



Mandale Mill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 130378
Local Authority Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number 293640
Inspection dates 19–20 September 2006
Reporting inspector Keith Bardon

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Thorntree Road
School category	Community		Thornaby
Age range of pupils	3–11		Stockton-on-Tees TS17 8AP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01642 647010
Number on roll (school)	228	Fax number	01642 647011
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Millie Scaife
		Headteacher	Mr Andrew Wright
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	19–20 September 2006	293640

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school which serves a disadvantaged area on the outskirts of the town. One in five pupils is from a minority ethnic background, predominantly Pakistani, and one in eight is at an early stage of learning English. When they first join the Nursery, many children have poor communication, social and personal skills. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average. The school has an eight place assessment unit for younger pupils who have severe learning difficulties. The school is part of an Education Action Zone and has received regional recognition for the opportunities it provides for adult learning.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Mandale Mill is a satisfactory and improving school. Since it was last inspected in 2001, it has had mixed fortunes with a recent upturn in standards following several years of decline. The improvements that are now becoming apparent in pupils' learning result from the committed approach to school improvement adopted by the headteacher and deputy headteacher and the support they receive from all staff.

Recent developments in the Foundation Stage have improved provision for the school's youngest children. They enjoy a good range of play-based activities which give them a solid start to school. Across the school as a whole, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory and on occasions good. Interesting lessons engage pupils and enable them to make regular gains in their understanding and skills. Progress is satisfactory, but slower in Years 1 and 2 because the work pupils are given is less stimulating and does not provide the same quality of learning. Because of the school's previous low position in the national rankings, the headteacher targeted the attainment of older pupils as the school's main priority. The school has moved on and is now in a position to focus its attention on the achievement of younger pupils. By the end of Year 6 standards are a little below average in most subjects. Weaknesses in pupils' writing adversely affect their attainment in general and in English in particular. Many pupils have yet to acquire a fluent style of handwriting and they do not spell or punctuate as well as they should. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those in the assessment unit, receive effective support and make good progress.

Everyone gets on well and pupils feel confident that there is always someone to help if they have a problem. Pupils' behaviour is mostly good and staff deal effectively with the occasional lapses. The school is calm and orderly. Most pupils show interest in learning, although their attention span is often quite short and, unless teachers are constantly providing them with new activities, they quickly become restless. The school provides its pupils with good quality care and support. Systems for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their welfare and safety and for providing them with personal and academic guidance are in place. The school works hard to involve parents in their children's learning, but the response it receives is not as extensive as it would like.

The school has been able to focus on its most pressing needs because procedures for checking the work of the school provide senior staff with accurate information. Teachers' involvement in school management varies. Some staff play a major role in evaluation and decision making while others are just beginning to contribute. Governors are supportive of the school but many are new and have still to gain an understanding of how to monitor the work of the school for themselves.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in all subjects by improving the quality of pupils' writing.
- Increase pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 by improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. From an extremely low point in 2005 the performance of Year 6 pupils in the national tests improved substantially in 2006 and the school came very close to achieving its challenging targets. Although standards are a little below average, the improvements in Years 3 to 6 are continuing.

Many children join the Nursery with attainment that is below that expected of three year olds. Due to improved provision in the Foundation Stage, the proportion of children reaching the targets for their age is increasing, but attainment at the end of Reception is below that expected of children this age. Pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory, but standards are not yet showing the same rate of improvement as in the rest of the school. Throughout the school, standards in writing lag well behind those in reading and mathematics. The difficulties pupils experience when putting their thoughts and ideas down on paper causes them problems in many subjects and the school has recognised the need for improvement.

The strengths and weaknesses in achievement and standards apply equally to the attainment of both boys and girls and to that of minority ethnic pupils. As a result of the focused support and individual attention they receive, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those in the assessment unit, make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory overall but with good features. Pupils clearly enjoy school and describe the many opportunities it provides with enthusiasm. Attitudes to school work are mostly positive, although many pupils find concentrating for lengthy periods difficult and have a tendency to become restless. Relationships are mostly warm and friendly and the praise pupils receive helps them gain self-confidence. Year 6 pupils welcome the fact that the school makes clear what it expects of them and described staff as 'kind but strict'. All the pupils who spoke to inspectors agreed that they felt safe and secure, with Year 2 pupils giving inspectors a detailed account of how to cross the road safely. Most pupils are friendly towards each other and behave well. A small minority of pupils are prone to outbursts of unacceptable behaviour. The school has a clear set of strategies for dealing with these incidents, minimising the effect they have on other pupils' learning. Attendance is satisfactory and steadily improving. Through the school council and links with the local community, pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of their responsibilities towards others. Most pupils show a good understanding of how to achieve a healthy lifestyle but find the requirements difficult to adhere to at times. Pupils' preparation for future learning and life is satisfactory. They develop a reasonable range of core skills, including information and communication technology (ICT), but do not write well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good features, especially in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6 where there are clear signs of improvement. Lessons seen during the inspection, including those in the assessment unit, were at least satisfactory and some were good. Lesson aims are shared with pupils so that they are aware of what they are to learn. In a good proportion of lessons, there is a brisk pace, challenging questions and a variety of activities which are lively and stimulating, thereby maintaining the interest of pupils. Other lessons, particularly in Years 1 and 2, have less sparkle. The pace is slower and at times the work does not fully engage pupils so that they lose concentration. A substantial proportion of pupils of all ages have a short attention span and have difficulty remaining on task for any length of time. Teachers make good use of ICT to enliven lessons and to extend learning in different subjects, as seen in a Year 5 numeracy lesson. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their work in groups which helps to develop their speaking and listening skills, but the teaching and learning of writing is not good enough. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for those who need it and work is matched carefully to pupils' needs. The interesting displays of pupils' work, especially of art, provide a stimulating environment conducive to learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. It covers all the required subjects, and lessons in German for older pupils make an enjoyable addition. The curriculum mostly meets pupils' needs but does not provide for their learning in writing well enough. Careful planning ensures that all pupils are included during lessons and have the same opportunities to learn. Allocating blocks of time to certain subjects helps provide continuity of learning and enables pupils to examine ideas in-depth. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is well structured with a variety of learning activities for indoor and outdoor play. There are good opportunities for pupils to use ICT across the curriculum and they work confidently and enthusiastically with computers. Good provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but provision for gifted and talented pupils is underdeveloped. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, mainly of a sporting nature, run in collaboration with a local high school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are in place and health and safety issues are reviewed on a regular basis. There is good support for pupils at transition stages in their education with additional support for

vulnerable pupils. Careful attention is given to the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those in the assessment unit and those who have behavioural problems. For the small number of pupils who need to be excluded for short periods, there is additional home support. The teaching assistant with responsibility for supporting pupils with English as an additional language monitors their progress closely. Assessment and tracking procedures are good. However, pupils receive only limited information on how to improve, although a new focused marking system is beginning to address this issue. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress. The breakfast club ensures that many pupils get off to a good start in the day. The 'meet and greet' system operated by the learning mentor helps welcome vulnerable pupils and their parents into school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

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Shortly after the last inspection the school went into decline and standards slumped. Since their appointment in 2004, the current headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked successfully to reverse the school's fortunes and improve pupils' achievements. The school has purpose and direction and shows good capacity for further improvement. Allowing for the ups and downs, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The school has a positive ethos and provides a pleasant working environment for both pupils and staff. Management by senior staff is satisfactory and the school operates cohesively. Procedures for checking how well the school is performing provide an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses and priorities for improvement reflect the school's most pressing needs. Evaluations of the information the school collects are mostly realistic, but at times there is a tendency to read too much into relatively small improvements. The contribution to standards by senior staff and subject leaders, some of whom are very new to their posts, is variable and at times the links between what teachers are doing in lessons and the effect this is having on pupils' learning and achievements are not always made clearly enough. Governance is satisfactory, but governors are heavily reliant on the headteacher's reports for their view of how well it is performing. The school's finances are managed efficiently and the large budget surplus is being utilised constructively.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

To the Pupils of:

Mandale Mill Primary School

Thorntree Road

Thornaby

Stockton-on-Tees

TS17 8AP

21 September 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. Although we were with you for only two days, we thoroughly enjoyed finding out about the work you do, and a special thanks to those who talked with us about the school.

There were lots of things we liked about the school. We are particularly pleased with the improvement the school is showing and the way in which the headteacher, deputy headteacher and staff are putting things in place to make it even better. It is clear that you are happy at school. Everyone is friendly and staff and pupils get on well. The school has a nice atmosphere and you quite rightly feel safe and well cared for. Many of the lessons we saw were interesting and lively, although a few could have provided more exciting things for you to do. Most of you pay attention at the start of lessons but some of you then become restless and uninterested as the lesson proceeds. When you feel this happening, you need to try much harder to keep your concentration and to do the best work you can. Most of you behave well, although a small number misbehave at times. We are pleased that you think that staff deal with any problems well and that if you have any difficulties of your own there is always someone there to help.

We also looked at what the school might do to improve. These are the things we suggested.

- Help pupils of all ages to improve their writing. You can help by always thinking carefully about what you want to say, trying hard to write neatly and clearly, taking care with spelling and using the correct punctuation.
- Help younger pupils to learn more. You can help by always listening carefully to the teacher and working as hard as you can in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Keith Bardon

(Lead Inspector)