

Mill Lane Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111539
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	310623
Inspection date	20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Margaret Shepherd

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Sacha Bedding
Headteacher	Mrs Carol O'Brien
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2004
School address	Wellington Street Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1QX
Telephone number	01642 860055
Fax number	01642 860044

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves an area with severe social and economic deprivation. There is a much higher proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals than average. More than half of the pupils come from a range of minority ethnic groups, with a high proportion having English as an additional language. There are more pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than average. In some year groups, there is a high number of pupils leaving or joining the school in the middle of their education. Standards on entry are much lower than is typical for children of their age. The school includes a unit for pupils with speech and language difficulties.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, personal development and well-being, care, guidance and support and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self evaluation document, national published assessment data, lesson and playground observations, discussion with senior leaders and parents, scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data, pupils' records and other documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own evaluations were not justified. These aspects have been included in the report where appropriate.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Parents hold the school in very high regard and particularly value the contributions of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.

Achievement is good throughout the school, but standards are below average. The children start school in the Nursery with levels of development that are below those typical of most children of that age. By the end of the Reception, a minority of children reach national expectations but many are well below these especially in literacy and numeracy. The pupils' good achievement is the result of consistently good teaching and learning, and a strong commitment from all staff to improve the school's provision continually. Results of assessments at the end of Year 2 and national tests at the end of Year 6 have been rising steadily in recent years. In 2007, the results at the end of Year 2 showed that standards rose in mathematics and sharply so in reading and writing. At the end of Year 6, the results fell back from previous years but the year group included a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The results were also adversely affected by considerable numbers of pupils joining or leaving the school.

The school greatly values its cultural diversity and the importance of providing equal opportunities for each pupil. It records individual progress very carefully and then analyses data systematically to plan work that matches different groups of pupils' needs. Teaching and learning are consistently good. In lessons where teaching is outstanding, the pace of learning is always brisk. The organisation in the junior classes for pupils to work in small groups matched to pupils' abilities in English and mathematics provides a good level of challenge for more able pupils and they achieve well. For example, Year 6 pupils confidently discussed the emotions of key characters in Hamlet. Support staff work in very effective teams to guide individuals and groups. They understand each pupil's particular needs and have a very good understanding of the learning expected for each session. Bilingual support staff ensure that pupils in the early stages of learning English can take part in lessons, which results in very good levels of inclusion. All these strategies result in consistently good achievement, whether pupils are girls or boys, British or from an minority ethnic background, more able, average or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils in the speech and language unit receive a careful mix of closely focused work in their own room and time with other pupils in the main school. Despite their complex learning difficulties, they achieve well.

A key outstanding feature of the school is pupils' personal development and well-being. This is a result of the school's very high quality care, support and guidance. Safeguarding systems are in place. The headteacher sets the standard of building high quality relationships with each pupil and gaining an in-depth knowledge of the families and community that the school serves. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure. They show high levels of maturity and take their responsibilities very seriously. A member of the school council expressed this when he said, 'We wear our badges with pride and we must provide a good role model'. The playground friends scheme is exemplary. Playtimes are happy, harmonious and productive times for the whole school community. The playground friends allocate their own responsibilities, set out a wide range of resources for pupils and organise activities, such as hockey games or quiet reading. Older pupils show great sensitivity to younger pupils; they all know the school rules extremely well and behaviour is excellent. There are very good levels of racial harmony, and boys and girls play happily together. Despite some pupils having severe behavioural difficulties, there have been no exclusions. Attendance rates have been rising steadily due to the strong stance the

headteacher has taken in emphasising the importance of this aspect to parents. Pupils show great respect for each other at all times. They thoroughly enjoy the 'wake up shake up' sessions each day and understand that, together with eating healthy foods, they are keeping healthy. There is a strong emphasis on personal development throughout the good quality curriculum. Pupils learn skills such as making decisions and working in teams, which prepare them well for their future economic well-being.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work in close and very productive partnership to lead and manage the school. They share the same of vision of continual improvement, careful self-evaluation, fulfilling the needs of each individual and working very closely with pupils' families and their community. They ensure that there are outstanding partnerships with others to promote pupils' well-being. The senior leadership team works very well together and new coordinators are moving into their roles well. Governance is good with some governors having very close links with the school. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, as is the school's capacity to succeed. It provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision is good and children make good progress. Children get an outstanding start in the Nursery class due to the very high quality of teaching and learning. Very high expectations give children great confidence in developing basic skills. In Reception children make further good progress, building well on their excellent start. The indoor areas are well organised and provide a well-balanced curriculum but the outdoor areas do not provide enough opportunities for children's development in each area of learning. Leadership is good and staff in the Foundation Stage work very closely with parents and families. This, together with a strong emphasis on personal development in lessons, results in very good achievement in this aspect.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the consistency of the pace in lessons.
- Extend the outdoor learning in the Foundation Stage.

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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?	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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	2
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

21 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mill Lane Primary School, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1QX

Thank you for being so very welcoming to me when I came to your school. You were all so friendly and helpful in answering my questions. I am writing to let you know what I found out.

One of the best things in the school is the way that you all work and play so well together. I was really impressed with the way that the playground friends organise all the different activities. You try hard to be sensible and to help each other. You know the school rules very well and your behaviour is excellent. The adults in your classrooms work really well together to help each one of you and you try hard to improve your work in lessons. You understand how important it is to keep safe and healthy; you obviously enjoy your 'wake up, shake up' sessions. Members of the school council do an excellent job and they are very proud of representing your views. The headteacher leads your school very well. She cares for each one of you, as well as all your families. She works very closely with the deputy headteacher and together they are helping all the staff to improve the school.

The headteacher, staff and governors want to make your school an even better place to learn. They are going to make sure that you keep learning really well right through each lesson. They are also going to make the outdoor areas for the Nursery and Reception children more interesting places to learn.

Once again, thank you again for being so helpful. I shall always remember the different things I saw you doing, particularly the playtimes. I wish you every success in your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Shepherd

Lead inspector