

# Maidstone Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124581
<b>Local Authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	328169
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Cheryl Thompson

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	183
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Fiona Topliss
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Lizzie Girling
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 January 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Maidstone Road Felixstowe Suffolk IP11 9EG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01394283375
<b>Fax number</b>	01394276956

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<b>Age group</b>	3–7
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an average size infant school serving its immediate locality. The school includes the Felixstowe area Specialist Support Centre (SSC) for a maximum of ten infant-age pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), there are two part-time Nursery classes and two full-time Reception classes. Attainment on entry varies, but is generally below average. Almost all children come from White British backgrounds and a very small number speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is above average as is the proportion of pupils who need extra help with learning.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Maidstone Infant school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. The headteacher leads the school's friendly family ethos well. Parents praise her contribution to the good quality pastoral care and support that their children receive. As one parent wrote, 'This is a great school run like one big family'. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. They are well behaved in lessons and around the school. Pupils enjoy school, as can be seen in their willingness to carry out helpful jobs. They like to carry messages, for example, or to collect and return registers to the office. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils are keen to learn from a good curriculum and particularly enjoy the good range of visits and clubs.

Achievement is satisfactory overall. The notable exception is the good achievement of pupils who need extra help with their learning, both in the main school and the SSC. These pupils receive carefully planned support and their progress is frequently reviewed to see if they can do even better. Over time, standards for Year 2 are broadly average except in reading and mathematics where they are below. The school has recently introduced the strategy of teaching pupils in groups according to their abilities in order to raise attainment in these subjects. However, senior staff have not monitored the teaching and learning rigorously enough within these groups to check their effectiveness, particularly in aspects such as the approaches to the teaching of phonics, which are inconsistent.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A considerable strength is the good relationships between teachers and pupils. Lesson plans generally address the needs of different groups of pupils satisfactorily. Some teachers make very effective use of these plans and ask probing questions that push pupils to think deeply and engage as active contributors to their own learning. However, there is variation in the way teachers use these plans and their assessments, especially in mathematics, and expectations are not consistently high enough. This sometimes leads to a lack of pace and to lessons that are not as well matched to the pupils' level of understanding as they could be. Teaching and support for pupils in the SSC is excellent. As a result, these pupils have very high self-esteem and very positive attitudes to learning.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with strengths in the good partnerships with parents and the range of outside agencies such as speech therapists and the local children's centre. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. There are reasonable systems for checking on the work of the school. However, the senior leaders have not used these systems regularly enough or with sufficient rigour to ensure that there is a clear picture of precisely what needs to be done to bring about improvement. For example, the school aims to promote reading as an enjoyable activity but has not noted that the majority of the reading scheme-type books in the Reception classes are, at best, uninspiring. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. The strengths are in pupils' contributions to their own community which stem from their involvement in a number of committees. They take responsibility for aspects that include provision in information and communication technology (ICT) and the environment.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

The EYFS provides a sound start to children's education. Parents are pleased with all the EYFS provides, especially the home visits prior to starting Nursery. In all classes, children are looked after well. Adults are very supportive and encouraging, which develops children's confidence and independence. They are very quick to notice if children need extra help with learning or their personal development and have effective plans to give them good support. Relationships between children and with adults are good. Teaching and the curriculum in the Nursery are good. As a result, children settle comfortably into daily routines and quickly make friends. They develop very positive attitudes to learning and, for their age, behave very well. They take turns sensibly on the large wheeled toys and enjoy taking on responsibilities for tidying up the room.

The curriculum in the Reception classes is satisfactory and meets the children's needs. The outdoor area is used effectively as an extension of classroom learning. Children make satisfactory progress in their learning and continue the good progress in their personal development. Teaching is satisfactory with a strength in the good support provided by teaching assistants. Letter sounds are taught appropriately. However, confusion brought about by the mixture of schemes for teaching phonics slows the rate of progress. Uninspiring reading materials hinder children's development of a lively interest in reading. By the time they reach the end of the Reception year, children's attainment is just below the levels typical for their age. Leadership and management of the EYFS are satisfactory but not enough monitoring is done to gain a clear picture of what is needed to improve the provision further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading by improving the quality of books available and by following a more consistent approach to the teaching of phonics.
- Raise standards in mathematics by using regular assessment of each lesson to effectively plan for the next.
- Improve the quality of teaching through regular and rigorous monitoring so that teachers know what to do to improve their practice.
- Develop the roles of the senior leaders so that they gain a precise understanding of strengths and areas to improve.

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

The school data show that at the start of Year 1, attainment is usually below average. Over time, standards in writing have been close to the national average but in reading and mathematics they have been below, and in some years, well below average. Pupils make sound progress as they move through the school so that from their starting points, achievement is satisfactory. Previous underachievement has been halted by the introduction of a good tracking system, which is used to hold teachers to account for the progress their classes make. Not enough pupils had been gaining the higher Level 3 in reading, writing or mathematics. However, recent initiatives, such as grouping pupils according to their abilities in mathematics and literacy,

are improving progress for more able pupils. They are currently on track to attain higher standards this year.

Pupils in the SSC make good, all round progress. This good progress is because their needs are well catered for by expert provision. These pupils feel happy and secure in their class and have very good self-esteem. Pupils in the main school who need extra help with their learning also make good progress because the expertise in the SSC is disseminated amongst all staff. Consequently, individuals have work and support at just the right level to help them succeed.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils work and play together well. They cooperate with adults and other pupils, demonstrating confidence and polite respect towards others. Behaviour is invariably good. Pupils say they feel safe in school because, as one stated with much nodding from others, 'All the adults look after us a lot'. Pupils enjoy school and contribute well to the school and local community, as can be seen in their willingness to carry out helpful jobs around the building. For example, they like to carry messages or collect and return registers to the office, and the choir has sung at a local home for the elderly. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils understand the relationship between keeping healthy and eating a sensible diet with plenty of fruit. They enjoy physical activity and often take part vigorously. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although opportunities to understand and value minority ethnic cultures and their richness in the United Kingdom are limited. Preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory. This is because literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactorily, and pupils' ability to work in teams is often good.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Good relationships are a feature in every class. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour skilfully so that classrooms have a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is strong and particularly beneficial for pupils needing extra help with their learning. Teachers' evaluations of how successful their lessons have been improved since the last inspection, although assessment is not used effectively enough to help teachers plan subsequent lessons to enable pupils to make good progress. For example, teachers take note of when their pupils have difficulty with a mathematical concept but do not change the next lesson plan in order to provide time for more practise. When lessons start, they move along at a reasonable pace. However, at the start of the morning and afternoon, time is often wasted because insufficient attention is given to making sure lessons start promptly.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Planning of the curriculum includes all the subjects and aspects required. It is adapted particularly well to meet the needs of pupils who find learning harder than others and for the few who join the school who are learning English as an additional language. What is planned and provided in the SSC is exceptionally good. This enhances activities for other pupils who struggle, especially in mathematics, as ideas, expertise and teaching are shared willingly. The grouping of pupils according to their abilities in literacy and mathematics is beginning to have an impact on raising

standards, especially for more able pupils. The curriculum includes carefully planned provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. Visits and visitors further enrich what is taught, as does the skilful support of teaching assistants and days that are set aside to teach a particular topic or theme. A number of well-supported clubs including, art, choir and sports add further to pupils' enjoyment and learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

All the required checks are carried out to ensure pupils' safety. Arrangements for first aid are adequate and further training is imminent to meet new government guidelines. Ongoing assessment of pupils' work, including marking, is nearly always conscientiously up to date. However, it does not provide enough guidance to pupils about how to improve their work and what to do next in relation to their targets. Recent improvements to target-setting and tracking of pupils' progress are beginning to provide fuller information about individuals' achievements. This information is not used sufficiently to adapt teaching and learning. Nevertheless, this is not the case for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for whom identification of needs, teaching and support are very effective. Furthermore, strong partnerships with outside agencies ensure that when particular advice or expertise is required to meet such needs, it is provided promptly.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher provides strong leadership for the successful pastoral work of the school and the satisfactory strategy for community cohesion. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are satisfactory. However, their impact is restricted because, although the headteacher checks on the work of the school, senior leaders are not involved enough in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school regularly and rigorously to gain a precise picture of what needs to be done to improve further. Consequently, school improvement planning lacks clarity and the rate of improvement is satisfactory rather than good. Raising standards by setting targets is developing well now that a good progress tracking system is in place. Targets are increasingly challenging but not yet aspirational. Leadership and management of the SSC are excellent and all adults, together with the headteacher, ensure that all pupils are fully included and that staff expertise is shared within the whole school. Governors are supportive of the school and fulfil their roles satisfactorily but do not have sufficient understanding of the standards achieved in the school to help them act as 'critical friends' and encourage the school to do even better.

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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

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	2

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

28 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Maidstone Infant School, Felixstowe, IP11 9EG

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school. Like you, we think it is a very friendly place to be and you get on well together. Our particular thanks to those of you who kindly gave up part of your lunchtime to talk to us. We found what you had to say very helpful. In return, I now want to share my findings with you:

This is a satisfactory school. You told us that you like school and we could see why, particularly when we saw how friendly everyone is. Your parents also told us how much they like the school and how they know the teachers will always help them. You told us that you feel very safe in school and one of the best things in the school are the teachers. All the adults care about you and work hard on your behalf. We could see that you make steady progress.

Your headteacher, governors and senior teachers provide satisfactory leadership and are working hard to make your school an interesting place to be. We have asked them to do four things to make your school even better:

- help you to do well in reading by giving you more interesting and exciting books to read and teaching letter sounds from one scheme instead of three
- make sure you do even better in mathematics by checking that lessons are planned carefully to match what you need to learn next
- make sure that the senior leaders help the headteacher to check on your lessons to see if they can be made even better
- make sure that the senior leaders learn more about what goes on in school so that they know how to help improve things.

This is a satisfactory school, not only because of what the adults bring to it, but also because of your contributions. You are positive about learning and we were impressed with how welcoming and polite you are to visitors. Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Thompson

Lead inspector