

Millfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110776
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
Inspection number	310417
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Raine
Headteacher	Mrs Lydia Harris
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2004
School address	Grange Lane Littleport Ely Cambridgeshire CB6 1HW
Telephone number	01353 861612
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized primary school that serves part of the large village of Littleport which is close to the fenland city of Ely. The buildings are currently being remodelled and extended to enable up to 120 additional pupils to be accommodated. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage and there are few pupils from each of seven minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has a few pupils who speak English as an additional language and are at an early stage of English acquisition. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and overall their social and economic circumstances are average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about half that found nationally. Children's attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is in line with national expectations, though their communication, language and literacy skills are below those typically found.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Millfield is a satisfactory school that has some good features. It provides satisfactory value for money. Parents are supportive of the school. They are unanimous in saying that their children enjoy school and are safe and well cared for. As one parent stated, 'There is a relaxed, friendly, caring and welcoming atmosphere'. Pupils rightly say that behaviour is good in both lessons and around the school. Their personal development is good. The headteacher has created and sustained a positive atmosphere well and ensures that pupils' personal development is good. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall because, until recently, there has been a lack of rigour in planning for improvement and the checking of pupils' progress. This has led the school to be too generous in its self-evaluation and setting targets that are too modest. Most of all, it has led to variations in pupils' achievement in some classes, particularly in Key Stage 2. Both these weaknesses have now been tackled and there are now good systems in place. As a result, teachers are clearer about what progress pupils make and how development priorities can be checked. However, the impact of this has not yet been realised in pupils' achievement.

Achievement is satisfactory. Provision is good in the Foundation Stage and children achieve well. In other year groups, progress varies between satisfactory and good. Standards at the end of both Year 2 and 6 are broadly in line with the national average. However, the proportion gaining the higher levels is below average in reading and writing in Year 2 and in English and mathematics in Year 6. Standards in science at the end of Year 6 are above average. This is because the good focus, led by the subject leaders, is bringing about improvements in the quality of the curriculum and is paying dividends.

There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning and in the school's curriculum. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and there are pockets of excellence. Some teachers ensure that pupils make rapid progress because they present challenging and exciting activities that match pupils' needs very well. The curriculum is satisfactory and all necessary areas are covered well. However, it is not planned thoroughly enough to ensure that activities meet the widely divergent needs of the pupils.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of provision and children's achievement in the Foundation Stage is good. Many parents commented on the effective procedures that help their children to settle in. As a result, even at this early stage in the term, children are settled, secure and keen to learn. Activities are stimulating and challenging and are well-matched to children's needs and therefore they make good progress. Particular care is taken to ensure that there is a good balance provided between those activities that are planned by staff and those chosen by the children. Due to the current building works, opportunities for outdoor learning are more limited than usual. However, good use is made of the available space.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly for higher attaining pupils in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6, and in reading and writing in Year 2.
- Develop more consistency in the quality of teaching and learning so that all lessons are as lively and challenging as the best.

- Make sure that staff are more readily held to account for any lapses in pupils' progress by making checking processes more rigorous.
- Improve the quality of curriculum planning to ensure that the work set meets the differing needs of pupils in all lessons.

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

Almost all children attain the expected goals at the end of the Foundation Stage and a significant minority exceeds them. Pupils who have learning difficulties receive prompt and sensitive support and, as a result, achieve well throughout the school. However, due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and, in the past, a lack of careful tracking of pupils' progress, achievement in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory overall. National test results have consistently matched national averages at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, though fewer pupils than expected gained the higher levels. There are encouraging signs that achievement is strengthening. In science, for example, good improvement projects that include more careful tracking of progress, led to standards being above average in the 2007 tests.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school and are friendly towards each other in class and around the school and are sensitive to others' feelings. There have been no exclusions. The level of attendance was found to be unsatisfactory at the previous inspection. The school has introduced a good range of initiatives to promote attendance, which is currently meeting the national average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a keen sense of right and wrong and use opportunities to reflect, for example, through regular meditation sessions. Pupils have a good awareness of the need for safe and healthy lifestyles, and they have a good understanding of healthy eating. They relish the many opportunities to take responsibility and are particularly proud of how older pupils support younger ones. They are prepared soundly for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Throughout the school, teachers manage pupils well and classrooms are characterised by a calm and purposeful atmosphere with good relationships. This enables pupils to enjoy school and develop their self-confidence. Some lessons are outstanding because teachers make good use of assessments to plan lessons that meet the widely varying needs of the pupils. However, this is not always the case. There are two year groups in each class and teachers do not always meet the needs of the wide range of ability. Teachers consistently use good skills of questioning and they enliven teaching by making good use of resources. However, progress slows on occasion when the work is too easy, particularly for the more able pupils. Those with learning difficulties are taught well and are given good support by teaching assistants. The recently revised strategy

for providing targets for pupils is starting to pay dividends because they are more aware of the progress they are expected to make.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There is an appropriate emphasis on raising standards of literacy and numeracy within and across the curriculum, and suitable plans to complete this work. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular sports and clubs which pupils say they enjoy attending, though a number said that they would like more. Provision for religious education, a priority for improvement in the last inspection, has been addressed well and is now satisfactory. Curriculum planning, however, is inconsistent. In the best cases it is thorough, but in some instances it does not sufficiently match work to the varying needs of learners. Good support enables pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to participate in an interesting and enriching programme of learning that develops their confidence and skills effectively. Pupils' personal development is promoted well through programmes concerning road safety, the potentially damaging effects of drugs and how to ensure a healthy lifestyle.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and underpin the positive ethos and the pupils' feeling of pride in the school. The staff invest considerable time in developing relationships with pupils and they know them well. As a result, the pupils' personal development and well-being are supported effectively. All procedures to ensure pupils' health, well-being and safety, including child protection, are securely in place. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are carefully supported and teaching assistants play a positive part in their support. The school has introduced new and good quality procedures to keep a more careful track of pupils' individual progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Although the headteacher provides very strong support for the personal development of pupils, there has been a lack of rigour in information gathering and improvement planning. However, the new development plan is more focused and a much more useful tool for improvement. Recent developments demonstrate that the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement. Subject leadership is satisfactory overall. Leaders are now clear about standards and provision in their subject. This has been used to good effect in mathematics for example, where careful and thorough analyses of pupils' performance have led to suitable amendments in the curriculum. Governance is satisfactory. The governors support the school well. However, they are over-reliant on the headteacher to provide information about the school's provision and standards. This limits the opportunity for the governing body to provide appropriate challenge for the school to improve.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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

1 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millfield Primary School, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB6 1HW

We really enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you very much for the friendly way you welcomed us and for the help you gave us to find out about your school.

Both you and your parents told us that you enjoy school and that you feel safe and well cared for. Your school is satisfactory. Sometimes lessons are outstanding and the activities are interesting and exciting. Occasionally, though, lessons are too easy for you. Your headteacher has done a good job in making sure that you all work and play together in a friendly way. However, your teachers have not checked your progress in enough detail. We were impressed with your behaviour, which is good and helps the teachers help you to learn, and also the way you make sure that everyone feels part of the family of your school.

Your progress is satisfactory overall and you attain average standards in English and mathematics and above average standards in science.

We have asked your teachers to do four things:

- To raise standards, in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 and in reading and writing in Year 2. This is particularly for those of you who find learning easy.
- To make sure that all lessons are as lively and interesting as the best.
- For your headteacher to make sure that teachers check your progress very closely.
- We have asked that lesson plans have work set at different levels so you can all make good progress.

You can help by working hard to meet your targets. Thank you once again for being so helpful to us.

With very best wishes for your future

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector