

Millfields Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 130272 |
| Local authority | Wirral |
| Inspection number | 341015 |
| Inspection dates | 23–24 March 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Mr Paul Bamber |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 176 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr J Weise |
| Headteacher | Mrs M Holford |
| Date of previous school inspection | September 2006 |
| School address | Willington Avenue Eastham Wirral CH62 9EB |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and observed 8 teachers. They held meetings with groups of parents and carers, pupils, staff, the chair of the governing body and representatives of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including improvement plans, records of pupils' attainment and progress, pupils' work in their books, and policies and procedures relating to safeguarding. The inspection team analysed 27 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and those from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether the overall attainment of Key Stage 1 pupils had risen this year and whether the decline in standards in Key Stage 2 has been arrested
- the school's strategies to improve standards in reading in Key Stage 1 and the progress made by girls and the more-able pupils in Key Stage 2 and how successful these have been
- if teaching currently and over time has been strong enough to ensure that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress
- how effective leaders and managers are in addressing weaknesses.

Information about the school

The pupils who attend this average-sized primary school are predominantly White British. A larger than average proportion has special educational needs and/or disabilities and a much larger percentage than usual is known to be eligible for a free school meal. The school is in receipt of awards that recognise its contribution to promoting pupils' health, sport, the arts, inclusion and a sustainable environment. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2008. The school shares its site with a Children's Centre and a privately run provision which offers care for Millfield's pupils from before and after school. These provisions are subject to a separate inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school? 4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement 3

Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' attainment, especially in Key Stage 1, to the quality of teaching and to pupils' overall progress.

Despite some good aspects in its work the school's overall effectiveness is inadequate. This is because pupils' attainment is low in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school but especially in Key Stage 1. In the school's Year 6 national tests, standards have fallen over the past two years to significantly below average. Pupils have not achieved well enough because teaching, although now improving, has not been strong enough to enable them to overcome previous underachievement. There are still too many pupils not attaining the challenging targets set for them. Exceptions to this are pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, most of whom achieve their targets as a result of effective support.

Pupils enjoy learning and make a positive contribution to the school and to the wider community. They adopt healthy eating habits and participate enthusiastically in sporting activities. Pupils also enjoy and are adept at singing and performing. In this they are well supported by specialist teaching. Their acquisition, however, of those skills which will prepare them well for the next stage of their education is inadequate. Although teaching is improving and was satisfactory overall in lessons observed during the inspection, it is clear from analysing pupils' work and from attainment and progress data that expectations have not been high enough. This is especially so for pupils' basic skills and for the more-able pupils to attain at higher than age-related expectations. Neither has the use of assessment been sufficiently rigorous.

The headteacher has introduced increased rigour into tracking pupils' progress, into improving the quality of classroom practice and into assessment. These have yet to have a strong enough impact to improve overall attainment throughout the school. Middle leaders are not fully effective because they concentrate too much on provision rather than the impact of their actions to improve pupils' achievement. However, increasingly accurate self-evaluation has led to clear identification of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, effective actions have been taken to improve

reading standards in Key Stage 1, the performance of girls in Key Stage 2 and outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The decline in overall standards in Year 6 has also been halted. Taken together, these factors indicate a satisfactory capacity to take to the school forward.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics to at least average standards by July 2011, by:
 - enabling pupils to read more fluently
 - ensuring that pupils know and use correctly the rules of spelling, punctuation and of more complex sentence structure
 - helping pupils to plug the gaps in their knowledge and understanding of basic mathematical facts, and to be more adept at solving problems.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that by December 2010, at least 75% of lessons are good or better, by:
 - ensuring that tasks set fully challenge all pupils, especially those who are more able, in order to make sure that they make good progress
 - injecting more pace into lessons
 - setting a realistic number of learning objectives for every lesson
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to work independently and to be involved in assessing their own and others' work.

- Enhance and improve the impact of middle leaders on the school's performance, by:
 - requiring them to focus their actions on remedying weaknesses in pupils' basic skills; for example, by analysing, together with colleagues, work in pupils' books in order to identify any weaknesses in their knowledge, skills and understanding
 - providing them with training to implement and enhance their role in monitoring and evaluation.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

| |
|---|
| 4 |
|---|

Pupils generally enjoy lessons and are willing learners. Most are keen to do well and take pride in answering questions correctly or in having their work praised. They work harmoniously in pairs and readily respond when asked to indicate how well they think they have done in a lesson. However, the achievement of the pupils, including those learning English as an additional language, is inadequate overall. Currently, pupils make adequate progress in lessons and learn satisfactorily in the main. However, as a result of previous underachievement they are not progressing as well as they should over time. The evidence from lessons observed and the analysis of their work in books indicates gaps in their prior knowledge which leave them ill-equipped to deal with more complex work. Currently, Year 2 pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics is weak. In contrast, their reading skills, despite being below average, have improved considerably over the past year. In Year 6, although the rapid decline in standards has been halted they remain significantly below average, albeit with an improvement in attainment in mathematics. Insufficient

challenge for the more-able pupils means that few of these pupils attain highly throughout the school.

The behaviour and attitudes of most pupils are good. However, in most classes, a small minority are less engaged in learning and cause minor disruption. As a result the quality of these pupils' learning and their progress are negatively affected. A few pupils report that during break and lunchtime outside play can be 'a bit rough' and that, although they feel extremely safe in class, they are at times nervous about going out to play. Pupils contribute well to school life, taking on responsibility willingly and conscientiously. They have a sound sense of fair play and effective social skills. At times, pupils lack a degree of self-confidence. This, together with their broadly average attendance and well-below-average basic skills, means that they are not acquiring effective workplace skills.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 4 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attainment ¹ | 4 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 4 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 3 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 3 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 3 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 4 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attendance ¹ | 3 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |

How effective is the provision?

Where teaching is at least satisfactory, lessons are planned with pupils' recent attainment in mind, which means that work is adequately suited to their needs. These lessons are managed satisfactorily, with appropriate amounts of time provided for instruction and for pupils to practise their skills and to apply their learning. Teachers make sound use of practical activities to stimulate learning, and teaching assistants provide effective support for slower learners. Assessment is satisfactory overall. There are some examples of very effective marking, but this is restricted to a few classes and within a rather limited range of subjects. Where marking is at its best, pupils are given clear pointers for improvement, but they are not required to indicate in subsequent work where and how they have responded to such advice. There are some remaining weaknesses in teaching. Teachers do not ensure that there is sufficient pace in lessons and do not enable pupils become more independent learners. In addition, basic skills are insufficiently consolidated and assessment information is not always effectively used. In some cases, teachers plan too many learning objectives for one lesson, few of which are met.

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

The curriculum has strengths in promoting pupils' enjoyment, in promoting the arts, in providing pupils with interesting experiences out of the classroom and in widening their horizons. It is a lot less successful in meeting their academic needs. Pupils are cared for well and they and their parents and carers endorse this enthusiastically. The effective partnerships the school has established with outside agencies enhance well the good provision for pupils who are looked after. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met. The strategies to improve attendance are working well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 4 |
| Taking into account: | |
| The use of assessment to support learning | 3 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 3 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff share the headteacher's determination to address the significant weaknesses in pupils' attainment. They have made a satisfactory start, for example, in the effective actions taken to arrest the decline in overall standards in Year 6, and recognise they have quite a way to go. The will is there but more time is needed to embed better practice and to enhance the effectiveness of senior and middle leaders. The governing body supports the school's work well and has a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the lack of detailed understanding of the indicators of school performance leaves the governing body less well equipped to challenge any decline in standards or pupils' underachievement. Where governance is strong is in its assurance of good safeguarding procedures which fully meet requirements. Recommended good practice is evident in all areas of safeguarding; there are well-developed child protection procedures and up-to-date training is provided. The school satisfactorily promotes equality of opportunity and does all it can to minimise discrimination and any form of harassment. It tracks the participation of different groups of pupils in aspects of school life. The school works well in partnership with parents. In promoting community cohesion, practice is much stronger within the school and in the local community than in establishing useful links with communities in different parts of the United Kingdom or abroad. Given the inadequate overall outcomes for pupils the school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 3 |

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 3 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 4 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery with skills much lower than expected. In the recent past, outcomes for most children have been inadequate. As a result of changes to provision and in leadership and practice, children now make satisfactory progress through the Nursery and Reception Years. The overall quality of teaching and of support is satisfactory, with children mainly enjoying both adult-led activities and free play. Whilst most children eagerly follow their interests in free play, some require more guidance or are reluctant to involve themselves fully. Welfare arrangements are strong and children demonstrate a growing awareness of what is safe and how to be healthy. Children make friends easily and increasingly learn to share and take turns. Some lack perseverance and quickly lose interest in and do not finish tasks. Adults support children well but are at times reluctant to step back and allow children the freedom to explore for themselves. The joint leaders of the provision ensure the effective participation of parents and carers in their children's learning. They have fully supported the teaching assistant in providing family learning classes for parents and carers which have contributed significantly to the support children receive in their learning and development at home.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |

Views of parents and carers

Fifteen per cent of parents returned the questionnaire. The views of some parents and carers were also voiced at a meeting held during the inspection. A very large majority are fully supportive of the school's work. Inspectors judge that several areas of the school's work are at least satisfactory, but that evidence indicates weaknesses in pupils' progress and in teaching over time. A very few parents expressed individual concerns; these were discussed with the school, by the inspectors, and satisfactory responses were received.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Millfields Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 27 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 176 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 13 | 52 | 10 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 16 | 64 | 8 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 14 | 56 | 8 | 32 | 2 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 12 | 48 | 10 | 40 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 15 | 60 | 7 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 13 | 52 | 10 | 40 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 13 | 52 | 10 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 10 | 40 | 12 | 48 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 11 | 44 | 12 | 48 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 7 | 28 | 15 | 60 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 10 | 40 | 12 | 48 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 11 | 44 | 12 | 48 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 14 | 56 | 9 | 36 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 39 | 58 | 3 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 13 | 50 | 33 | 4 |
| Secondary schools | 17 | 40 | 34 | 9 |
| Sixth forms | 18 | 43 | 37 | 2 |
| Special schools | 26 | 54 | 18 | 2 |
| Pupil referral units | 7 | 55 | 30 | 7 |
| All schools | 15 | 49 | 32 | 5 |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

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|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school. |
| Learning: | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners. |
| Overall effectiveness: | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| Progress: | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millfields Primary School, Wirral, CH62 9EB

Many thanks to you on behalf of the inspection team for the polite and warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school a few weeks ago.

It is our job to find out how good an education you are getting and this letter is to tell you what we found out. Most of you enjoy school, get on fairly well together, have a lot of interesting things to do out of class and know well how to live a healthy lifestyle. However, standards are low in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because over a period of time you have not been taught these subjects well enough. The teaching is improving now so we judge that the school can become better because your headteacher has introduced a lot of good things that are beginning to work. The school takes good care of you. However, the school has been given a 'notice to improve'. This means that it will have to quickly improve even more how you are taught and raise the standards of your reading, writing and mathematics. We judge that pupils, including those of you who find learning easier than most, require extra help to improve. We have also asked those teachers who look after subjects to concentrate more on how well you are doing in them.

You can all help by working as hard as you can and coming to school as often as you can. Thank you again for your help with the inspection. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Paul Bamber
Lead inspector

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