

Millbrook School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117379
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	338996
Inspection dates	11–12 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Judi Bedawi

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Townley
Headteacher	Celia Townson
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent more than half of their time observing learning and 11 teachers, including student teachers, in 16 lessons or parts of lessons. They held meetings with governors, staff, the schools' educational welfare officer and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books and a range of school documentation, policies, monitoring records and data on pupils' attainment. The inspectors received and analysed 56 parental questionnaires.

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

attainment and progress in writing and mathematics across the school, including Year 6, and the impact of the school's efforts to raise standards

- attendance including the level of persistent absence and the effectiveness of the schools' monitoring to secure improvement
- pupils' behaviour and their views on feeling safe
- the quality of teaching and learning and the impact on pupils' progress

Information about the school

Millbrook is about the same size as most other primary schools. Pupils come from the local community. Most are from White British backgrounds, but the percentage of minority ethnic pupils admitted throughout the school is well above average, with an above average proportion of those having little or no knowledge of English. Although the number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to other schools, the proportion of pupils, that have a statement of educational needs, is above average. Pupil mobility is high throughout the school. All staff in Key Stage 2 have been appointed since the last inspection. The school has gained the Activemark and the Healthy Schools Award.

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

Millbrook provides pupils with a satisfactory education. The school has a positive atmosphere very clearly focused on learning and a determination to raise standards and pupil outcomes. Following a legacy of inadequate attainment, firm sustained action is being taken to reverse the situation. This is aided by the appointment of new staff in Key Stage 2, leading to rapid improvement in teaching and learning.

Children's attainment on entry to the Reception class has been below age-related expectations in recent years, particularly in language and numerical skills. In the current Year 6, the majority of pupils have not attended this school since the Nursery. In 2009, two pupils joined Year 6; this had a detrimental impact on test results. Those arriving in other year groups often have below average learning skills, especially if they arrived with gaps in their education or no knowledge of English. In 2009, Year 2 pupils, except those higher attaining pupils, performed better in their mathematics and writing than in reading. In Year 6 pupils did less well in mathematics and higher attainers underperformed. However, attainment has improved since September and pupils' progress this academic year, including Year 6, is satisfactory. This is due to better teaching and attendance. Well-trained teaching assistants support pupils effectively; this includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities so they make similar progress to other pupils in their classes.

Pupils are keen learners; this is most evident when pockets of exemplary teaching lead to a cracking pace, with the majority of time spent in pupils learning. Pupils behave well, concentrating hard, even when tasks sometimes lack challenge. Marking to help pupils work more independently, is inconsistent, as is some lesson planning for different pupil groups. Target setting using assessment information is good and most older pupils know what they must do to reach the next level. Pupils have high expectations of their own and others behaviour. They feel safe and appreciate the way that the staff act promptly if they need advice or guidance. Pupils enjoy all kinds of sporting activities and want to be healthy.

The headteacher and senior leaders have an accurate overview and evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and know what needs to be done to sustain and build on the rising standards. The governing body are committed to further improving standards in English, mathematics and science and improving the quality of teaching. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Teaching, attainment and progress, is improving rapidly particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6 with the introduction of more challenging academic and school targets and the resolution of previous inspection issues.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment and achievement in writing, reading, mathematics and science by;
 - developing more opportunities for writing across the curriculum and improving the quality of spelling and the presentation of written work
 - enabling pupils to develop their skills and confidence in reading to a wider audience and in sharing their reading with others
 - spreading the good development of mathematical skills evident in Years 5 and 6, to all other year groups
 - developing pupils' investigative skills in science.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning to good or better by;
 - building on existing good assessment practice and questioning seen in the Nursery and in the teaching of Year 6 mathematics, to extend and enhance teaching skills across the school
 - In Years 1 and 2 develop rigour in the pace of learning and in the challenges set, so that progress for all pupils accelerates
 - increase identification of work for different groups in lesson planning and ensure that all marking tells pupils how to improve their work independently.
 - Around 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils like school and their teachers. As one pupil said, echoing the views of others 'I enjoy school because teachers help me understand.' Pupils have positive learning attitudes, respond well to adults and work sensibly together. Pupils are highly motivated, engaging with enthusiasm, when teachers plan interesting activities that capture their imagination, as in a Year 6 writing session, focused on 'flashback'.

Although children get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their overall progress is currently satisfactory; as is progress in Key Stage 1. Factors such as high mobility and the need to develop writing skills play a significant part. In Key Stage 2, progress accelerates as pupils move up the school, with some that is increasingly good and occasionally outstanding, particularly in Year 6 mathematics and in Year 5 where a large minority are already at the average attainment levels for the end of Year 6, with a small number of pupils assessed as being even higher. This is due to: good teaching and gains in pupils' confidence, effective development of skills and filling gaps in learning. In English, standards are starting to rise, but not all pupils write as much as they might, nor correct spelling errors and make their work look neat. When reading aloud, pupils are sometimes hesitant, or not fully confident of their ability. In discussion, pupils say

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they do not have many chances to conduct science investigations.

Pupils enjoy the attendance rewards, with golden leaves to put on the 'attendance tree' and certificates awarded for other good work, actions or behaviour. Good behaviour permeates the school and pupils are polite and helpful. They feel very safe because they are taught how to look after themselves, for example, by not using computer chat rooms. They say that occasional incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and they play well together at breaktimes. They enjoy healthy lunches, but as a treat are allowed chips on Fridays. They are very aware of the benefits of staying fit and extremely proud of winning the gold medal in a recent inter-schools sports tournament.

Pupils have a secure understanding of basic skills, and their use of information technology is good. The school council operates democratically, regularly seeking pupils' views about ways to improve their school. Pupils participate in local community events, but have less opportunity, apart from the positive relationships established with minority ethnic pupils, to learn from wider and global links and this is why pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory rather than good. The school admits that this is an area for further development.

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	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	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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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How effective is the provision?

Pupils, who need additional support for special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well through more recently introduced intervention group work. This is having a positive impact on learning, aided by good staff teamwork and regular meetings to discuss pupil's progress. Teaching is improving rapidly especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at the top end of Key Stage 2, where there are exemplars of good and increasingly outstanding practice to be shared. However, this is not yet consistent across the school and particularly in Key Stage 1 and the start of Key Stage 2 where the balance is sometimes tipped more towards teaching than learning. This is because teachers spend too much time talking and so pupils have less time to do their increasingly good work. This results in some pupils' work or views of the lesson being rushed. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and effective questioning keeps pupils interested. Some staff use good teaching strategies, such as accelerated learning pace and greater challenge to fire pupils' imagination. There is thorough assessment and tracking data, with effective whole school target setting so that pupils know what they have to do to reach the next level. However, the quality of marking is variable with insufficient informative marking to help pupils improve their work independently. Some work is not marked or just ticked and too often teachers do not pick up on written work that is untidy. Relationships and mutual respect between staff and pupils are good.

The broadly balanced well-resourced curriculum focuses well on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. It is carefully adapted to meet the needs of those learning English and those who have special educational needs and/or difficulties, so that they make equal progress to other pupils. Pupils increasingly use their skills in other subjects, particularly so in information and communication technology, used to good effect in recent word processing and graphic image work for the 'Olympic Day'. However, there are not always enough opportunities for them to develop their writing. Pupils are enthusiastic about physical education and the Activemark award is encouraging them to make good use of local community and school facilities, as well as inspiring interest in the forthcoming Olympics. They also enjoy art, dance, music, French and residential visits. Visits and visitors enrich the curriculum and broaden their knowledge of others' lives. A group of younger pupils and children who are identified as being gifted or talented have begun working with others at a nearby school.

The view of one pupil that 'The school is safe and caring and we all get on together,' is well supported by the large majority of parents. The staff create a caring atmosphere with a 'can do' approach to helping pupils; this raises self-esteem, enabling them to learn effectively. The school works closely with a wide range of outside agencies to provide the right type of help for more vulnerable or needy pupils and for any families, who might be having difficulties that are having an impact on learning. Staff listen to pupils carefully, acting promptly to resolve any concerns. A Polish staff member helps the growing number of Polish pupils to settle and communicate effectively. The school has improved attendance and reduced the level of persistent absence. It is aware that a few families still need encouragement to ensure their children attend more regularly.

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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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leaders and middle managers work effectively as a team. They follow the headteachers' clear model of identification, evaluation and monitoring, increasingly focused on raising standards and pupil outcomes. This is starting to have a positive impact on the schools' performance, for example in mathematics and attendance. Senior leaders realise that the stepping stones for improvement are securely embedded. The pace of change is gaining a momentum, to sustain improvement particularly in writing and in raising the bar for teaching and learning to become consistently good or better. New staff in Key Stage 2 have a rigorous approach to targets; this is enabling more challenging target setting and higher expectations of pupils' attainment and achievement.

Governors now have a sound understanding of their role; they ask more questions and are starting to challenge senior leaders. Safeguarding is good and meets current government requirements, strengths include training of staff and governors and careful attention given to vulnerable pupils. The school has successfully improved some aspects, including mathematics, information and communication technology, attendance and governance. Partnerships with parents are good as are those with other partners, including local schools, welfare agencies and sports partnerships.

Community cohesion is satisfactory; local links are well-embedded but as clearly identified in a recent thorough audit there is more to do to develop wider and global links. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory because all groups of pupils make satisfactory progress and learn that discrimination is not acceptable. Use of resources is satisfactory and finance is carefully managed.

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	2

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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 get a good introduction to learning through play because the staff help them to develop their personal, social and discovery skills right from the start. They settle quickly, content and confident in the extremely welcoming and well resourced environment. Almost all children make good progress from their generally below age-related starting points. By the time they move into Year 1, most are at broadly average levels in all areas of learning, apart from writing and calculation which are slightly lower. Children achieve well in early reading and speaking because there is a good focus on sharing books and phonics teaching. Children thoroughly enjoy well-planned indoor and outside activities that excite the imagination, such as using torchlight to make stars, moons or even planets on the ceiling.

Teaching is good with some outstanding elements, for example, the way that nursery staff develop and build on children's thinking so that there is excellent child-led and adult-directed learning at the same time. Parents are well informed of their children's progress. 'Learning journals have recently been introduced to increase their awareness of the detailed assessments carried out on their children's welfare and performance. Leadership and management is good because there is a effective team who understand the needs and enjoyment of young children and take time to ensure that they gain essential skills .

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

Parents and carers responding to the questionnaire all say that their children are safe

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and almost all say they are kept well informed and supported about progress and that their children enjoy school. Additionally parents think that teaching is good as are transfer systems, pupil progress and the leadership of the school. A few parents felt that healthy lifestyles and behaviour could be better. Inspectors judged teaching and pupil progress to be satisfactory and found evidence that behaviour and healthy lifestyles are good. The inspection team agreed with the other positive parental views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Millbrook 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 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 210 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	52	28	54	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	51	31	49	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	46	32	51	1	2	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	46	29	46	1	2	3	5
The teaching is good at this school	25	40	35	56	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	41	32	51	4	6	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	41	31	49	3	5	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)	19	30	40	63	1	2	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	35	35	56	4	6	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	32	33	52	9	14	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	27	41	65	3	5	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	25	40	33	52	1	2	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	48	30	48	1	2	2	3

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.



15 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millbrook School, Waltham Cross, EN8 9BX

We would like to thank you for making us all feel so at home when we visited your school recently. You told us why you like school and learning, particularly, using computers, mathematics, helping each other, feeling safe and taking part in after school activities. You know your targets, well done! We can see that you work hard and that you find learning fun.

You make satisfactory progress because your teachers and teaching assistants do a satisfactory job in helping all of you to learn. Your behaviour and attitudes are good and you play sensibly at breaktimes, looking after each other well. Your attendance is satisfactory and has improved. We are sure that you could improve it to earn even more gold leaves. Your attainment is similar to that of pupils in other primary schools.

I have asked your teachers to make sure that you do writing in all subjects and for you to remember to spell correctly and make your work look neat and tidy. We have asked your teachers to make sure your written work is always helpfully marked so that you can improve your work without too much teacher help. Additionally, we want your teachers especially in Year 1 and 2 and sometimes in other classes, not to spend too much time talking so you can get on with more interesting learning so that your progress gets even better.

We want you to read more so that you become confident readers and we want younger pupils to become really good at mathematics like those of you in Years 5 and 6. We would also like your teachers to plan more science investigations for you.

I am sure that you will continue to find learning fun at Millbrook and rise to the challenges you will be set in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judi Bedawi

Lead Inspector

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