

Mendip Green First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109102
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	356474
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Jane Neech HMI

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sylvia Claridge
Headteacher	Bruce Dale
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Between them, the inspectors observed 23 lessons and 16 teachers. Eleven lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and a senior leader. A learning walk focusing on the curriculum was completed alongside a senior leader. The inspectors held meetings with teachers, senior leaders, a group of pupils, the Chair and members of the Governing Body, and one of the partners who works with the school. The lead inspector met with a group of parents. The inspectors observed the school's work and evaluated a range of school documentation. They scrutinised 141 questionnaires received from parents and carers, and 39 questionnaires completed by staff.

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

- How the school is narrowing the gap between the underperformance of groups of pupils.
- The school's systems for assessing, tracking and intervention, ensuring all groups and individuals achieve as well as they can.
- The quality of teaching and the curriculum and how these cater for the discrete needs of different groups of pupils.
- The impact of leaders and managers on the achievement of all pupils.

Information about the school

Mendip Green First School is a larger-than-average first school and serves the surrounding area. From September 2010 the school's planned admission level has been reduced to 120. There are plans to achieve primary status in collaboration with two neighbouring schools. The proportion of pupils believed to be entitled to free school meals is above the national average. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The overall percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. Pupils are taught in 16 classes. This includes a hearing and language resource base and a nurture room. The school runs a breakfast club and after-school club.

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

Kindness is reflected in every aspect of this satisfactory school's work. As one typical young pupil put it: 'We have kind words, kind hands and kind feet.' This school has focused on the nurture and care of pupils and their families and consequently this area of the school's work is outstanding. As a result, pupils are very safe and demonstrate good levels of enthusiasm for school. Parents and carers praise the staff unreservedly for the way they look after pupils. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'The staff exceed all expectations.' Recently, there has been a decline in standards, and academic achievement is now satisfactory. Since the last inspection the school's success in improving the areas of weakness identified, such as the performance of boys in writing, has been uneven.

The school has a satisfactory capacity to make the improvements necessary to the attainment reached by all pupils because of:

- the strong focus by staff and governors in responding to the needs of pupils and their families to help them succeed
- the good teaching
- the developments that have been started to track pupils' progress
- the exceptionally strong partnerships that exist with parents and outside professionals
- the positive attitudes of the pupils and their enjoyment of school.

Mendip Green is much respected by parents and carers because the school goes the extra mile to support individual pupils and their families. Consequently, all groups of pupils enjoy learning in lessons and respond well to adults in school. As a result of high expectations from staff, pupils are polite and friendly, and behave well. During the inspection pupils were keen to talk to inspectors and tell them about their school. There are excellent links with a broad range of partners, such as social care professionals, and this is having a positive impact on supporting families. Parents and carers speak with pride about the profile of the school in the local community with, for example, older pupils taking part in the Remembrance Day parade. Pupils enjoy sporting, dance and drama events. A favourite activity leading to high self-esteem is street dancing at the after-school club.

The strengths in teaching are the result of the excellent relationships that exist in school. The supportive manner in which teachers question pupils encourages them to express their ideas with confidence. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are taught in a mixture of small nurture groups and larger groups alongside their peers, with adult support in whole-class lessons. Pupils from the hearing and language resource base

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benefit from specialised teaching in a range of learning opportunities. Parents express the view that this is a real strength of the school.

The school acknowledges that recent changes to the curriculum, the drive to raise expectations and measures to ensure teachers are sufficiently accountable for improving pupils' performance have yet to impact on improving attainment. The curriculum, while sound, does not allow for challenge so that all pupils achieve as well as they can. This is because the activities planned are not always adjusted to a high enough level for all pupils. While pupils' social development is tracked by leaders and managers, the use of academic tracking, assessment and marking is not well established throughout the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Use tracking, monitoring and assessment, including marking, routinely and rigorously to bring about improvements in standards.
- Ensure that the curriculum is clearly adapted and tasks extended to enable all pupils to achieve well.
- Introduce more regular meetings between senior staff and teachers to ensure that staff are doing all they can to accelerate the progress of all groups of pupils within their classes, especially in Year 3.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The youngest children begin school with skills, knowledge and understanding well below levels typically seen for early literacy, language and communication. Performance in National Curriculum tests in reading, writing and mathematics has recently declined. However, pupils make satisfactory progress from their exceptionally low starting points through to the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils with a statement of special educational needs outperform their national counterparts in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 3 standards in English and mathematics are low. Attainment overall is low because not enough pupils make the accelerated progress needed to achieve broadly average standards. In mathematics the school is narrowing the gap in performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and others. However, the picture of progress for different groups is inconsistent, with differences between the performance boys and girls in reading, writing and mathematics in the last two years. From lesson observations during the inspection, the pockets of good progress relate to pupils' confidence to articulate their ideas, such as pupils describing characters from traditional stories with words like 'generous' and 'graceful'. The quality of work in books ranges from some examples of good work, such as detailed story plans for the Russian Tale of Babushka, to limited and poor quality writing. Not all pupils know their targets and how to improve their work. Some areas of performance are improving securely but, given the mixed picture, achievement overall is satisfactory.

Pupils learn willingly because of the positive relationships that are embedded in all the school's work. Pupils value the opportunity to talk to adults if they have a worry or concern. The school council plays an active role in the life of the school, such as their involvement in developing the adventure zone for playtime activities. Parents report that their children are well prepared socially for the next step in their education. The oldest pupils enjoy 'Raise the Roof' singing with pupils from the junior school as part of their

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transition. The application of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy for future learning is satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of the benefits of healthy eating, such as through the popular gardening club recognised in the Healthy Schools award.

Young pupils display an impressive level of respect for each other's needs. During a session observed in the nurture room pupils took the initiative to move chairs, allowing for a pupil in a wheelchair to join the group. These actions result from the emphasis placed on valuing individual differences, which is praised by parents. Pupils clearly understand the difference between right and wrong and respond well to adult advice, which helps them to think about positive behaviour. Older pupils are keen to find out about ancient cultures and enjoy preparing for an archaeological dig in the school ground. As part of learning about religious ceremonies a group of pupils enacted a Christian marriage ceremony led by the vicar of the local church. Community links resulted in the young wedding participants and guests being transported to the church in a limousine provided by a local firm!

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	4
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	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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

The social and emotional needs of all groups of learners, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are extremely well met because of the positive atmosphere created in each class. Parents and carers comment on how well their children are doing as a result. Asking adults for help with work is encouraged and consequently

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pupils do this with ease. Teachers' planning generally focuses on the key learning task for the lesson but lacks challenging opportunities for the higher achieving pupils. In the effective lessons, as in an English lesson for older pupils, the teacher set higher levels of work for one group of pupils and offered another group the opportunity to attempt the more challenging task. This resulted in some pupils stretching themselves academically with good results. Clearly targeted support for potentially vulnerable pupils enables them to make good social and emotional progress.

Teachers' marking and the use of assessment make a contribution to pupils' learning where they are matched to pupils' individual needs. Some marking of writing gives pupils advice on how to improve their work. The marking policy is not yet fully embedded across the school and so the advice given to pupils is inconsistent.

The redesigned curriculum is leading to more active learning, which is enjoyed by pupils. Parents report that their children enjoy topics beginning with a 'wow' event. However, changes to the curriculum are not yet fully established across the school. Curriculum activities do not always enable pupils to accelerate their progress and improve their skills in English and mathematics especially in Year 3.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are ambitious to ensure all groups have an equal chance to feel part of the school community. In providing a secure family atmosphere where pupils are valued for their differences they have been very successful. Partnerships with outside professionals are exceptional and have led to significant improvements, such as the rise in attendance of some individual pupils from well below average to above average, so that attendance overall is now above average. Parents and carers praise the work of the school in supporting parenting skills. In particular, parents praise the headteacher's unflinching work in supporting families and the approachable nature of all staff.

The governors have initiated a review of teachers' marking across the school but have been less effective in ensuring the new policy is quickly implemented by monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness on improving standards. They support the school's focus on care and nurture but have been less focused on challenging the school to improve achievement. Safeguarding arrangements are good and systems in place for child protection are of a high quality. The school promotes equality of opportunity by ensuring staff are well trained to meet the different needs of all groups of pupils. Consequently pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities experience curriculum opportunities, such as information and communication technology, alongside their peers.

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Although the school promotes community cohesion well within the school and locally, leaders and managers acknowledge that work related to developing pupils' understanding of wider communities is less well developed.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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

Parents speak highly of the induction arrangements. One parent expressed the view that his confidence in the school had grown as his child settled happily. Children display confident attitudes because all adults know them well and pay particular attention to their needs. Children respond exceptionally well to one another, showing mature attitudes towards sharing equipment. The Early Years Foundation Stage team works seamlessly together and this enables the children to participate in activities in both the inside and outside learning environments. Adults are highly committed to planning exciting learning opportunities for children so that from low entry points they make sound progress. One such example observed during inspection was the use made of large cardboard boxes as dark spaces to sit in and investigate light. Children shone a torch through lace materials and were fascinated by the patterns of light. Adults take note of children's interest when planning activities and maximise writing opportunities. The theme of birthdays captured children's interest to write lists for party food. This led to children applying their developing knowledge of letter sounds when writing words. Occasionally activities planned do not provide enough challenge for the more-able children, such as when investigating numbers. Teaching assistants support children well when sharing books, and skilful questioning supports children's early language and communication skills. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led. A team has been created where all adults are involved in planning and assessment, and continuously amend plans according to the interests of the children.

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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	3
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

An overwhelming majority of parents and carers are happy with all aspects of their children's experience at school on almost all survey questions. An extremely small percentage commented on the access of vehicles to the site. At the time of the inspection inspectors observed that the school takes all reasonable precautions to keep pupils safe on entering and leaving the school site.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mendip Green First 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 141 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 454 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	109	77	26	18	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	97	69	41	29	0	0	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	72	51	67	48	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	86	61	51	36	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	96	68	42	30	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	83	59	55	39	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	75	53	60	43	0	0	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)	63	45	61	43	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	84	60	51	36	4	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	48	60	43	5	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	63	45	69	49	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	98	70	40	28	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	104	74	35	25	0	0	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 all 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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 pupils' 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.



19 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mendip Green First School, Worle BS22 6EX

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school on our recent visit. We liked the way many of you talked to us about your school. We were impressed with your behaviour and how you enjoy school. We were pleased to hear your views and these helped us to make our judgements. This letter is to tell you what we found.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. Staff know each one of you and your families extremely well. The headteacher and the staff work exceptionally hard to make sure you have a happy and safe time at school. This means that the way the school cares for you is outstanding. Your teachers make sure you learn in an atmosphere where what you have to say is important. Because of this you speak out with confidence. You are good at knowing how to be healthy and how to keep yourselves safe. There are opportunities for you to take part in sporting, musical and drama events. We were particularly impressed to see how well you were practising for your Christmas play. Your parents and carers told us how proud they are to see you in the school productions. Those of you with special educational needs and/or disabilities enjoy your learning in small groups and in whole-class lessons. You are well supported by the adults who help you. While teachers plan interesting topics, the curriculum does not always allow you to achieve as well as you might. A few of you know your targets but many of you are unsure how to improve your work. In your work you are making satisfactory progress from your abilities at the time you start school.

I have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to work on some areas to improve your learning. We have asked your teachers to give you curriculum tasks that challenge you so that you achieve higher standards of work. We have also asked your teachers to use assessment and marking in lessons and follow your progress carefully to make sure they help each one of you improve your work. We want your school's leaders to help them to do this through working closely with them.

I am confident you will do all you can to help by continuing to behave well and enjoy school.

Yours sincerely

Jane Neech

Her Majesty's Inspector

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