

Micklands Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109926
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	310144
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2007
Reporting inspector	John Earish

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Catherine Bennett
Headteacher	Mrs Janie Archer (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2002
School address	Micklands Road Caversham Reading RG4 6LU
Telephone number	0118 901 5500
Fax number	0118 901 5499

Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The nature of the intake to this average sized primary school has changed since the last inspection. Although it is situated in a relatively prosperous area, it serves families from a wide variety of social backgrounds. This includes pupils from the outskirts of Reading where some families live in disadvantaged social circumstances. About a quarter of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups and a few are at very earliest stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is just above that found nationally. The proportion eligible for free school meals is above average. The numbers on roll are decreasing in line with a declining school population. The school is being led by an acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. It has a number of strengths, mostly relating to pupils' care, personal development and well-being, which are of good quality. The overwhelming majority of parents believe their children enjoy school and are well cared for. One summed up the views of a great many in saying, 'The teaching staff are friendly and approachable' and 'they feel comfortable discussing things with teachers'. Pupils treat each other with respect, behave well and want to learn. They feel safe and are aware of how to avoid risks.

Under the very good leadership of the acting headteacher and assistant headteacher all of the adults are working with determination to accelerate pupils' achievement. The school has successfully improved the learning environment and dealt with a legacy of underachievement. This has already resulted in improvements to the national test results by Year 6, which are now broadly average overall. There are increasing numbers of pupils achieving the higher level 5 in both English and mathematics. The strongest performance is in science. The value added between Year 2 and Year 6, previously well below average, was very good this year. This was due to the high quality teaching and learning pupils received in Year 6. School assessment records show recent improvements are being maintained and improved.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and evidence from the school's accurate evaluations show the amount of good or better teaching is increasing. This is the result of actions based upon the outcomes of the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching by the acting headteacher, the local education authority and the assistant headteacher. For example, teachers and teaching assistants are sharing ideas, knowledge and skills with each other to improve the quality of lessons. However, teaching is not yet consistently good across all classes, which results in uneven progress. Learning is most effective when teachers give pupils opportunities to learn independently or in small groups and use their initiative. This does not yet occur in all lessons.

The satisfactory curriculum provides well for pupils' personal, social and health education and makes a positive contribution to their good personal development. Planning in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science has been adapted to meet the needs of the different groups within the class. Opportunities to help pupils to recognise and spell words phonetically have been increased and there are good support programmes to boost the progress of pupils who need extra help.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The acting headteacher has taken decisive action to accelerate pupils' progress. This has been effective and checks carried out by the school show that pupils are now achieving the challenging targets set for them. However, the very recently appointed subject coordinators are not yet influential enough in raising the quality of teaching and learning to ensure greater consistency in pupils' progress and, consequently, good achievement. The use of assessment information to track the performance of the pupils is developing well. This allows teachers to quickly identify underachievement and deal with it. School review is rigorous and results in actions that are accelerating achievement and sustaining recent improvements. This confirms the school's good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start school with below average skills, especially in communication, language and literacy and their social and personal development. They make satisfactory progress and most reach the goals expected of them by the end of Reception. Teaching reflects a satisfactory understanding of how very young children learn. The children enjoy a great deal of individual attention, although interventions during children's play to help develop learning are sometimes not effective enough. The school has responded well to recommendations from its previous inspection. It now provides its children with a satisfactory range of structured opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills, both indoors and out.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make consistently good progress.
- Ensure that subject coordinators are more clearly focused on their impact in raising achievement.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils of all abilities to learn independently or in small groups.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 6 did better in the national tests for 2007 than in previous years. In relation to their attainment at the end of Year 2, they made significantly better progress than average and were in the top 13 per cent of all schools. This was due to the success of initiatives to deal with a legacy of underachievement and high quality teaching in Year 6. The strongest subject is science, with significantly more pupils attaining the higher levels in national tests compared with previous years. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils in Year 2 also did better in the national tests than in the previous three years and standards are now just below average overall. However, progress in other year groups is not as good because teaching is not as good. The school recognises that progress in reading is not as strong as in other subjects. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates. Those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress against their challenging targets because of the good levels of support they receive. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils are now making satisfactory and sometimes good progress in lessons. School assessments show those currently in Year 2 and 6 are on track to sustain and build on these recent improvements.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good because the school has put considerable efforts into improving behaviour and building a caring and respectful community. Pupils' behaviour is generally good although a very small number still find it difficult to settle quickly to tasks. Relationships are also good; pupils get on well with their teachers and each other. However, their abilities to work independently and use their initiative are not as well developed. They show consideration and respect for each

other whatever their backgrounds or cultures. One Muslim pupil remarked, 'This school makes me very proud of my religion because everybody shows interest and respect.' Pupils are well aware of the importance of staying safe, eating healthily and taking regular exercise. They participate fully in the good range of physical activities the school offers. The pupils contribute well to community decisions through the active school council. They are aware of how important it is to help others both in school and in the wider community. For example, they enthusiastically raise money for local and national charities including leukaemia care, after one of their number was diagnosed with the condition. Recent improvements in their progress, the satisfactory use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning and the opportunities they have to develop enterprise skills mean that they are now adequately prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

A significant proportion of good teaching was seen during the inspection. Its impact was seen in the good learning and the interest and enjoyment shown by the pupils in these lessons. This is because the teachers successfully transmit their enthusiasm and expertise to the pupils. For example, higher attaining Year 6 pupils worked at devising a number of solutions to an apparently simple mathematical problem. They rose to this challenge and found several different and interesting methods. However, good practice is not consistent in all classes. There are still some lessons where teachers do not always pitch work at suitably challenging levels. As a result, the pupils do not learn as well as they should. However, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities learn well because they are provided for well and this helps them to keep up.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced with an appropriate emphasis on English and mathematics. The school is adapting the curriculum to make it challenging, relevant and exciting by making thematic links between the different areas of learning. Provision for information and communication technology has improved and satisfactorily supports learning across the curriculum. Improvements to the planning of literacy and numeracy are helping to raise standards in English and mathematics. However, planning does not ensure that there are enough opportunities in some lessons for pupils to work independently and use their initiative in order to sustain rapid progress. The good range of extra-curricular activities supports other aspects of pupils' personal development well. The pupils really enjoy these activities and appreciate the increasing range of opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is good and most parents are happy that the school is safe and secure. A few report concerns about behaviour, but inspectors found that pupils behave well. The school works well with a wide range of outside agencies to offer comprehensive support and guidance. This includes the Behaviour Support Team and the Reading Children's Fund, a charity that supports those vulnerable pupils who find working with others difficult or are disturbed by challenging and unfamiliar situations. Procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety are

secure. The improved procedures for monitoring academic progress, although relatively new, are already having a positive impact on pupils' progress and achievement. The quality of academic guidance is good, and is particularly effective in Year 6. These pupils have an exceptionally good understanding of what they can do well and what they need to improve. One pupil summed up the views of the others in saying, 'The teaching staff boost our confidence up and up.' However, in other year groups pupils do not have such a clear understanding of how they should improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher brings with her a wealth of expertise. She has very quickly rebuilt the confidence and self-esteem of pupils and adults. The new senior management team has developed a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The team members fully understand what needs to improve and how to achieve it. They are using challenging targets well to raise standards and achievement. However, the very recently appointed subject coordinators are not yet sufficiently involved in evaluating either the provision or its impact on the pupils' progress. Governors share the leaders' determination to raise standards, but are not yet rigorous enough at holding the school to account for its performance in order to sustain rapid improvement.

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Annex A

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
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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.

Annex A

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 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	3
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

14 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Micklands Primary School, Reading, RG4 6LU

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school. We were impressed with your friendliness and your sensible and helpful attitudes towards each other. We think that you go to a satisfactory and improving school and there are lots of things that we like about it. Here is a list of some of them.

- Your school is friendly and welcoming. You behave well and get on well with each other.
- You listen carefully to what your teachers have to say and learn a lot in lessons.
- The school council represents your views well and you raise lots of money for charity.
- There are lots of clubs and activities for you to attend at the end of the school day. These are proving to be very popular.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are well looked after.

All of the adults in your school want it to be even better. To help them to do this we think that there are three things to do next.

- Your teachers need to give you even more opportunities to use your own initiative during lessons and to work independently.
- There are more good lessons now than there used to be and we are asking your teachers to try to improve on this and make all of their lessons good or better. This will help all of you to make good progress.
- We would also like your teachers to find out more about being in charge of different subjects. We would particularly like them to find out more about the different ways that they could check on how well you are learning. This will help them to make your work even better than it is.

We are sure that you are ready for these challenges!

Yours sincerely,

John Earish

Lead Inspector