

Mill Mead Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117297
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326565
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin Cragg HMI

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	237
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 Karen Lewis
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Nesbitt-Larking
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Port Vale Hertford Hertfordshire SG14 3AA
Telephone number	01992 582776
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector.

Description of the school

The school is of average size. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is small. There are few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average but there is an average proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. There is a breakfast and after-school club with child care provision which is managed by a private company and uses the school's premises. This provision was inspected separately at the time of the school inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Mill Mead is a good school with some outstanding features. Parents responded very positively in questionnaires to the school's strong sense of community, the focus on children as individuals and the excellent range of activities. They also appreciated the dynamic leadership of the headteacher. The school has a strong ethos of care and respect. As a result, pupils thrive. They feel safe, thoroughly enjoy their lessons and develop confidence. They benefit from an excellent curriculum with a very wide range of visitors, trips, events and activities which broadens and enriches their learning. It also promotes very good provision for community cohesion at local and global level. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully, based on thorough tracking of assessment information, which leads to appropriate intervention for those who find learning more difficult or who are not achieving as well as they might.

Achievement is good overall with clear improvement at Key Stage 1 since the last inspection. According to the provisional 2009 results, pupils' performance in writing has also improved. Standards are above average. Teaching is consistently good with a good range of activities which engage pupils' interest. Teachers plan well to meet the needs of all children, although tasks for higher attaining pupils sometimes reinforce rather than extend their learning. Teachers generally make clear what pupils should do to improve their work. However, there are different systems for this across the classes which affect pupils' understanding of how assessment works as they move through the school.

The headteacher sets a very clear direction for the school which is shared by staff and governors. There are excellent local partnerships which enhance pupils' learning. Monitoring and evaluation is thorough and leads to accurate self-evaluation. However, subject leaders are at an early stage in ensuring that the outcomes of their evaluation have an impact on pupils' achievement. The school has made clear improvement since the last inspection and has good capacity to improve further. Value for money is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is good. Children who attend Nursery develop their skills and social awareness at an early stage. The majority of children enter the Reception class with knowledge and understanding which is in line with national expectations. The good links with parents help children to settle quickly into safe and secure routines which promote a healthy lifestyle and ensure that they respond appropriately to each other and to adults. Excellent attention is paid to their welfare and individual needs. Activities and resources are well-planned and provide a good range of experiences in the classroom and the very well-equipped outdoor space. Good teaching and the stimulating environment help children to make good progress in achieving the early learning goals, especially in their personal development, and communication and language skills. Children are encouraged to develop independence and to take ownership of their learning. Good leadership and management, together with strong teamwork, ensure that the needs of all children are met through good intervention programmes where necessary. The procedures for monitoring and recording children's progress in achieving the early learning goals are good. However, inconsistency in the formal assessment system between the Nursery and Reception classes limits the quality of information available on transition.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers plan lessons to extend and challenge pupils with higher prior attainment and those who are gifted or talented.
- Develop greater consistency in teachers' comments and their use of assessment in lessons to identify for pupils how they should improve their work.
- Ensure that subject leaders' monitoring and evaluation of provision has an impact on raising achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. In 2008, Year 6 pupils reached their challenging targets and achieved standards that were above average, especially in mathematics and science. However, standards in English were broadly average. The standards reached by Year 2 pupils in 2008 were also above average with reading and mathematics stronger than writing. Pupils generally made good progress from their starting points. However, fewer pupils achieved higher levels in English than in mathematics and science. In 2008, boys achieved higher standards overall but girls generally made slightly better progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made good progress. The small number of children who speak English as an additional language also made good progress. The provisional results for pupils in 2009, at both key stages, show improvement in English overall and in writing, particularly at the higher levels. However, results in mathematics fell slightly. Overall, pupils' progress from the end of Year 2 is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are proud of their school and value the happy and exciting learning environment provided for them. They develop excellent relationships with each other across the age range, and with their teachers. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and a strength of the school. This is borne out by pupils' involvement in the exceptionally wide range of activities available to them. Within this caring environment, pupils gain confidence and enjoy their education. They have a very clear understanding of healthy lifestyles which shows in their choice of food and regular participation in sports. Behaviour is good during lessons and most pupils are keen to learn. They show a very good level of self-discipline as they move around the school and in the playground. Pupils say they feel safe in school and have confidence that all adults are there to help them if problems arise. Attendance is good because pupils want to come to school. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community. The school council is actively involved in decisions for the school's development, and pupils have an excellent understanding of the wider community through their involvement in activities and their sponsorship of a Ugandan primary school. They make good progress in developing life skills to prepare them for secondary education and the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and use a good variety of activities to interest and challenge pupils. Although work is generally matched well to pupils' needs, on occasions the tasks for

higher attaining pupils reinforce rather than extend their learning. Teaching assistants provide effective support for those pupils who find learning more difficult. Lessons are managed effectively and conducted with good pace. In the best lessons, pupils are expected to learn independently and to assess their own work and that of their peers using agreed criteria. Teachers use modern technologies well to structure learning and to encourage pupils to apply their skills. Pupils respond very positively, generally settling to work well, collaborating successfully and enjoying the very good relationships in classes. Teachers' marking is detailed and pupils generally know what they need to do to improve their work. However, the approaches used vary from class to class and this affects pupils' understanding of assessment as they progress through the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school has an outstanding curriculum with an exceptionally broad range of enrichment activities. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and the school has successfully adopted the International Primary Curriculum. Pupils respond well to the themed approach, linked closely to personal and social education. The wide range of activities is a significant strength of the school. The strong focus on modern foreign languages within the curriculum provides pupils from Reception with the opportunity to learn French and German. The school clearly places importance on meeting the aspirations of different groups of pupils: for example many pupils learn to play musical instruments and take part in the school orchestra and regular performances. There is an outstanding range of clubs which are enjoyed by the majority of pupils. The regular residential trips, including visits to France and Germany, are a significant feature of the ethos of the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for all pupils. Pastoral care is outstanding because pupils are well known to staff and relationships are excellent. Staff work as a strong team and place clear emphasis on developing every child as an individual. All safeguarding procedures are fully in place and good attention is paid to the protection of children through rigorous monitoring and recording. There are good procedures for promoting attendance. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported in classrooms by skilled teaching assistants and through their individual education plans. The school works closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils who need extra help receive the support they need. There is a good system for tracking pupils' progress which is used well to identify those children who are not making as much progress as they should. However there are some inconsistencies between classes in the way that teachers help pupils move on to their next steps of learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good with some strengths. The headteacher sets a very clear direction for the school which is shared by staff and governors. Thorough monitoring and evaluation by senior staff and governors lead to clear priorities for improvement. Challenging targets for pupils help to raise achievement, as shown by the improvement at Key Stage 1. Middle leaders are increasingly accountable for their areas of responsibility and contribute to

monitoring and evaluation. However, these activities are not yet sufficiently developed to have a distinct impact on raising achievement. There is a very strong ethos of care in the school and all pupils are valued and treated as individuals. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. There are excellent links with parents, the local community, including the on-site child-care provision, and local schools. There is strong emphasis, through the link with a school in Uganda, on enabling pupils to understand other cultures. An excellent range of trips exposes children to other languages and cultures in Europe. Children develop a good understanding of other faiths but have less opportunity to explore the diverse communities in this country. Governors know the school well and have very effective strategies to hold it to account. There have been clear improvements since the last inspection and the capacity to improve is good.

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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?	1
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	2
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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	1
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**

9 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mill Mead Primary School, Hertford, SG14 3AA

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave to me and my colleague when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to many of you in lessons, in meetings and around the school. You helped us to get to know your school and this letter is to tell you what we found on our inspection.

Yours is a good school and some areas are outstanding. You are cared for very well and encouraged to develop your confidence and to enjoy your lessons. You told us that you feel safe and that adults solve any problems very quickly. You get on very well with each other, mixing well across the different classes. You behave very well around the school and your attendance is good. You reach standards that are above average and make generally good progress. The school provides an excellent curriculum for you with an outstanding range of trips, events, competitions and visitors. You told us that you really enjoy the opportunities available. We were sorry to miss Year 3 who were at camp. Your teachers plan interesting lessons for you which provide a good variety of activities. You worked well together in groups and pairs. You generally know what you have to do to improve your work. Teachers keep track of your progress and provide good extra support where you need it. Your headteacher and the staff work really well as a team. The strengths of the school came across very clearly as we talked to you. They also showed in your parents' replies to us. There is a strong feeling of community in the school and of everyone pulling together to improve.

Your school has improved since its last inspection but we suggested some areas where it might get even better. We have asked your teachers to make sure that the work for those of you who are aiming for higher levels really challenges you and moves your learning forward rather than giving you more practice at the same level. We understand that most of you know what to do to improve your work but the way teachers do this varies from class to class. We have asked them to make their approaches similar to help you as you move through the school. We have also suggested an increased role for the staff who look after particular subjects.

I am sure that your school will continue to improve. We really enjoyed our visit to your school and wish you success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Martin Cragg

Her Majesty's Inspector