

# Emerson Valley School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131190
<b>Local Authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	360227
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Angela Kirk

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	477
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lynne Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Janette Brown
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	31 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Hodder Lane Milton Keynes MK4 2JR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01908507914
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<b>Email address</b>	emersonvalley@milton-keynes.gov.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. There were 26 lessons observed taught by 19 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, groups of pupils and a representative of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised pupils' books, monitoring and assessment information, policies, safeguarding documents and teachers' planning. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from staff and pupils as well as 138 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- Inspectors explored the impact of initiatives to improve pupils' achievement.
- They looked at how good progress is, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, for different groups of pupils and for the more able in writing.
- They considered whether teaching is good enough to accelerate progress and raise attainment, and whether it meets the needs of all groups of pupils.

## Information about the school

Emerson Valley is a larger-than-average-sized junior school. Approximately 60% of pupils are from White British backgrounds, other pupils are from a wide range of ethnic groups. The main ethnic groups have Indian or African heritage. A few pupils join the school in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Their main needs are related to moderate learning difficulties. The school has achieved Healthy School status, International School status and a Bronze Eco-School award.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

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

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Emerson Valley is a satisfactory school. Pupils make satisfactory progress to achieve broadly average attainment by the time they leave the school. Progress across the school is inconsistent as a result of inconsistent teaching with pupils usually, but not always, making better progress in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 3 and 4.

Pupils in Year 3 settle well into school as a result of good transition arrangements with the two feeder infant schools and extra support in school, for example older pupils are keen to act as their 'Playground Pals'. Pupils say that they enjoy school, particularly the wide range of sport and music opportunities offered. As a result, attendance is above average. Pupils behave well and are polite and considerate to one another, ensuring that lessons are calm and productive. They display good attitudes to learning and there is a positive and friendly ethos throughout the school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and spoke animatedly to inspectors about recent role-play activities they had enjoyed, which taught them to deal with emergencies. Pupils are able to articulate their understanding of balanced diets well, with older pupils also showing a good understanding of the importance of sleep and a good awareness of the dangers associated with smoking. This understanding reflects the school's Healthy School status.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but inconsistent. A greater proportion of good teaching and the more insightful use of assessment information are particularly evident in Years 5 and 6 where this has accelerated pupils' progress. A few teachers do not plan work that is at the right level to challenge all pupils and their marking and feedback to pupils are not well linked to learning objectives. So, as a result, some pupils do not know how to improve their work. Not all teachers ensure that pupils know what they need to do to achieve well in lessons. The curriculum is broad but is still being developed and there is an inconsistency in how different year groups have developed the progression of skills. The school has plans to review this. Care, guidance and support are a strength in the school. Staff know pupils well and there is excellent support and care for vulnerable pupils, individually and in small groups. The school has taken effective steps to improve since its last inspection, but there is still too much inconsistency across the school. Where teachers have embraced the school's initiatives, achievement of pupils is good. Senior and middle leaders have undertaken good-quality monitoring and evaluation. Self-evaluation is largely accurate. Good practice is shared throughout the school and much inadequate teaching has been addressed. However, senior leaders and the governing body have not held all teachers well enough to account for the achievement of the pupils they teach and, for some, improvements are too slow. The governing body is starting to challenge the school and has recently improved the focus of its monitoring of the school's work to focus on key areas of improvement. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

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Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve progress by:
  - improving the quality of teaching and learning so that by July 2012 it is consistently good, especially in Years 3 and 4
  - ensuring that planning identifies work at the right level to challenge all pupils
  - ensuring that pupils know exactly what to do to achieve well in each lesson
  - improving the consistency of marking and feedback to that of the best.
- Evaluate and improve the curriculum so that there is good skills progression between themes and year groups.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by using monitoring and evaluation information to hold teachers more effectively to account for the achievement of the pupils they teach.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

<b>3</b>
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Pupils join Year 3 with average attainment overall. Assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2010 showed that attainment in English has risen as a result of the school's focus on writing and achievement now is satisfactory. Attainment in mathematics is usually better than in English. There is evidence of accelerated progress in English and mathematics, mainly, but not exclusively, in Years 5 and 6 due to good teaching and successful interventions. The good teaching in the school always starts from prior assessment. For example, in a Year 6 lesson the teacher had identified in previous writing that pupils' use of text to build up tension in their stories was a relative weakness. She used the music from the film 'Jaws' to develop pupils' understanding of how to create tension and compared this to text, supporting pupils' good understanding of the use of short sentences, describing something coming closer and closer and a sudden noise. Where teaching is weaker, teachers do not match pupils' prior learning well to the learning objective or to the work set, resulting in work either being too easy or too hard for too many pupils. All teachers in the school use talk partners or trios to help pupils to develop their spoken English skills and explore new ideas during lessons. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, pupils made good progress in their personal development and health education lesson and as a result of the use of talk partners could clearly articulate their understanding of what it means to be assertive. One pupil explained, 'You are confident about what you want to say, sure about it, but you don't say it using an angry tone (of voice).' Occasionally, teachers do not give pupils sufficient 'thinking time' when using this technique.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress along with their peers. Some successful interventions have enabled them to catch up previous underachievement. More-able pupils are well challenged when teaching is good. The school has further supported its more-able writers and mathematicians by providing clubs, which pupils enjoy and are determined to achieve their best. Behaviour is good, pupils enjoy school and there is a shared culture of positive attitudes to learning as reflected in

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their enthusiasm when discussing their school. They say that bullying, if it does occur, is handled well by staff. Pupils show good manners and relate well to each other and to the staff. They are proud of the contribution they make to their school life and the eco squad and environmental club continue to support the school's Eco-School award. Social and moral development is good so pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and undertake considerable fundraising for various charities. However, their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils show a limited understanding beyond their own background and experiences. Pupils' basic skills prepare them satisfactorily for secondary school, although pupils are well prepared in terms of their personal development.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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 school ensures that the care, guidance and support it provides are effective. Pupils demonstrate confidence when taking part in activities because they have good relationships with adults who know them well. The school has established good links with other agencies in order to provide well-targeted support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Effective strategies are used to help pupils understand the purpose of lessons. In the good lessons observed teachers used steps to success so that pupils knew exactly how to achieve well. In weaker lessons, the steps to success were either not helpful or missing from the lesson content. A few inadequate lessons were observed where previous learning

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was not used effectively to plan the lesson. Consequently, work was either too easy or too hard for pupils, resulting in inadequate progress. Lessons are typically well organised and teaching assistants are deployed well to support learning. Marking across the school is inconsistent resulting in some pupils being unclear where they need to improve.

The curriculum includes some themes which pupils particularly enjoy and through which writing and information and communication technology are developed well. Pupils' personal development and well-being are a strength in the curriculum. The school is aware that there is not always good progression from one theme to the next in the skills that are taught. Extra-curricular opportunities, which have an excellent take up, are a strength; the school has an orchestra, choir, many successful sports teams and a wide range of clubs, including a number where pupils also learn French, Spanish, German and Russian supporting the school's International School award status.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The large team of senior leaders and managers communicates high expectations to staff and is motivated to improve the school further. Initiatives to improve writing have proved successful and pupils' achievement is now average. However, while this impact is clear through the teaching and learning for many pupils, and through overall improvements to teaching and learning over the past few years, there are still teachers who have not been held to account sufficiently well for the progress of the pupils they teach. Although pupils are making satisfactory progress overall and many are now making good progress, this is not yet sufficient to raise attainment. Leaders have eradicated most, but not all, weaknesses in teaching. The governing body has a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement as a result of useful reports and presentations from senior staff. Safeguarding is good and procedures and systems are embedded and followed by all. Health care plans for vulnerable pupils are clear and comprehensive and the school is proactive in following up any incidents and ensuring that records are amended and policies reviewed if necessary.

Engagement with parents and carers is good and the school has worked hard to improve relationships and to create a welcoming environment. Parents are well informed and their views are taken into account. Partnerships with other local schools and health and education professionals to promote sport, modern foreign languages and pupils' welfare are strong. Systems to measure and analyse the progress of different groups of pupils are sophisticated and the school knows exactly where improvement is required and are acting on it. The school has a good view of the performance of different groups including

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different ethnic groups represented. There is some improvement where the school has targeted its actions. All pupils are included well and very occasional incidents of racist behaviour are dealt with robustly. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. There are developing links with the local community but insufficient opportunities currently for pupils to build an understanding of the United Kingdom as a diverse multicultural society.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very positive about all aspects of the school. The school's actions to ensure that pupils are kept safe and enjoy school had the highest levels of agreement. Almost all of the parents and carers who responded are happy with their child's experience of school overall. One parent summed up the views of many, 'My child loves school and they do lots of things to make learning fun.' A very small minority of parents and carers felt that their child was not making enough progress. The inspectors found that overall pupils make satisfactory progress and, as identified in the report, this is an area for the school to improve. Some parents and carers thought that the school did not always deal well with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found behaviour to be good and that staff dealt with those incidents of unacceptable behaviour well. Behaviour records scrutinised indicated a clear and consistent system to deal with unacceptable behaviour.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Emerson Valley 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 138 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 477 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	84	61	53	38	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	78	57	59	43	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	39	28	93	67	2	1	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	36	70	51	12	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	59	43	71	51	5	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	35	78	57	8	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	33	84	61	6	4	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)	56	41	72	52	4	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	38	74	54	7	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	30	77	56	10	7	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	26	86	62	8	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	63	46	67	49	3	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	76	55	60	43	2	1	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



23 June 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Emerson Valley School, Milton Keynes, MK4 2JR**

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. What you told us in discussions, and through the questionnaires that you filled in, helped us when we were thinking about our findings. We were impressed by your good behaviour in lessons and around the school.

We think that your school is satisfactory. This means that some things are going well, but there are some things that could be better. All the adults in the school take good care of you and you say that they listen to you if you have any worries or concerns. You told us that this, together with your personal, social and health education lessons, helps you to feel safe. Your attendance is good. You take regular exercise and know about the importance of a healthy diet.

We found that, although a number of you make good progress, too many of you only make satisfactory progress because you do not have enough good lessons. In order to improve, we have asked your teachers to make all lessons as good as the best ones, so that you can all make good progress. They will do this by setting work that is at just the right level to challenge you and by making sure that you know exactly what to do to achieve well in the lesson. We have also asked some of the teachers to make their marking and feedback better so that you know what you need to improve. We have asked the senior teachers and the governing body to make sure that all the teachers are the best they can be. You told us that you enjoy school and some of you told us about the interesting themes and topics that you study. We have asked your school to check these topics to make sure that you learn all the skills you need to, in the right order, as you move through the school.

You can help too by always trying your hardest in lessons and by trying to improve your work by listening carefully to your teachers' advice and reading their comments on your work. You can then use this information to help you to improve.

Yours sincerely

Angela Kirk

Lead inspector

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