

Milwards Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114922
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	378961
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2012
Lead inspector	George Logan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	252
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Tanner-Smith
Headteacher	Angela Callaway
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2008
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	15–16 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

George Logan Additional inspector

Diana Songer-Hudgell Additional inspector

Robert Miller Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent ten hours visiting 20 lessons taught by nine different members of staff. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and with staff and two groups of pupils. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, listened to pupils reading and looked at the school's documentation, which included records of teaching, the main improvement plan, records relating to safeguarding and extracts from the school's tracking of pupils' progress. A scrutiny of pupils' written work was also undertaken. The inspectors analysed 141 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, together with questionnaires from staff and from pupils.

Information about the school

Milwards Primary School and Nursery is an average-sized primary school. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There are a few pupils from the Gypsy/Roma community. A small, but increasing, minority of pupils speak English as an additional language. Most of these are relatively recent arrivals in the United Kingdom, mainly from Eastern Europe, and are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is slightly above average. However, the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is much higher than is normally found. Many of these have complex physical and/or cognitive needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school does not meet the minimum standard expected by the government for pupils at the end of Year 6. The school offers before- and after-school care clubs, managed by the governing body. The school has gained a number of awards. These include the Green Tree School Eco-Award, the Sustrans Bronze Mark for cycling activities the Eco-School Bronze Award and Healthy School status.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is improving steadily and is well-regarded in its community. The school makes extensive, high-quality provision for disabled pupils and those who have significant special educational needs. It is not good overall because pupils' progress is not yet consistent or rapid enough.
- Progress has improved in Nursery and Reception, although more-able children are not yet challenged sufficiently. Steady progress in Years 1 and 2 contributes to average attainment at the end of Year 2. Progress in Years 3 to 6 has improved in English, but is no better than satisfactory in mathematics. Attainment at the end of Year 6, though still broadly average, shows a clear trend of improvement. Science has insufficient prominence in some classes.
- Teaching is satisfactory and some good teaching was observed. However, the pace of learning and teachers' expectations of pupils, including the quality of pupils' written work, are not always high enough. Teachers' marking of writing gives pupils clear guidance for improving their work. However, this approach is not generally the case in other subjects, including mathematics.
- Behaviour, safety and pupils' personal development are good. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning. Provision for pupils' welfare is good and pupils feel very safe. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Attendance is consistently above average.
- While many aspects of the management of performance are good, ensuring a clear direction and well-established systems, the leadership of teaching is not always sufficiently focused to ensure consistent expectations and higher outcomes. The curriculum, including extra-curricular provision, provides satisfactory learning experiences. However, subjects beyond literacy and numeracy are not always studied in sufficient depth.

Schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by

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an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the Early Years Foundation Stage provision by:
 - ensuring that all children, including the more able, have access to challenging activities which enable them to learn at a brisk pace and attain the higher levels.
- Increase the pace of pupils' progress and the levels of attainment they reach, particularly in mathematics, through:
 - establishing more consistent, and higher, expectations of the rigour and quality of pupils' written work
 - more effective marking of work, which indicates to pupils what they need to do next to accelerate the pace of their learning.
- Ensure that science is taught with greater frequency and consistency, and in more depth, across the school.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers feel that their children make good progress. Inspection evidence indicates, however, that pupils' achievement, while satisfactory overall, remains inconsistent. Children's skills on entry to Nursery are below expectations. Although outcomes at the end of Reception rose again in 2011, progress in Nursery and Reception, while improving, remains satisfactory. Despite adult interactions with individual children being often good, the overall pace is sometimes slow and there are missed opportunities to extend learning, particularly for more-able pupils. As a result, too few children are attaining at the higher levels. Increasingly, however, children enter Year 1 with literacy and numeracy skills that are broadly average. While attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 is broadly average, there is a trend of improvement in mathematics, reflecting recent initiatives to enhance progress. Effective teaching and better consolidation of reading skills are helping to accelerate learning. For example, a guided reading session in Year 2 was successful because of careful planning and organisation, challenging tasks set for each reading level and methodical training of pupils in skills such as the scanning of text.

Progress in Years 3 to 6 is also satisfactory, supporting broadly average, but steadily improving, attainment by the end of Year 6. Current projections indicate a significant improvement in 2012 upon relatively low attainment, particularly in mathematics, in 2011. However, progress in mathematics remains slower than in English. Although

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some successful science lessons were observed, provision for science is underdeveloped in some year groups. Overall, progress is constrained because of variable expectations of what pupils should be achieving. This is evident in the rigour and quality of pupils' written work, where there is a significant gap between year groups. In a challenging Year 3 mathematics lesson, good use was made of available staff to deliver introductions closely matched to individual needs. Delivery was briskly paced with well-planned opportunities to consolidate and revise earlier learning. Other lessons also had a relatively brisk pace, although introductions were sometimes lengthy. In general, more rigorous tracking of pupils' progress, greater accountability of staff and a stronger focus on learning are having a positive impact. Progress in reading is increasingly secure, with focused sessions to promote pupils' knowledge of phonics (the linking of letters and sounds) and to develop their reading skills. By the time they leave the school, pupils' attainment in reading is average.

Good provision to meet the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, particularly those with statements, ensures that they make at least satisfactory and often good progress. These pupils benefit from a high level of well-trained and tightly-monitored adult support. This focuses closely upon their academic, as well as their personal development. Pupils who speak English as an additional language, those from minority ethnic groups, and those of Gypsy/Roma heritage, generally make good progress.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers, and pupils, feel that the quality of teaching is good. However, inspectors found that, while some teaching seen was indeed good, the impact of teaching over time has been variable, resulting in mostly satisfactory, though currently improving, progress. Teachers promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well. They encourage cooperative working and a readiness to share. The teaching of phonics is supported by a good range of activities accurately matched to individual needs. Although improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage have ensured that more children now reach average levels of attainment, and the trend is rising, teaching does not yet provide sufficient challenge to enable a greater proportion of children to attain the higher levels. Elsewhere, with an increasing proportion of good teaching, progress is improving steadily, although this remains more secure in English than in mathematics. Where teaching is good, for example, in a Year 4 literacy lesson which focused on accurate punctuation of direct speech, the teacher managed to bring life to a potentially dull topic. Humour, pace and some effective oral demonstrations helped pupils to understand what constituted direct speech. They could then systematically apply the clear rules for writing direct speech accurately. In other lessons, a slow pace, with too little challenge for more-able pupils, constrains learning. The school is well staffed and teaching assistants benefit from good opportunities for training and professional development. They are well-prepared and have a positive impact upon pupils' learning.

Across the school, progress in implementing assessment strategies, including self-

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assessment by pupils and the use of individual targets, has been satisfactory, although their impact on pupils' learning remains inconsistent. The marking of pupils' work in literacy mostly identifies the next steps they need to take in their learning. This approach is less evident in other subjects. Insufficient priority is given to the quality of pupils' written work and presentation is sometimes untidy. Overall, the planned curriculum is beginning to support better progress in pupils' core skills. That said, the time given to science is limited and the recorded work which results from this lacks rigour.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents, carers and pupils rightly recognise the good standard of behaviour and safety in the school. Close relationships between adults and pupils, and the good range of enrichment activities, engage pupils well and help secure a positive community spirit. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and most are motivated learners. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils, parents and carers, have few concerns about behaviour. Most pupils say that they feel very safe, and all parents and carers feel that their children are safe in school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage behave well and conduct themselves safely both indoors and in the outdoor area.

Pupils have a good understanding of risk, supported by the school's input on road safety and personal safety. In activities such as 'Forest School', the school actively encourages pupils to tackle and manage risk. Pupils understand the purpose of the school's efforts to keep them safe when using the internet. There are clear and effective procedures for managing pupils' behaviour. As a result, there are few recorded incidents and few episodes of inappropriate behaviour. School records confirm that pupils' behaviour over time is good. The ethos of the school is extremely inclusive, providing for pupils with a wide range of needs, some of which are high-level physical or cognitive needs. There are few exclusions. There are no reports of bullying of any type. Good procedures are in place to manage any issues that might arise. Attendance is above average. Absences are followed up promptly. Pupils mostly arrive at school punctually. Good provision in the breakfast club supports the prompt arrival of a few pupils who might otherwise have punctuality issues.

Leadership and management

Parents and carers rightly recognise Milwards as a highly inclusive community. The school strongly supports the personal development and well-being of all pupils. The headteacher and middle leaders have, over time, demonstrated great commitment to the needs of the high number of pupils with statements of educational needs, but not at the expense of any other pupils. The introduction of well-organised and popular before- and after-school care arrangements and significant investment in pastoral support has enhanced opportunities for all pupils. Senior leaders and the governing body ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective. The school is

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active in tackling discrimination and is resolutely committed to promoting equality.

School leaders are ambitious for all pupils to have the opportunity to make the best progress they can. A robust tracking system and rigorous data analysis aid leaders in closely monitoring pupils' progress and carefully targeting support. However, the monitoring of teaching is not always incisive enough to ensure that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are consistently high.

Through its good extra-curricular and enrichment programme and a commitment to the individual, the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development well. Pupils' awareness of cultural diversity is satisfactorily promoted. Though still satisfactory in its enhancement of pupils' basic skills, the curriculum provides a viable framework within which to drive attainment up.

School self-evaluation indicates that school leaders have accurately judged what still needs to be done and have the capacity to bring about further improvement. The governing body is keen and committed and fulfils its duties conscientiously. Governors have a realistic view of the school's strengths and actively support its work. Though diligent in monitoring the school's policies and procedures, they do not yet focus sufficiently on outcomes for pupils to be able to fully challenge leaders and managers about the impact of the school's work.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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 March 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Milwards Primary School and Nursery, Harlow, CM19 4QX

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, spending time in lessons and hearing your views. Thank you to those who completed our questionnaire. We found that Milwards is a satisfactory school and it is improving steadily.

- Attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6. However, you make better progress in English than in mathematics. Too little attention is given to science.
- The school provides really well for children who are disabled or who have high levels of special educational needs.
- Although provision in Reception has improved and children now have average skills in reading, writing and mathematics when they enter Year 1, lesson time is not always used well and progress could be faster still.
- Teaching is often good. You learn well in many lessons, but your written work can be untidy. Marking does not always give you enough guidance about how to improve your work.
- You have very positive views about school, have good attitudes to learning and behave well. Attendance is above average.
- Senior leaders are keen to improve the school. They ensure that children with particular needs are well supported. They are working hard to ensure that your academic progress is more rapid.

To help you to do better, we have asked the school to:

- develop provision for Nursery and Reception children so that they are more challenged and attain even higher levels
- help you to make more rapid progress and gain higher levels of attainment through teachers having higher expectations of the quality of your written work and giving you clear guidance through marking as to how you can improve
- ensure that you get more opportunities to explore science and build your scientific skills and knowledge.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan
Lead inspector

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