

Mildmay Junior School

Robin Way, Chelmsford, CM2 8AU

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This is a rapidly improving school as a result of the headteacher's excellent leadership. Teachers, governors, support staff and the pupils themselves are fully committed to getting even better.
- Pupils are now making good progress in all year groups. Attainment is average in reading, writing and mathematics by the time pupils leave the school.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is always good and often outstanding.
- Relationships are excellent.
- Parents are very pleased with what the school provides for their children.
- Teaching is now typically good as a result of regular and thorough checking of teaching by the headteacher and senior leaders. This is now leading to improving levels of attainment as pupils progress through the school.
- Additional adults employed to help pupils who find learning difficult are effective and make sure those who find learning difficult make good progress.
- Pupils in the enhanced provision are now making better progress than in the past because teaching has improved and pupils are given interesting things to do.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding to bring about exceptional progress or above average attainment by the end of Year 6.
- All teachers are not yet helping pupils to think more deeply about what it is they are learning by using more probing questions.
- Expectations about the amount of work pupils are capable of producing are not always high enough.
- Teachers are not yet consistently setting work which is sufficiently demanding and which recognises that pupils are now working at a higher level than in the past.
- The links between reading and writing are not being made sufficiently explicit so that pupils can make full use of these to help them improve their own writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons in the school and in the enhanced provision, five of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed pupils moving around the school, in the dining room and at break and lunchtimes. They listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with pupils, senior leaders, including subjects and other leaders, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 45 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as parents' spoken and written views, and the school's most recent parental questionnaires. Inspectors took account of 32 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked closely at a range of documentation, including the school's information about the progress of pupils, the school's view of its own performance, plans for improvement, safeguarding policies and records relating to the management of teachers' performance.

Inspection team

Nichola Perry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alison Carter

Additional Inspector

Janet Tomkins

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional funding given to schools for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and some others) is lower than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is slightly above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also slightly above average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection there have been a significant number of staff changes.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs in the form of enhanced provision for twelve profoundly deaf pupils who spend a proportion of their time in classes with the other pupils as appropriate to their needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding, thereby raising attainment by:
 - making sure that all teachers consistently plan more demanding work which takes full account of pupils' improved rates of progress and higher attainment
 - insisting that pupils produce a greater volume of work, across all subjects, particularly in writing, in the time available
 - making the links between reading and writing more explicit and actively encouraging pupils to use their increasing knowledge of high quality writing in their own writing
 - encouraging pupils to think more deeply about what they are learning by asking more probing questions.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is average by the time pupils leave the school. Levels of attainment in all three subjects are rising consistently in all year groups because learning is now securely good so that pupils are achieving well from their individual starting points. This accelerated progress represents good improvement since the previous inspection when pupils were not making as much progress as they should.
- Learning focuses strongly on making sure that all pupils have a good grasp of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Good emphasis is placed on communication and language, for example, through drama activities, role play, use of talk partners or group work which is helping pupils of all abilities develop better confidence in their writing.
- Use of drawing is similarly having a positive effect by helping pupils to rehearse and explain their ideas for their writing. These methods of helping pupils learn more effectively, along with skilful support staff, are also ensuring that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the same good progress as their classmates.
- Renewed focus on the teaching of reading is contributing strongly to improved rates of progress. The many pupils heard reading during the inspection make good use of their developing skills, for example, in interpreting unfamiliar or new words so that reading is more fluent and pupils' understanding of texts is good.
- Links that teachers are making between reading and writing are also having a positive effect on pupils' growing understanding of how authors use rich and exciting language in their books. Whilst this is increasingly evident in the way pupils are now able to improve their own sentences in lessons, teachers are not yet making sufficient use of reading texts so that improvement can be seen in pupils' own writing.
- Learning is well planned and structured, and pupils of all abilities are effectively supported. Excellent use of additional sessions and support is ensuring that pupils in all groups, but especially older pupils needing to catch up, are now working at a higher level than in the past.
- This is particularly the case in mathematics, where increasing numbers of pupils are now working towards, and reaching, the highest level of attainment possible in Year 6. However, as year groups progress through the school, all pupils are now working at a higher level than in the past. In some classes teachers have not raised their expectations accordingly to reflect pupils' improved levels of attainment year on year.
- Improvements to the enhanced provision have led to pupils now learning well so that they are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics than in the past, although progress in mathematics is better than in English. Learning is effectively structured in achievable steps and pupils are very well supported by additional adults. Communication skills are good.
- All pupils in the enhanced provision make good progress in their use of British Sign Language, including those new to it. This aspect of their learning is further enhanced when teachers and pupils in the main school also use sign language whenever they are able. Pupils benefit greatly, both socially and academically, from the opportunities they are given to work alongside pupils in the main school.
- Progress and attainment for pupils supported by pupil premium funding has been erratic in both

English and mathematics. For example, national data show considerable improvement in both subjects in 2012 from 2011, when comparing the attainment of these pupils to their classmates and with other similar pupils nationally. In 2013 pupils performed slightly less well in both subjects than their classmates. In English pupils are in the region of two terms behind their peers. In mathematics, although this was an improvement on the 2012 results, pupils are around four terms behind when compared with their classmates.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good throughout the school and some is outstanding. In the best lessons teachers' use a broad range of approaches to encourage pupils to improve their work.
- Of particular note is when some pupils are starting to introduce vibrant features of language into their own writing that they have derived from their reading books. This indicates that these pupils are being effectively helped to make the important link between reading and writing. All teachers are not consistently raising the level of their teaching in this way to match pupils' raised attainment levels.
- Teaching of basic skills is good and pupils' learning is well structured in steps which help them improve. Work in pupils' books makes it clear that this is having a positive effect, for example, on pupils' writing. However, some teachers are not expecting pupils to produce enough work in the time available. Most teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across other subjects.
- A very strong feature of teaching is the high quality of relationships. Pupils clearly feel highly valued by their teachers and other adults, which leads to pupils having high self-esteem and very positive attitudes towards learning. In lessons this is evident in the way pupils work together in pairs or small groups, as well as in whole class activities.
- Questioning is used well by all teachers and support staff alike, to support and structure pupils' learning. Only in the best lessons, have teachers developed particularly effective ways of probing pupils' answers which challenge them to think more deeply about what they are learning. This is leading to these pupils making faster progress in their thinking which they can transfer to their work.
- Feedback during lessons is good and marking effectively informs pupils about how they can improve their work. Pupils increasingly confidently assess their own work and that of other pupils and this is helping them to develop a real sense of responsibility for their own learning.
- Teaching in the enhanced provision is now good. Relationships are excellent and pupils' attitudes towards learning are very positive. Adults are especially well skilled in motivating pupils to learn and this is most evident in the quality of their questioning and the discussion, both verbal and through signing. Pupils respond confidently and work well together, clearly enjoying their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Often it is exemplary, such as in the dining room or in assembly where pupils are required to take greater responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils show a very mature attitude when considering how pupils in the school behave or towards pupils who may be different from themselves. They judge behaviour to be very good.

- Pupils are quick to recognise that sometimes a pupil may find it difficult to behave in the accepted way, but say that behaviour seen during the inspection is the norm. They are extremely accepting of the profoundly deaf pupils who join them in lessons daily, often using signing where they are able, in order to improve communication with each other.
- Lessons are rarely interrupted by poor behaviour. All pupils understand the behaviour policy and can explain the different rewards and sanctions. Pupils engage in the activities provided with great enthusiasm. Pupils in all lessons seen work constructively together. They listen well to their teachers and other adults, and also to each other. They show a genuine delight at the success of others as well as their own achievements.
- Pupils are extremely proud of their school. They say they love coming to school to learn and be with their friends. This is reflected in the consistently above average attendance and good punctuality.
- Older pupils enjoy additional responsibilities around the school, particularly when it involves helping younger pupils. Discussions with pupils show that they are not yet as involved as they might be in taking responsibility for the behaviour of other pupils or actually helping others to manage their own behaviour.
- Pupils really like the new school uniform and state that the current good behaviour is due to the new behaviour policy and higher expectations of teachers. They are thrilled with the considerable range of lunchtime and after-school activities now available for them.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school and they can trust any adult, but especially the headteacher, to solve any problem that might arise. Their parents are unanimous that their children are safe and well cared for in school. Pupils understand very well how to be safe, including e-safety. While they say they do not know much about bullying – because it never happens at the school – they are able to talk about the different forms of bullying, including inappropriate use of language towards different groups and know what to do should it occur.
- Very strong support is provided for pupils and their parents whose circumstances make them vulnerable. There is excellent liaison with parents, schools and other support agencies. Excellent support is provided for pupils joining the school from other settings where they may not have had a positive experience. The firm boundaries provided offer these pupils security so that they can learn and thrive as well as other pupils.
- Provision and support for pupils attending the enhanced provision is effective and the inclusion of these pupils into mainstream classes is excellent. Parents are extremely pleased with the transition arrangements into the unit and those for secondary transfer.

The leadership and management are good

- A key factor in the school's rapid rate of improvement since the previous inspection has been the excellent leadership of the headteacher. Thorough and highly effective checking of performance from the start has eliminated inadequate teaching and substantially raised the overall quality of teaching, so that it is now securely good. He has managed some extremely challenging times very successfully, without losing sight of the need to improve pupils' learning and progress.
- The excellent system for managing and developing staff performance means that all staff are now strongly held to account for their own performance and that of their pupils. All staff are keen to get better still. The headteacher has succeeded in securing the support of governors, all

staff, parents and the pupils themselves. They are a committed and vibrant team who fully share the headteacher's aspirations for the schools' future.

- The school is consistently moving forward because plans for improvement are fit for purpose and highly accurate. They are helping leaders at all levels to become increasingly effective in their roles and have helped the school improve at such as rapid rate since the previous inspection. Subject and other leaders have played a key part in making sure the work planned for pupils and the monitoring of their progress are the best they can be.
 - The curriculum focuses well on making sure pupils develop good basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Links between subjects are growing stronger so that pupils are increasingly able to see those links for themselves. Further enhancement of pupils' learning experiences are outlined in the school's plan for the use of the primary school sport funding which targets, among others, those pupils with particular social needs. This new provision is intended to raise standards in physical education and to encourage targeted pupils to become more active and to engage in a healthier lifestyle.
 - The wide range of additional activities, visits and visitors, during and after school, enrich pupils' learning and aspirations extremely well. Subjects and the activities planned for pupils make a particularly strong contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
 - Pupils' self-esteem is high because their social and emotional development is given equally high priority alongside their academic progress. Equality of opportunity is ensured at all times. Any discrimination is tackled promptly and effectively so that incidents of any kind are rare. Regular and rigorous monitoring of all pupils' progress is protecting all pupils from falling behind as a result of their needs or background and means that any gaps which appear in their performance are quickly reduced.
 - The local authority recognises that this previously satisfactory school has made rapid progress over the last seven terms. Accordingly, the initial high level of support provided has now been reduced very significantly and the skills of the headteacher are now used to support other, less experienced, headteachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors offer strong support and challenge to the leadership and direction of the school and this has made a considerable difference to the school's performance. They are knowledgeable and insightful about why the school needed to improve and how this has been achieved rapidly. For example, they show an excellent knowledge of how pupils are now making good progress across the school, compared to their past performance. They play an important part in making sure that everyone's performance is as good as it needs to be and are very aware of actions taken to reward good teachers and those which tackle underperformance. They are very ambitious for the school and are committed to excellence for all the pupils. To this end they manage finances prudently so that funding, including use of the pupil premium, is used effectively to help meet the needs of individuals and specific groups. This is making a real difference to the performance of all pupils. Governors are equally ambitious for their own performance and undertake regular audits of their skills and training needs. Particular attention is now focused on making sure that new governors feel welcomed, have access to good support and quickly feel sufficiently skilled and able to challenge the school's performance. Governors make sure that the school meets all current national requirements for safeguarding pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114892
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	425218

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	302
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Skevi Ioannou
Headteacher	Ceri Jones
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2011
Telephone number	01245 250019
Fax number	01245 265689
Email address	admin@mildmay-jun.essex.sch.uk

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