

Mill Lane Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 111539 |
| Local Authority | Stockton-on-Tees |
| Inspection number | 356937 |
| Inspection dates | 8–9 June 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Kevin Johnson |

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 | 182 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Jonathan Robinson |
| Headteacher | Mrs Carol O'Brien |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Wellington Street Stockton-on-Tees County Durham TS18 1QX |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Eleven lessons were observed and nine teachers seen. Meetings were held with parents, groups of pupils, staff, and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's assessment data, samples of pupils' work, policies and governing body minutes as well as documentation relating to safeguarding and the curriculum. Also taken into account were 99 questionnaires returned by parents and carers along with those completed by pupils and staff.

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

- Whether the school's assessment of pupils' attainment is accurate.
- Whether teaching promotes good progress.
- The effectiveness of the school's partnerships in promoting improved outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Almost half of the pupils are from the locally-settled Pakistani community and increasing numbers from eastern European and other countries are being enrolled. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average.

The school hosts a specially-funded unit for up to ten pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. The overall proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.

The school has achieved Activemark and has gained Gold 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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school where overall outcomes are outstanding. Exceptional care, guidance and support for all pupils result in their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They enjoy school and achieve well.

Children are given a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage from starting points which are, overall, significantly lower than those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and personal and social development. Many starting nursery do not speak English. Nevertheless, pupils make good progress because of the strong provision and the excellent work with parents and carers to enable them to help their children at home.

Good progress continues throughout the school due to consistently good and, at times, outstanding teaching. Following a period of fluctuation, attainment is in the broadly average range. A constantly effective factor is the good support given to pupils who speak English as an additional language and to those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's outstanding use of assessment, checks, supports and improves the progress of all pupils. Pupils who attend the specially-funded unit are well-engaged and motivated by the well-targeted help they receive. However, the school is aware that English and mathematics remain areas for further improvement throughout the school

Most of the pupils' personal qualities are outstanding including behaviour and commitment to a healthy lifestyle. They say that they feel exceptionally safe and are involved in the school's excellent safeguarding procedures. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school's everyday life and to its welcoming ethos. Their average and improving attendance is a contributing factor to their generally good preparation to secure their future economic well-being.

Leaders at every level are strongly committed to the school's future success. Excellent working partnerships, with parents and carers and links with schools and other providers significantly enhance all pupils' learning and teachers' leadership and management skills. Monitoring by subject leaders of the effectiveness of English and mathematics is good but is not as robustly in place in other subjects. Community cohesion within and beyond the school is exceptional. Since the last inspection, leaders have consolidated many areas of the school's work and improved others such as the outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the effectiveness of assessment, and aspects of the now outstanding safeguarding procedures. These improvements have impacted positively on provision and outcomes. The governing body fulfils a challenging and evaluative role effectively. These improvements coupled with leadership's accurate view of the school's work demonstrate good capacity for continued improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics throughout the school by:
 - - ensuring that pupils know and apply strategies to improve their spelling, including the use of opportunities to check each other's work
 - - improving pupils' mental agility in mathematics when problem-solving and providing opportunities for them to apply their learning in practical ways across the curriculum.
- Extend the role of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to all subject leaders.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' excellent behaviour and attentiveness in lessons are major contributors to their good learning and progress. Pupils thrive on challenges and work effectively with partners in the classroom. They work hard and understand what they need to do to improve. They particularly enjoy opportunities to use computers and Year 6 pupils, for example, use word-processing skills well to produce good-quality writing linked to their topic work. Bilingual support for pupils who speak English as an additional language is very effective in lessons and ensures a good pace to those pupils' learning. However there is, at times, too little emphasis placed on the application of skills particularly to improve spelling and mathematical understanding for all pupils.

From their varying starting points on entering school, often outside the normal admission times, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Progress for those who speak English as an additional language is rapid at times. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they are supported well by learning programmes that are tailored precisely to their particular needs. The teachers' frequent checking of assessments both ensures and demonstrates that good progress is maintained. The progress of pupils in the specially-funded speech and language unit is good overall with some examples of outstanding progress, reflecting strengths in teaching, management and tracking of progress.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary as are their relationships with one another. They are invariably polite and well-mannered and have a deep sense of loyalty to the school. Pupils are firmly opposed to all forms of bullying or racist behaviour. 'Playground friends' fully live up to their job description and are always on hand should they be needed to give help or reassurance. Pupils have excellent understanding of issues related to their health and well-being. They are greatly appreciative of the quality and healthy aspects of lunchtime choices and very keen to participate in sports and other active after-school clubs. As well as having a strong voice in school affairs pupils, for example, eagerly enlist for neighbourhood watch schemes, raise funds for charity and very much contribute to the school's profound sense of community. Their considerably well-developed personal qualities and improving standards and attendance are providing a good foundation for the next stage of their education.

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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 | 2 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 1 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 3 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |

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 good overall and inspectors also saw examples of outstanding teaching. Interesting methods and use of resources such as a selection of soft toys to help pupils to use alliteration in their descriptive poems, bring lessons to life. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and different ability groups are challenged by work which is matched well to their needs. Teaching assistants provide valuable support. They are skilled at managing pupils' learning and very sensitive to their individual needs, especially those whose circumstances potentially make them vulnerable. Lesson-planning is based soundly on teachers' excellent knowledge of pupils' abilities and progress. Assessment and marking are of high quality. They ensure that pupils are well-informed about their next steps in learning and give significant impetus to pupils' good progress and rising attainment. In a small number of lessons too much is expected of some groups of pupils who do not learn as well as they might without adult support. Occasionally, too little is expected, especially when pupils could use more independent strategies such as referring to dictionaries to correct their own spelling.

Pupils gain a good deal of enjoyment from the curriculum which enables them to achieve well. A good selection of after-school activities enables them to nurture skills and interest in sport and the arts. This has a good impact on pupils' confidence and their development of self-esteem. A good emphasis is placed on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils practise writing appropriately across different

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subjects but there are fewer planned opportunities for the application of mathematical skills or problem-solving. Curriculum planning embraces good opportunities for pupils to develop personally, for example, through the promotion of community cohesion whereby pupils compare cultural lifestyles with those in different circumstances.

Parents and carers overwhelmingly endorse pupils' views that they are exceptionally safe and well cared for in school. They typically comment on how all staff reach out to the community, particularly those who may be new and unable to speak English. Support for potentially vulnerable pupils, and families, is exceptional and ensures that all are fully included in whatever the school provides. Staff work vigorously with a small number of parents to improve their children's attendance and have well established systems for monitoring and encouraging attendance overall. Parents are extremely happy with the opportunities they have to discuss their children's progress and equally happy about the progress they make as well as the arrangements for pupils joining the school and transferring to the next. The clear guidance for pupils is amply reflected in their outstanding personal development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 2 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 1 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 2 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 1 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The energetic commitment to further improvement, shared by leaders at all levels, is derived from their passionate belief that the school is the heart of the community. All staff members are very ambitious for every pupil: evidence of the school's outstanding promotion of equality of opportunity. All forms of discrimination are challenged and each pupil is enabled to achieve. Parents and carers are very much part of the vision and are strongly encouraged and supported in their endeavours to improve their skills and help their children at home. The collective drive for improvement has gathered pace through the strengthening of the senior leadership and the resulting impact of their monitoring of teaching quality in English and mathematics. This level of monitoring and evaluation does not extend to the roles of leaders of other subjects to promote their accountability for improvement in their areas. The governing body supports and challenges the school in equal measure. Its members are well-informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their close monitoring of planned improvements helps them to share effectively in the school's accurate self-evaluation. Procedures for safeguarding are outstanding. Excellent quality assurance, routinely informed by pupils and parents and carers, is high on the school's agenda. All are exceptionally well-informed about their responsibilities. The way in which systems and information are integrated into the curriculum makes pupil very thoughtful about their personal well-being. The promotion of community cohesion is excellent. Productive exchange visits with schools in the United

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Kingdom give pupils a broader understanding of cultural diversity. The sharing of information with pupils in Helsinki, San Francisco and Rwanda take that understanding an important step further.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 2 |
| 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 | 1 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 1 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are well provided for and make good progress. Provision for children's welfare is outstanding as is the strength of teamwork among staff and their commitment to providing the best for the children. Excellent planning and assessment, which fully takes account of children's individual starting points and the one-to-one engagement of parents, particularly those who do not speak English, are exemplary features of the relatively new leadership. The very recent completion of improvements to the outdoor area is beginning to impact on the range of activities provided, and children's independence, especially those activities which they choose for themselves. The unexpected discovery of a beetle by children digging in the garden motivated a group to dig more energetically to see what else they could find. Well-targeted teaching of letters and sounds, particularly for children who speak English as an additional language, gives a good boost to their confidence when tackling early reading and writing. Mathematical development is also woven effectively into children's play, for example, by teaching the names of shapes through a game where children have to think and move quickly from one shape to another. Children's personal social and emotional development is given high priority resulting in their increasing confidence, trusting relationships and enjoyment of learning. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the way in which they, too, can contribute to their children's learning and development.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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 | 1 |

Views of parents and carers

A majority of parents and carers returned completed questionnaires. Overall, they expressed overwhelming support for the school. Those who attended a meeting with inspectors spoke highly of the headteacher's leadership and the way in which the staff engage parents and carers in school matters. A very few parents and carers expressed individual concerns. These were discussed with school leaders whilst ensuring that parents' and carers' anonymity was protected.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mill Lane 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 99 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 182 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 68 | 69 | 31 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 78 | 79 | 21 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 55 | 56 | 39 | 39 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 53 | 54 | 42 | 42 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 62 | 63 | 35 | 35 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 65 | 66 | 31 | 31 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 57 | 58 | 37 | 37 | 1 | 1 | 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) | 53 | 54 | 42 | 42 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 52 | 53 | 44 | 44 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 64 | 65 | 29 | 29 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 57 | 58 | 39 | 39 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 67 | 68 | 26 | 26 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 73 | 74 | 26 | 26 | 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 | 46 | 48 | 6 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 6 | 47 | 40 | 7 |
| Secondary schools | 12 | 39 | 38 | 11 |
| Sixth forms | 13 | 42 | 41 | 3 |
| Special schools | 28 | 49 | 19 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 14 | 45 | 31 | 10 |
| All schools | 10 | 46 | 37 | 7 |

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



10 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mill Lane Primary School, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1QX

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school recently. It was a delight for us to talk to you, not least because of your exceptional politeness and good manners. We noticed your outstanding behaviour in lessons and around the school, how beautifully you take care of one another, and how fit and healthy you are. That is not surprising, having sampled those fantastic school lunches! It was also very clear that you love your school and are very proud to belong to such a happy community.

Mill Lane is a good school. Although you make good progress and achieve well overall, the standards you reach in English and mathematics need to be higher. Your teachers work hard to make your lessons fun. We found that they do that well and plan good ways for you to learn. The grown-ups in school take excellent care of you and keep you very safe.

Your teachers, parents and members of the governing body are just as proud of your school as you are and, of course, would like to make it better. To help that to happen, we have asked them to help you to reach higher standards in English and mathematics by first making sure that you improve your spelling and that you know how to check your spelling for yourselves. Second, by helping you to improve your mental mathematics skills and by giving you more chances to use and develop them in different ways and in different subjects.

You can help by continuing to enjoy school as much as you do already and working really hard on those things which need to improve.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Johnson
Lead inspector

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