

Moorland Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110361
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	325136
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Steven Hill

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	67
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Rist
Headteacher	Mrs Juliet Jones
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Maslin Drive Beanhill Milton Keynes MK6 4ND
Telephone number	01908 678888
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small infant school that has close links with a Nursery and a Children's and Family Centre, which are nearby. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high, with the main problems being moderate learning difficulties, and behavioural and emotional issues. The proportion eligible for free school meals is well above average. A large percentage of pupils belong to minority ethnic groups and an above-average proportion speak English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in this good school. It is a thriving, harmonious, multicultural community where pupils thoroughly enjoy both work and play. The practically based curriculum and a wide range of exciting enrichment activities all contribute to their enthusiasm. Pupils' personal development is good because of the excellent pastoral care provided. When they start in Reception, their personal, social and emotional skills are varied but, overall, are very much lower than are usually found. The school focuses very successfully on developing these, and pupils make great strides in all aspects of their personal development. Excellent links with a variety of partners in the community, and the schools' own systems, support this. Pupils like and trust the adults they work with, one saying that the best thing about the school was that 'The teachers are kind and help the children.' Pupils form very good relationships with each other, regardless of gender or ethnicity. A wide variety of support systems, such as the nurture group and Family SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning), help those pupils who struggle with self-confidence or with conforming to behaviour expectations to do well. The learning mentor, the parent support adviser, the extended school's coordinator and the family support worker, in collaboration with parents, all make a major contribution to pupils' success.

Pupils are confident that they are safe in school and show concern and care for each other. They know about how to stay healthy and are very enthusiastic about exercise. Pupils behave well. They make a good contribution to the school community. Attendance has improved slowly but consistently for the last few years, because the school has worked successfully on this. The proportion of persistent absentees is now lower than the national average. However, overall attendance is still below average, and the school's tracking shows that those pupils who miss the most school make less progress than their classmates.

Pupils' very positive attitudes underpin their good achievement and they make good progress during their time in school, regardless of ethnicity, gender or ability. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection, when progress was satisfactory, and is a product of better teaching and assessment procedures and of an improved curriculum. Pupils' progress is tracked well and the school provides a series of carefully tailored systems to support individuals' academic needs. At the time of the last inspection, standards were exceptionally low. Standards are now much better, but are still below average at the end of Year 2 because of pupils' very low starting points. Pupils make good progress in lessons because of good teaching, although there are still some inconsistencies between lessons. Classes are managed well and good relationships mean that pupils work hard and are keen to succeed. Teachers generally match work well to pupils' needs, based on the good information they now have about previous attainment. The effective deployment of extremely skilled teaching assistants is a major factor in the progress, for it means that pupils are often able to work in a small group with good support from an adult. A few lessons are only satisfactory, usually because some of the pupils are given work that is a little too hard or too easy for them. In some lessons, pupils are encouraged to assess their own learning, which gives both them and their teachers a good understanding of how they are doing, but this practice is not consistent.

A major strength of the school is the exceptionally good way it links with the local community, including a variety of local groups, the nearby Children's and Family Centre, the Nursery and the pupils' parents. This, together with expanding links at home and abroad, supports the school's good contribution to community cohesion. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about

the school and praise how well it cares for their children. One wrote of her daughter, 'It is a joy to bring her to school and leave her happy, and learning and enjoying it.'

The school's strengths rest on good leadership and management. The headteacher provides very clear educational direction for the school community, and all staff work as an effective team to drive improvements. The increased involvement of parents and the community contributes to improvements in learning. The better quality of teaching has come about through regular monitoring of lessons and clear feedback to colleagues to help them improve their practice. Subject leaders take a full part in this, and mutual support and advice are a major factor in practice. Governors have a good understanding of the school's context and needs, and support it well. The school is well placed to build on its success and improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. From generally very low starting points, they make good progress, although most are still working below the expected levels by the time they move to Year 1. An exception is in their personal, social and emotional development, where they make outstanding progress because of the school's excellent support for their personal development and well-being. All the adults develop excellent, trusting relationships with the children, who settle quickly into school and feel safe, happy and secure. They enjoy the wide range of exciting play-based activities provided both indoors and outside. The project on Mrs Lather's Laundry during the inspection generated immense enthusiasm and involvement, and led to great progress in children's knowledge and understanding. There is a very good balance between activities that are closely directed by adults and those that children choose for themselves. The adults are particularly skilled at intervening in children's play, helping them to think through their ideas and develop their understanding. Frequent participation by the adults helps children to learn through seeing a good model of what is wanted. This also produces a lot of enjoyment, such as when the teacher led a very lively game of Snap during 'golden time'. The provision is led and managed well, and all the adults work together as a supportive team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make teaching more consistent so that standards are raised further.
- Improve attendance, particularly for those pupils with higher levels of absence who make less progress than their classmates.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards have risen in the last few years but are still below average at the end of Year 2. Pupils achieve well from very low starting points. Pupils make most progress in reading. A concentration on boosting writing standards in the last year, based on improving pupils' speaking and listening skills, has been successful. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do well because of the extra help they are given. Those who are learning to speak English as an additional language get a lot of effective help, learn the language quickly and make the same good progress as their classmates. All groups of pupils make similarly good progress, with the exception of a small group with weak attendance, who do not achieve as well as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a keen sense of right and wrong, and develop good relationships with each other. Behaviour is good and pupils are confident that any lapses are quickly and fairly sorted out by the adults. They are keen to do well and are increasingly independent in their work, although a few find it difficult to sustain concentration without adult guidance. They feel safe in school, know the routines for maintaining their own safety and are caring of others. The school has Healthy School status. Pupils are very keen on exercise, particularly gymnastics. They know about healthy eating and regularly eat fruit at break-time, although what they eat at lunchtime does not always match their understanding of healthy options. They take on responsibilities willingly, for example Year 2 pupils enjoy reading regularly to their Reception 'buddies'. They feel that they have a strong voice in the life of the school via the school council and that the adults listen to their views. They are regularly involved in local events, and in raising money for charities. Pupils' good progress in basic skills and their very positive attitudes to work prepare them well for their future lives, in school and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage classes well, based on their clear expectations of and good relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils work hard and make good progress. Good use is made of the skilled support staff to provide extra help or challenge to pupils who need it. This additional provision is strongly supported by the improved assessment information available, so that the match of work to pupils' needs is generally good. However, this match is occasionally not as close as it needs to be, with the result that some pupils get work that is too hard or too easy. Teachers and support staff present ideas with great enthusiasm and generate similar enjoyment from their pupils through interesting, practically-based tasks. Pupils collaborate well when required and get on sensibly when working independently. However, occasionally, teachers do not sufficiently monitor the progress of pupils working independently. This means that, for a few pupils, their misconceptions are not corrected quickly enough and progress slows.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has worked successfully to improve the curriculum since the last inspection. Interesting, practically-based activities ensure pupils are engaged and enthusiastic in many lessons. The match of the curriculum to pupils' academic and emotional needs is much better, so their progress has improved. A wide range of visits, visitors and after-school clubs provides enrichment and excitement which promote pupils' enjoyment and achievement. A focus on speaking and listening, including drama and 'talking partners', has helped raise achievement in a variety of subjects. Art is a particular strength, with varied, high-quality work on display around the school. The use of a specialist teacher for gymnastics is enhancing progress in physical education. A key strength is the support for pupils' personal, social and health education through a wide variety of strategies. This results in excellent progress in pupils' personal development, which underpins their improved standards and achievement. A commitment to the environment has resulted in the award of Eco School Status.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The excellent pastoral care provided for pupils is the key to its success. Links with a wide variety of partners, backed by very good relationships with parents, provide a positive ethos in which pupils are safe and happy and enjoy learning. A wide variety of systems are in place to ensure that pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs are dealt with sensitively. Those pupils who struggle to conform receive excellent support. All staff are very aware of pupils' needs and intervene quickly to defuse any problems when they are upset. This means that the learning of others is not disrupted, while the pupils with problems are settled quickly and so are able to make progress. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Good academic support and guidance are provided, based on the improved tracking of pupils' achievement. Any pupils who are in danger of falling behind are quickly identified. Both in lessons and in a variety of very effective support groups, this information is used to make sure pupils get the help they need. Pupils' academic and personal successes are celebrated in a variety of formal and informal ways. This greatly supports their motivation and achievement. The school has worked successfully with its partners to raise attendance in the last few years, although absence is still too high for a few pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The close teamwork of all staff and a shared vision underpin the positive outcomes for pupils. Staff have rightly made the improvement in pupils' personal development their first priority. This has led to pupils feeling safe and happy in school, behaving well and wanting to learn. This firm basis for learning has been used well to promote pupils' achievement and raise standards. There is excellent provision to ensure equal opportunities for all pupils. The very secure understanding that staff have of pupils' social and academic needs means that every individual is well catered for. Self-evaluation is good, based on monitoring of provision and progress and on concerted action to tackle any problems. The school makes good provision for community cohesion and evaluates the impact of its work well, particularly at a local level. Very good use is made of the expertise and knowledge of parents, for example when a Muslim parent helped pupils to understand the celebration of Eid. However, in spite of its very successful relationships with parents, the school currently has no parent governors, despite efforts to recruit them. The headteacher is currently planning how this can be remedied. The very strong local links are enhanced by increasing work to understand contrasting communities further afield, such as a rural school in Norfolk. The governors have a very good understanding of the school's context and have provided strong support in dealing with financial issues.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Moorland Infant School, Milton Keynes, MK6 4ND

Thank you for your warm welcome when I came to inspect your school. I think you help to make Moorland one of the friendliest schools I have ever visited. Moorland is a good school and this is what I found out about it.

Your behaviour is good, you all get on well together and you try hard with your work. You really enjoy school and are good at helping each other and the staff. You are keen on exercise and use a lot of energy. Most of you attend well, but a few are absent rather a lot and do not make as much progress as the rest. I have agreed with the staff that they are going to try to improve attendance. You can help by always coming to school unless you are really ill.

You make good progress because the teachers are good at helping you learn. You get lots of interesting things to do and are enthusiastic about what you achieve. Occasionally, a few of you get work that is not quite right for you, so that your progress slows. I have agreed with the teachers that they are going to make sure that everyone makes good progress in all the lessons. You can help by keeping on trying hard and making sure that you ask for help if you need it.

The adults are very good at keeping an eye on you and making sure that anyone who needs any extra help gets it. They are good at organising the school and are keen to get your parents involved. Your parents told us in their questionnaires how pleased they are with how you are getting on at school.

I hope that you carry on enjoying school, working hard and making good progress. Thank you again for all your help.

Yours faithfully

Steven Hill

Lead Inspector