

Mildmay Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114892
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326085
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Freda Mountain
Headteacher	Mrs Linda King
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2006
School address	Robin Way Chelmsford Essex CM2 8AU
Telephone number	01245 250019
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly larger than most of its type. The vast majority of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. Only a few pupils are from other ethnic backgrounds. No pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. Attainment on entry is rising and is generally a little above average but fluctuates from year to year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average because of on-site provision for twelve pupils with hearing difficulties. Very few pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual times. The percentage of pupils in receipt of free school meals is below the national average. The school holds the Active Sports Mark and the Healthy School Award.

The infant and junior schools offer a joint breakfast club which is managed by and held in the infant school. It did not form part of this inspection and will be reported on separately.

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 school which provides sound value for money. The headteacher is particularly successful in promoting the welcoming, caring and inclusive ethos of the school. Working effectively with the staff, she ensures that pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy living. Pupils' behaviour is good and at times outstanding, and their enjoyment is clearly evident. Pupils' personal development is underpinned by the good, recently revised curriculum which is increasingly engaging their interests. However, the curriculum has yet to impact on achievement and standards. Pastoral care is a strength of the school. As a result, all pupils, and particularly those who are vulnerable, feel safe and well supported. Links with the local community, outside agencies and other schools are good. They contribute much to pupils' progress and support community cohesion effectively. The school enjoys the support of parents. One parent wrote, 'I am very pleased with Mildmay Junior: I would have no hesitation in recommending it to others'.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and the overall standards reached by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science are broadly average. However, there are variations in standards between subjects. The standards reached in mathematics and science tend to be slightly higher than those in English. Pupils make good progress in reading and satisfactory progress in mathematics and science. The school has correctly identified that pupils do not make enough progress in writing. Staff are in the process of addressing this issue by ensuring that basic writing skills are reinforced and promoted through work in other subjects. There are no on-going differences in the performance of the different groups of pupils. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive appropriate support and make similar progress to their peers. Pupils with hearing difficulties are fully included in the life of the school and make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' progress is inconsistent because of variations in the quality of teaching. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. There are examples of outstanding and good teaching but too few lessons are taught to these standards. In the good and outstanding lessons, pupils work with sustained concentration and display high levels of enjoyment. These lessons are conducted at a quick pace and challenge all pupils. In contrast, where teaching is satisfactory, teachers do not match work sufficiently to the needs and abilities of all the pupils. Their expectations of some pupils are too low. There are also variations in the quality of academic guidance and in the use of targets. In some classes, pupils are not given sufficient help to improve their work. Consequently, the quality of care, academic guidance and support is satisfactory.

The leadership and management of the school at all levels are satisfactory. There is a clear vision for the future. The recent introduction of curriculum teams has brought a new wave of enthusiasm and optimism to the school. Subject leaders and middle managers understand their roles and how they can be extended to improve standards. Systems for recording pupils' assessment data are being extended. These are beginning to be used appropriately to analyse outcomes and raise expectations. Governors are developing their roles. They are supportive and ensure that statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding, are met. Good strategic financial decisions have been taken to even out the impact of possible reductions in the budget through falling roles. However, the governing body has not been sufficiently rigorous in challenging the school on the standards pupils attain and the progress they make. The realistic self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, the commitment of the leadership team and the clear vision for the future provide it with sound capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in writing.
- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching so that the vast majority of lessons are taught to a good or better standard.
- Ensure senior managers, subject leaders and governors are more effective in directing improvement through rigorous analysis and use of assessment data.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In the 2008 national tests, pupils attained broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. The outcomes in English were slightly lower than those in mathematics and science. Although the figures suggest underperformance by the girls, this is not the case. The discrepancy is as a result of the number of girls in the year group with learning difficulties and disabilities. All groups of pupils made satisfactory progress based on their starting points and needs. Current standards are above average in reading, and broadly in line with expectations in mathematics and science. However, in writing, standards are close to being below average. Standards in information and communication technology have improved through enhanced resourcing and training for staff. Overall, pupils in the current Year 6 have made broadly satisfactory progress during their time at the school. The involvement of the family support worker and the contribution of the communicators for pupils who have hearing difficulties ensure that these and other vulnerable pupils are fully integrated into the life of the school. They make similar progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They treat one another with respect and make sure that those with significant hearing difficulties are included. They become tolerant and caring individuals and take on a good range of responsibilities. Older pupils enjoy their roles as peer mediators and play leaders. The school council is effective and has helped to introduce the red and yellow card system to encourage good behaviour. There are times when pupils' behaviour is exemplary but a small number of pupils find it hard to conform to the school's high expectations of behaviour. This tends to be in lessons when the pace is slow or there is a lack of challenge. Overall, pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and to use the internet safely. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and enjoy gaining their healthy eating award for having two pieces of fruit in their lunchbox. They make a positive contribution to the community, raising funds for a range of charities and planting flowers in the locality. Their understanding of Britain as a diverse society is good and their knowledge of other cultures is promoted effectively through theme weeks, such as the recent Greek week. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is above average. The standards they reach in English, mathematics and science together with their good social skills, prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Relationships between pupils, teachers and support assistants are consistently good. This ensures that pupils feel safe and develop their self-confidence. There are examples of good and outstanding teaching. These lessons are characterised by meticulous planning to meet pupils' varying needs. Learning objectives are clear and expectations for all pupils are high. Extremely skilful questioning extends pupils' thinking exceptionally well. In contrast, where teaching is satisfactory, expectations are not as high. In some lessons, the pace of a part of the lesson is a little slow and pupils are not taught specific skills. Although pupils make satisfactory progress in these lessons, their learning is not accelerated. Teachers are increasingly using the electronic white boards to bring an added stimulus and dimension to the lessons. There are examples of teachers involving pupils well in assessing their own learning and good examples of informative marking, especially in the English books, but this effective practice is not consistent in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school successfully provides pupils with a rich and varied programme of activities, both within and beyond the school day. Much work has been done to ensure that links between subjects add interest and enjoyment for pupils. For example, pupils in Year 5 used their literacy and geographical skills to report work undertaken during their residential visit to Beccles. Vibrant displays of pupils' work around school demonstrate regular and interesting links between art and history. There are strengths in the combination of specialised literacy programmes, especially for reading, and activities in class for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those supported by the resource base. That said the school recognises it lacks specialised mathematics programmes for pupils who find this subject particularly difficult. There is a comprehensive and effective programme for personal and social development that makes a significant contribution to pupils' well-being and the mature attitudes of many. Pupils appreciate the good range of sporting and cultural activities on offer to them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This is a school where staff go the extra mile for their most vulnerable pupils, for example by providing play therapy and opportunities to improve pupils' self-esteem. Staff share a high commitment to pupils' welfare and well-being and pastoral care is good for all pupils. Health and safety practice, and procedures for safeguarding pupils, meet requirements. Academic guidance is satisfactory. There are examples of pupils receiving good quality feedback from teachers either verbally or on paper but this is not consistent. Similarly, pupils' understanding of their learning targets varies because they are not all couched in easily understood language or used consistently. Systems to check pupils' progress over time are in place but staff are just starting to make full use of the information to analyse what is working well and where to focus improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher is committed to improving the quality of education and ensuring the pupils receive a rich and varied curriculum. The issues from the last inspection have been addressed appropriately. The staff function well as a team and those with responsibilities are developing their roles in evaluating achievement. The impact of greater rigour in the monitoring of pupils' progress and the setting of suitably challenging targets is beginning to be felt as standards improve. But there is still much to be done, particularly in developing accountability amongst all staff for the progress that 'their pupils' make.

Parental confidence in the school is strong and the school's contribution to community cohesion is good. There are particular strengths in pupils' understanding of local issues and the school is committed to strengthening the wider links and the global aspects of its strategy. Governors are committed to the work of the school and provide conscientious support. Their awareness of their responsibility to hold the school to account has grown but their role as critical friends is not fully developed, particularly in analysing the outcomes and challenging the school on the standards it achieves.

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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 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/or disabilities make progress	3

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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 learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mildmay Junior School, Chelmsford, CM2 8AU

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit and talking to you. We were very pleased to hear that you like coming to school and that your attendance is above average. Throughout the day, you behaved well. At times, your behaviour could not be better. You demonstrated that you are keen to take responsibility and that you all get on together very well. You have an excellent understanding of healthy living and know a lot about keeping safe. We were impressed by your good contribution to the school community and your knowledge of people from other cultures. You show respect for each other, move carefully around the school and play safely in the playground. Well done!

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. The standards you reach in English, mathematics and science are broadly similar to the national average. You tend to make good progress in reading and satisfactory progress in mathematics and science. Your progress in writing is not as good. Your teachers are aware of this and have started to make sure you practise your writing skills when you are recording your work in other subjects. We have asked them to continue to do this and to concentrate on improving your writing skills because this will help you make better progress and attain higher standards not only in English but in other subjects as well.

You told us that some of your lessons are very interesting and give you lots to think about, but others are not so challenging. We agree with you and have asked Mrs King to make certain that there are more lessons that challenge you, capture your imagination and encourage you to do well. But don't forget, you too must play your part by always working as hard as you can.

Your teachers have recently introduced changes to the way they record and use the assessments they make of your work. We think this is a really positive move. We believe this will help raise expectations which will lead to quickening your rate of progress and improving your standards. Consequently, we have asked your teachers, senior managers and governors to continue to develop this initiative.

Good luck for the future and thanks once again for being so friendly and polite.

Yours faithfully

David Wynford Jones

Lead inspector