

Millfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110776
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	356814
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Peter Clifton

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Raine
Headteacher	Lydia Harris
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons and observed nine teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. Inspectors talked to pupils in lessons and at break times. They observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including development planning, monitoring information and evidence of safeguarding procedures, as well as pupils' books. They analysed 62 responses to the parental questionnaire and took account of the views expressed by parents and carers during informal meetings and conversations.

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

- the extent to which attainment is being raised, particularly for the most able pupils in English and mathematics in Years 1 to 6
- how well teaching provides challenging work for different groups of pupils that leads to sustained improvement in progress and tackles any underachievement
- the effectiveness of the work of leaders in the school in promoting improvement, drive through change and hold teachers to account for the progress made in different classes
- the strength of curriculum planning to engage the interests of the pupils, particularly boys, and the success of any additional provision in English and mathematics to enable pupils to catch up on learning.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school serving the local village and rural community. There are two Reception classes, and seven mixed-aged classes through the rest of the school. Nearly all pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. A privately run pre-school shares some of the school's facilities, but was not included in the inspection.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Attainment is low and has declined from the time of the previous inspection, particularly in English. There are too few pupils working at the higher levels of attainment. Children make a good start in Reception and enter Year 1 with broadly average standards. However, from this point learning slows and progress is inadequate. The main reason for pupils' inadequate achievement is that tasks set for pupils of different abilities take too little account of what they already know. The expectations for the most-able pupils are too low and activities given to less-able pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or difficulties, are too often inappropriate. Whole-class teaching, especially in lesson introductions, does not move on the learning of different groups at a brisk enough pace. The targets and objectives in lessons are too general and of little use in promoting better learning.

The school's leaders recognise that weaknesses remain but the action taken to remedy them, particularly to improve the quality of teaching, has not been effective. The way progress is measured has improved since the previous inspection, but this has not led to robust action to tackle underachievement or hold teachers to account for the progress made in different classes. Teachers are keen to improve the quality of their work but have not been given sufficiently clear direction to enable them to play their full part in school improvement. There are signs that additional provision in English and mathematics to enable pupils to catch up on learning is helping to strengthen progress, but this is not built on well enough in lessons.

Despite these weaknesses, both girls and boys retain positive attitudes to learning and enjoy answering questions and working together. In lessons, most listen well although their attention drops, for example when they sit on the carpet for too long. Around the school the pupils are polite and friendly. They comment that they usually feel safe in school. The headteacher has suitable procedures to deal with any concerns that arise and these are understood by the pupils. However, a very small minority report that bullying occurs, and they say it is not always dealt with sufficiently well by adults. The school has strategies to improve attendance and leaders have been successful in reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent. However, the overall level of attendance remains too low with little sign of sustained improvement. Pupils' understanding of being active and eating healthily is good. For example, there is a good take-up of pupils eating

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fruit and vegetables on 'fruity Friday,' which is organised with the help of parents and carers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, particularly for the most able pupils in English and mathematics across Years 1 to 6 by:
 - providing more opportunities for extended writing especially in Key Stage 1
 - using demonstrations to show pupils how to organise their text into paragraphs that use a range of sentence structures and punctuation marks
 - giving pupils opportunities to apply their mathematical skills by doing more problem solving and investigative work.
- Ensure that the large majority of teaching is good or better by:
 - matching provision closely to the individual needs of pupils
 - ensuring introductions are brisk and actively involve pupils in their learning
 - improving the use of pupils' targets in lessons to make learning more tailored to individuals
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to assess their own work.
- Strengthen the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that weaknesses are tackled robustly and staff have clear direction to enable them to play their full part in improving the quality of provision.
 - Improve attendance through:
 - analysing attendance data more rigorously in order to target actions effectively
 - working even more closely with families whose children do not attend on a regular enough basis.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Children typically start school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are in line with those expected for their ages, although communication, literacy and calculating skills are weaker areas. After the start of Year 1, attainment dips to a low level because of weaknesses in provision. In the current Years 1 and 2, progress remains weak and attainment shows very little sign improvement. Attainment in Year 6 is low in both English and mathematics. There are a few signs from the school's tracking information that progress across Years 3 to 6 has been strengthened recently, but it is not good enough to tackle a legacy of underachievement. In too many lessons learning is either inadequate or barely satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make inadequate progress because work is not tailored to their specific needs, and the same applies to the most-able pupils. During the inspection, for example, pupils of different abilities were asked to write an explanation leaflet using their knowledge of electrical circuits. Here, not enough was expected of the most-able pupils, and in work on fractions in Years 3 and 4, some pupils became confused while others found the work far too easy. In group work, older pupils worked confidently to identify different types of triangle, but the task was too simple for the most-able pupils. Weaknesses in the development of basic

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skills and low attendance mean that pupils are unable to develop a solid foundation for their next stage of learning.

Pupils are well mannered and courteous and their behaviour is satisfactory overall. They typically respond well to requests from teachers and continue to work independently in groups. When their concentration lapses, it is mainly because they are expected to listen passively for too long or work set is insufficiently challenging. Although pupils feel safe, a few incidents are causing disquiet. Pupils say that this is mainly name-calling and play-fighting during play times. At lunchtimes, there is a popular salad bar, and cycling to school has been promoted successfully. Pupils enjoy using the spacious grounds for physical activities. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school community through the school council and they have helped to raise money for children who are less fortunate than themselves. Assemblies are used well, for instance to promote a good understanding of the importance of recycling. Pupils' understanding of those from different backgrounds and cultures is less well developed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
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	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is not promoting learning well enough in Years 1 to 6. On too many occasions whole-class teaching covers work which is too easy for the most-able pupils and too complex for those with special educational needs and/or difficulties. This reflects planning which is too often focused on general activities, for example to write an acrostic poem,

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rather than the skills different groups are expected to use. It is made worse on some occasions because whole-class teaching carries on for too long. When this happens, the pupils become restless and inattentive. However, pupils are managed effectively and respond well to requests to get on with the work given. Teaching assistants provide additional support in lessons for pupils with weak basic skills. However, during whole-class sessions, their skills are not always used fully to promote learning. Marking to help pupils extend their learning is inconsistent in quality. The use of targets in lessons to help pupils assess their own work so that they can identify what they need to do to improve is at a very early stage of development.

The curriculum is not sufficiently well matched to the pupils' needs. Skills are not always taught in a logical sequence and there are too many occasions when work is insufficiently well adapted to the personal plans of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additionally, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills to problem solving and work on investigations. Despite these weaknesses, pupils are interested in their work and keen to be involved in their learning. For example, in Years 3 and 4, they enthusiastically pooled ideas about developing characters in writing and in Years 5 and 6, they worked out the values of different symbols in order to solve number problems. The school provides an interesting range of well-attended clubs and visits to places of interest to make learning more enjoyable.

Despite the weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum, there is a positive learning environment. Although some procedures are helping to improve attendance, leaders recognise that they do not go far enough and have not yet developed a deeper understanding of the causes of the low attendance. There are a few instances of bullying which are not always dealt with fully to the satisfaction of pupils or their parents and carers. There are strong links with the adjoining pre-school because of close working arrangements, and good procedures ensure a smooth transition to secondary school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are not taking effective steps to secure good teaching. Teachers are committed to improving the quality of provision and work with enthusiasm in lessons. However, this effort has not been channelled to good effect in promoting effective learning for different groups of pupils. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate because common weaknesses in teaching have not been tackled and there is an overall lack of direction. Recent plans for improvement cover the correct priorities and external support has been sought. These have yet to have sufficient impact on learning.

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The governing body is beginning to strengthen its role through monitoring the work of the school and developing links with parents and carers. Its understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses is improving, but the challenge to bring about improvement has not been strong enough and it has had too little impact on the work of the school. Provision to secure equal opportunities and tackle discrimination is inadequate because the outcomes for different groups of pupils are inadequate and show little sign of improvement.

Staff have been suitably trained in child protection and the school follows good practice in recruitment procedures. Regular checks are made to ensure that the premises and equipment are safe. Leaders recognise and address the needs of pupils who need extra support because their circumstances make them particularly vulnerable. The school has a suitable policy and plan to promote community cohesion. Relationships in the school are harmonious; however, planning to promote wider national and international links is at an early stage of development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
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	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress across the various areas of learning. Attainment on entry to the school has recently been strengthened as a result of close working with the pre-school. The children are confident in choosing activities for themselves. Activities to promote counting are made fun and interesting with much active participation, such as when the children used the story of Noah to help them to count in twos, following the jumps on a number line. The children enjoy playing in the outside area, but this is yet to be used to its fullest extent during inclement weather. When a child noticed a 'dead' ladybird in the handlebars of a bike, the teacher used this as an opportunity to discuss the hibernation of different animals. There are good opportunities for the children to develop

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their literacy skills with plenty of interesting activities designed to promote writing. These include writing labels and shopping lists with the help of word walls. Adults play word games with children and this is helping the children to recognise common words. As a result of these strategies, they are making good progress in their letter formation and the most-able children are beginning to write in sentences.

Adults work well together to ensure the children are safe and secure. Good links are being forged with parent and carers through workshops and consultation evenings. Parents and carers comment positively about the enthusiasm of staff and how well their children have settled.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires returned by parents and carers was below average. The returns indicate that parents and carers think their children feel safe and mostly enjoy school. There are regular opportunities for the parents and carers to come into school, which many take up, and positive comments were made about staff being welcoming and helpful. However, some parents and carers rightly recognise that some areas of the school's work are not good enough, including their children's progress. Inspection evidence confirms this. A few parents and carers commented that behaviour is not good enough and bullying is not being dealt with effectively. Inspectors judged behaviour in lessons to be satisfactory with the pupils wanting to learn. In the playground, some boisterous behaviour was noted.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 62 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 236 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	61	19	31	3	5	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	29	47	29	47	2	3	1	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	22	35	30	48	8	13	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	50	17	27	12	19	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	33	53	20	32	7	11	2	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	52	19	31	10	16	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	48	26	42	4	6	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	26	42	19	31	8	13	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	48	18	29	12	19	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	32	16	26	13	21	13	21
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	35	18	29	16	26	4	6
The school is led and managed effectively	21	34	19	31	12	19	5	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	44	24	39	9	15	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 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



14 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millfield Primary School, Ely, CB6 1HW

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you. You were friendly and gave us a lot of valuable information. The inspectors judged that the school is not providing you with an adequate education, and so you are not achieving as well as you should be. Much needs to be done to improve teaching and the curriculum in order to raise standards. The school will therefore be subject to special measures, which means that it will get extra help and some inspectors will return to see how it is doing.

These are some of the things we noted about your school.

Children in Reception have settled well and are making good progress, particularly with literacy and numeracy, but this is not maintained through the rest of the school.

You told us you feel safe, but that sometimes behaviour is not good enough and this includes name-calling or play-fighting.

You behave well inside the school and are keen to contribute in lessons.

You have a good understanding of how to stay healthy including which foods are good for you.

You help others who are less fortunate by raising money and collecting gifts.

We have asked your headteacher and the staff to make a number of improvements to help you to learn better. They need make sure you reach the levels expected by the time you leave school, particularly in English and mathematics. You also need to be given work that is not too easy or difficult, and we have asked your teachers to ensure that the start to lessons is brisk and involves more of you. More also needs to be done to help you understand what to do to improve your work. We have also asked your headteacher to provide the teachers with more help to improve how they plan your work. Finally, your attendance is too low and you can all help here by coming to school as regularly as possible.

Yours sincerely

Peter Clifton

Lead inspector

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