



Maidstone Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124581
LEA SUFFOLK LEA
Inspection number 281755
Inspection dates 19 January 2006 to 20 January 2006
Reporting inspector Ms. Ruth Frith LI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Maidstone Road
School category	Community		IP11 9EG
Age range of pupils	3 to 7		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01394283375
Number on roll	211	Fax number	
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Robert Bareham
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Ms. Lizzie Girling

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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 situated in an area of Felixstowe near to the container port. Many parents are employed at the port or in related businesses. The percentage of pupils receiving free school meals is broadly average. Children's attainment on entry to school is below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is well above the national average and eight children have a statement of special educational needs. These pupils have a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities. A Specialist Support Centre is part of the school's provision. This is for children who come from the Felixstowe area, have a statement of special educational needs and require specific small group teaching. Most children come from White British backgrounds and a very small number speak English as an additional language. A few children are looked after by others than their immediate family. The new headteacher has been in the school for just over a term.

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 standard of education and has several key strengths. Staff are particularly effective in the way they care for pupils and promote their personal education. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but has several good features. These help pupils to enjoy their learning and become happy, confident and independent learners. Those in the reception class make a good start and quickly become eager to learn. The quality of provision and standards in the Foundation Stage has improved since the last inspection. It is now satisfactory and set to improve further. Pupils reach broadly satisfactory standards by the time they leave school but do better in writing than reading and mathematics. Whilst staff have been successful in encouraging children to reach the standards expected for their age, more capable children are sometimes not sufficiently challenged. Since her appointment, the headteacher has quickly gained the confidence of staff and parents. She is particularly effective in building on the good team spirit amongst staff, who share a determination to improve provision and raise standards under her leadership. The school's systems for checking how well it is doing are satisfactory and enable it to gain an accurate view of its performance that matches the inspection findings. However, systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning are not sharp enough. The necessary changes that the headteacher has identified are yet to show themselves fully but a good start has been made. The satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, and enthusiasm and commitment of staff and governors, together with the vision of the headteacher indicate that the school has a good capacity to improve further. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise standards in reading and in mathematics. - Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring good pace in all lessons and appropriate demand on all pupils, particularly the more capable. - Improve assessment and target setting so that practice in reading and mathematics reflects that in writing and pupils' progress can be effectively tracked over time. - Develop more effective systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From slightly below average starting points, pupils make sound progress overall and achieve satisfactorily. Children respond well to the very caring environment and good support they receive when they start school and settle quickly to learning. Although standards overall are broadly average, in the 2005 national tests, standards in reading were significantly lower than the national average and lower than the school's results in previous years. Standards in writing have been maintained over time and standards in mathematics were significantly lower than in the previous two years. Standards are affected by the lower than average percentage of pupils gaining a Level 3 in reading

and mathematics. In some lessons, more capable pupils receive sufficiently challenging work and achieve well. Overall, however, current planning and teaching do not ensure consistently that their needs are well met and this results in some underachievement within this small group, particularly in reading. Pupils' progress in reading and mathematics is satisfactory overall. Pupils make good progress in writing and frequently achieve well because teaching builds systematically on prior learning and is well structured. Staff had recognised the need to raise achievement in writing and the results of their work can be seen in the improved standards. Staff are now well placed to use the good work here to improve reading. Pupils in the current Year 2 are on track to meet the realistic but appropriately challenging targets set. There have been significant improvements in pupils' standards in information and communication technology (ICT) due to improved resources, a richer curriculum and better teaching. Pupils with learning difficulties make similar progress to their peers and frequently receive good support from teachers and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The children's personal development and well-being are good. This reflects the priority and hard work that governors and staff devote to it. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good. The children form a responsible and caring community which values everyone. They learn to enjoy aspects of their own cultures through visits and events and develop their spirituality through reflection and prayer. Behaviour is unfailingly good, in and out of lessons. There are few disputes. They use their own judgement to keep noise low, for example, while waiting for assembly, without having enforced silence. Attendance is good because children enjoy school and any absences are followed up promptly. The children learn about working safely in their lessons and on the playground. They are taught well about healthy lifestyles and have learned so much about healthy eating that they have been known to ask for carrots at home, having tried them at school. This is due to exceptionally good links they have with a local allotment owner who gives them vegetables and for whom they plant seeds and rear seedlings. The children regularly contribute to the community by joining in festivals, working with other children to develop their public speaking and by supporting local charities. Pupils learn basic skills that will contribute positively to their economic well-being. Their skills in ICT are improving rapidly due to the new link with the partner junior school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning in the school is satisfactory overall but has some consistent strengths. Teachers know the pupils well and manage them skilfully, thus ensuring positive attitudes and avoiding conflict or stress. Lessons are well organised and well supported by the dedicated team of teaching assistants. The teaching of

writing ensures good progress for the pupils through work which is carefully divided into stages and through clear targets for the pupils which they understand and can aim for. The teaching of reading is less well structured and targets are not identified clearly or shared with pupils. In some lessons the pace is too slow so that the children do not achieve as much as they might. There is insufficient challenge for the pupils, particularly the more capable ones. When talking to her whole class, one teacher targeted questions for specific pupils. This ensured the right level of challenge. Other teachers allowed volunteers to answer which did not provide practice for everybody. Pupils do their tasks as they are asked, but sometimes they could get on and do something more demanding. The teachers regularly assess what pupils have achieved. Whilst this helps them to plan different work for different ability levels and to know each individual, sometimes pupils are still given insufficient challenge. Teachers carefully record how well each child has done but the system they use is not the same across the school. Consequently, it is difficult for the headteacher to take oversight of the children's standards and progress over time. The head teacher's own evaluation of the teaching is, as yet, informal and needs to be clearer to help the teachers to raise standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that is broad, balanced and focuses on developing pupils' interest in learning. Much of the curriculum is taught through a topic approach which enables teachers to make effective links between subjects. This makes learning more relevant to the pupils' experiences. Curriculum planning is satisfactory overall but there is a variety of practice and an unclear progression between the long-term aims, medium-term objectives and the activities provided in lessons. The school has recognised that a review of planning and evaluation of lessons is needed in order to bring about consistency of practice. There is a good range of additional activities which help those who find learning difficult. Staff enrich the curriculum well by inviting visitors and taking children on visits to local places of interest. A good range of popular extra-curricular activities helps the pupils to maintain a healthy lifestyle, for example, through dance, and to develop their creative and academic skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of the care, guidance and support for pupils is good. Efficient day-to-day care is securely based on good communication and good relationships between pupils, staff and parents. All the adults, including the administrative staff, the meals' and crossing patrol supervisors know the children and are vigilant in ensuring pupils' good attendance, safety and well-being. The children report that they can turn to any of the adults for help and know that their problem will be taken seriously. The children consider bullying to be a short-term problem because they know it will be dealt with as soon as they report it. All the staff are well trained in procedures to keep the children safe. Although the headteacher is aware that the policy document on child protection

needs up-dating the current practice in the school is good. Pupils with learning difficulties are given suitable degrees of support through work with specialist staff and often make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Overall, leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher has quickly made a positive impact since her recent appointment and is supported well by the deputy headteacher and other staff. She has a clear vision for the school's future based on its existing strengths and her evaluation of which areas need further development. The school's self-evaluation procedures are satisfactory and the headteacher is currently working with staff to ensure their full involvement in this process. There are satisfactory systems in place to monitor key aspects of the school's work such as teaching and learning but these need formalising to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress throughout their time in school. The headteacher has appropriately prioritised the need to rewrite the school improvement plan so that it more clearly outlines the focus for development. Parents are encouraged to put forward their views and their comments are helping to identify areas for improvement. Because of the vision of the headteacher and the dedication and support of staff and governors, the school has a good capacity to improve. Good relationships and a supportive atmosphere are evident throughout the school and provide a good foundation on which staff are willing to try out new strategies and share their skills and expertise with others. This has resulted in a body of professionals who are eager to improve and who are poised to follow the headteacher's lead into the next stage of the school's development. Teachers with additional responsibilities all provide sound leadership but need to focus more on raising standards. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is well led and organised and provides good support for the school. There is a need to develop governors' monitoring roles so they have a clearer view of standards and how well the school is doing.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to say how much we enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for talking to us about your school and the work you have done. These are the things your school does well: - You enjoy school and are keen to do good work. - You behave well and are kind to each other. You work and play together well. - You do well in writing and reach standards that are similar to other children of your age. - Staff look after you well and you feel safe in school. - All the staff work well together as a team to ensure that you enjoy being in school. Mrs Girling is pleased to be your new headteacher and is working with the staff and governors to improve the school and ensure you receive a good education. They have lots of ideas which will help the school to improve even further. - They will make sure your reading is as good as it can be. - Teachers will give you work which is at the right level so that it makes you think and work hard, especially those of you who are particularly good at something. - Teachers will develop the way they assess your work and set targets in reading and mathematics, so that they can help you improve and know how well you are doing throughout your time in school. - A plan to improve the school will be developed together with systems to work out how well the school is doing.