track to achieve the expected levels in most areas by the time they enter Year 1. Good leadership ensures that children are well looked after so that they are safe and secure. Links with parents and support agencies are good and the local area is used well to extend children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Assessment strategies are improving. These are beginning to show how well each child is doing but are not used consistently to track progress. The outdoor area is not used as well as the indoor classroom to extend children's learning.

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

Most of the parents who responded to the inspection questionnaires said that their child enjoys school and that their children are safe and secure. 'My child is very happy,' wrote one parent. Another commented, 'My child is well taught and looked after by teachers.' Some parents feel that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspection evidence, as well as school tracking data, shows that behaviour at the school has improved because of a strong focus on the development of pupils' social skills. Behaviour during the inspection in all parts of the school was good. Several parents also feel that the school is not well enough led or managed. There has been some turbulence in leadership in the past but this has now been addressed and leadership, including of the governing body, is now stable and committed to improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Moss Bury Primary 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 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 288 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	38	52	57	2	2	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	41	45	44	48	6	7	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	29	56	62	7	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	33	57	63	3	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	34	37	51	56	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	35	46	51	9	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	33	55	60	6	7	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)	22	24	56	62	6	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	31	56	62	4	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	26	41	45	17	19	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	19	53	58	13	14	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	18	20	47	52	21	23	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	36	50	55	8	9	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



1 June 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Moss Bury Primary School and Nursery, Stevenage, SG1 5PA

Thank you for your help during our recent visit to your school. We enjoyed talking to you. This letter is to tell you some of the things we found out about your school.

Moss Bury Primary and Nursery gives you a sound education.

You behave well in and around the school and you work well with each other.

You make sound progress in your lessons because of satisfactory teaching, although those of you who could do more do not always get the chance to do so.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes do well in their lessons.

Pupils in the hearing impairment unit also achieve well because of the good teaching and support that they get.

Although your work is marked regularly, you do not always know how you could improve your work.

The way that teachers check your work is improving.

Leaders of your school keep you safe and secure.

We are asking your school to do three things to help it improve.

Improve the way that your work is assessed. You could help with this by checking your own work every day.

Make sure that the leaders of your school look carefully at how well you are all doing.

Help you to come to school more often. You could really help with this by making sure you come to school as often as you can and by being on time.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Denise Morris

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.