

Mendip Green First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109102
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	309881
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Tom Simpson

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	407
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sylvia Claridge
Headteacher	Bruce Dale
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2003
School address	Greenwood Road Worle Weston-super-Mare BS22 6EX
Telephone number	01934 513791
Fax number	01934 522152

Age group	4–8
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large school serving a mainly urban area. The majority of pupils come from a White British background and only a very small minority are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The main difficulty of these pupils relates to speech, language and communication. The percentage of pupils entitled to a free school meal is also above average. Attainment on entry varies from year to year, but is normally below that expected for children of this age. A hearing and language resource base, currently providing for six pupils, is based at the school. The school has received the 'Healthy School' award and the Leading Aspect award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This popular and inclusive school is good, with some outstanding features. In particular, it has a very strong ethos of caring exceptionally well for all its pupils, including those who are academically able as well as the significant number who have complex learning needs. Staff at all levels are highly committed to further raising academic standards while still providing a curriculum which is stimulating and relevant and which has a very good level of consideration for pupils' wider personal needs. The outstanding level of care, guidance and support provided for the pupils impacts very successfully on their personal development, which is excellent. The pupils love coming to this school. They work very hard while they are there and their behaviour is outstanding. Many parents commented very positively on the provision made for their children. One parent wrote, 'My son has had a fantastic start to his education at Mendip Green.' Another commented, 'My child has always achieved highly at Mendip Green and is very enthusiastic about learning.'

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. This is having a positive impact on standards, which are rising. A good and very well enriched curriculum effectively supports pupils' love of learning. Provision for pupils in the Reception classes is good. This means that the children get off to a good start in their schooling, especially in developing excellent personal skills. There is a particular strength in the teaching of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, both in the main school and in the hearing and language resource base.

Most pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points and standards are average by the time they leave the school. Writing, however, is a relative weakness. This is particularly the case for boys. The school recognised that raising standards in reading was its first priority and put in place a number of strategies which successfully achieved this. With the support of the local authority, it is now focused on improving writing by, for example, improving the curriculum even further to make it 'irresistible', particularly for boys, and by working intensively with particular groups of pupils who are not doing as well as they could. It is too early to judge whether these strategies are working.

Good leadership and management are having a significant impact on most aspects of the school's work. As a result, the issues arising from the last inspection have been addressed well. Pupils' speaking and listening skills, for example, have improved and the overall quality of the accommodation is now better. The school evaluates its strengths and areas for improvement well and puts in place appropriate strategies for improvement. As a result of this, and the commitment and enthusiasm of staff at all levels, the school has a good capacity to improve further in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well across all the areas of learning during their time in the Reception classes. Standards are broadly average in most areas of learning by the time they reach Year 1, although writing is a relatively weak area. Achievement in the children's personal, social and emotional development is excellent. A good curriculum is provided and, in a vibrant, stimulating environment, the children flourish. A wealth of enriched experiences is provided through skilled teaching, very effective personal support and strong leadership of the provision. Role play is especially well provided for and early reading is also promoted very well. Senior staff have a

very good understanding of the strengths of the provision as well as its areas for improvement, such as developing writing skills even more effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards in writing, across the school, particularly for boys.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In the Reception classes, children make at least good progress in all the areas of learning. Pupils continue to make good progress as they proceed through Years 1, 2 and 3 and, by the time they leave the school, most are reaching standards in English, mathematics and science that are in line with the national average. This is reflected in the most recent national test results for pupils in Year 2, which, despite a significant number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the year group, were broadly average in each of the assessed areas. Overall standards have been rising over the past two years. Standards in reading, which has been a particular developmental area for the school, have risen significantly since last year. Standards in writing, particularly for boys, remain a relative weakness throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils of all ages show a genuine respect for each other and for the adults at the school. They love coming to school and thoroughly enjoy their lessons. They were very enthusiastic, for example, about a visiting storyteller who entertained and stimulated them in assemblies and lessons during the inspection week. They are very friendly and their behaviour is outstanding. Although attendance is only satisfactory at present, this is largely due to the regular absence of a small number of pupils. It is improving as a result of the school's rigorous efforts and the effective work of a 'parent support adviser'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Links with schools abroad, for instance, contribute well to their understanding of other cultures. Pupils feel safe at school and have an excellent understanding of how to keep fit and healthy. The school council, which is well regarded by all pupils, has been instrumental in promoting healthy lunchboxes and improving playground activities. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community. Year 3 pupils, for example, act as play leaders and support younger pupils at lunchtimes while pupils throughout the school enjoy supporting charities such as Action Aid. Pupils are well prepared for their future lives, especially through their very well developed social skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

A strength of the teaching and learning at the school is the effective and well-structured planning. This is reflected in interesting teaching methods which motivate the pupils well and successfully promote their highly positive attitudes towards learning and their good progress. Relationships are particularly good and the pupils work very well both independently and collaboratively, such as when raising ideas in pairs as 'talking partners'. There is generally a good level of challenge to tasks and the work set is well matched to the individual needs of pupils with different levels of ability. Sometimes, however, expectations for what pupils could

achieve in their writing are not high enough and there is some inconsistency in the quality of marking. Pupils are very effectively managed, which results in exceptionally good behaviour in lessons. Teaching assistants are very well deployed and they contribute very effectively indeed to the progress of the pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number who have English as an additional language. Rigorous procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are now in place.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well matched to the differing needs of the pupils, including those in the main school and those in the hearing and language resource base. It is very well enriched by music and sport and by a very good range of out-of-class activities which effectively enhance both pupils' learning and their personal development. The curriculum for children in the Reception classes and for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a particular strength of the school. Good links with other local schools to support the curriculum include an art partnership with the local secondary school.

Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are used effectively to support learning in other subjects. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length, which detracts from the standards they are capable of reaching. The overall curriculum is currently being developed to make it more creative and relevant, especially for boys. The school's provision for personal, social and health education is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All the adults in the school encourage enjoyment and achievement in pupils' learning across the whole curriculum. Robust procedures are in place for child protection, health and safety and safe staff recruitment. Pupils are confident that they can seek help and advice from teachers and other adults when they need it. Staff are excellent role models who very successfully promote pupils' outstanding behaviour and relationships. Pupils with specific needs, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in both the main school and the hearing and language resource base, are very well supported by all staff in lessons and when receiving specialist support such as in the 'Sunshine Surfers' nurture group. The school also makes excellent use of outside agencies, such as the speech and language service, to support pupils' specific needs. Teachers monitor the progress of pupils very well. They set challenging targets and provide the necessary guidance for these to be achieved. Typically, one parent wrote, 'Mendip Green is a very caring school with all teachers putting the children's welfare as a high priority.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides highly effective leadership. He has a strong commitment to all aspects of the school's provision, including further raising standards, and is very well regarded by all relevant parties. He has created an ethos where staff, pupils and parents alike feel valued. He is very well supported by an able and proactive senior leadership team whose members have strong individual and corporate roles. The school has developed robust procedures for monitoring

and evaluating all aspects of its work, including teaching and achievement. As a result, staff are very clear about its developmental needs. For example, improving reading was recognised as the most urgent priority and this issue was successfully addressed. The school is now appropriately focusing on further raising standards in writing and introducing a revised curriculum in order to make it more exciting and relevant, particularly for boys. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, both in the main school and in the hearing and language resource base, is very effectively managed. However, as some managers at the school are relatively new to their roles, their impact on the school's provision has yet to be fully felt.

The governors are knowledgeable and supportive. They fulfil their monitoring role well and are confident to challenge the school's management if they feel that this is appropriate.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

06 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mendip Green First School, Weston-super-Mare BS22 6EX

Thank you for making us so welcome at your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing about your work. We found that your school provides you with an education which is good overall, but is outstanding in some areas.

Here are some of the things we found:

- your behaviour is excellent and you are developing outstanding personal skills; for example, you are very enthusiastic about school and are very keen to learn
- adults take extremely good care of you and make sure that anyone who needs extra help gets it
- you get off to a very good start when you are in the Reception classes and make good progress throughout the school
- you are well taught and given interesting things to do, both in and out of lessons
- the headteacher and staff are working very hard to make the school even better.

Here is what we have suggested the school does now to make the school better:

- make sure that you do as well in writing as you do in other subjects.

We hope that all of you, but especially boys, will work very hard to improve your standards in writing.

Thank you again for your help.

With best wishes

Tom Simpson Lead Inspector