

Millbrook Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131815
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	360328
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Gordon Ewing

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	401
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ania Sagajllo
Headteacher	Debra Mansfield
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They visited 23 lessons, observing 15 teachers. Some intervention groups were also observed. Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, members of staff and groups of pupils. Informal discussions were conducted with some parents, carers and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, including the systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress, pupils' work and teachers' planning and marking. Inspectors took account of separate questionnaires completed by 194 parents and carers, 41 staff and 158 older pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The steps taken since the last inspection to improve attendance and reduce the persistent absence of a few pupils.
- The relative rates of progress through the school of all pupils in English and mathematics, but especially high-attaining pupils, boys, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those of White British or White Other heritages.
- How effectively leaders at all levels monitor the quality of teaching and ensure that assessment information is used effectively, and the impact of the strategies to improve the quality of teaching and to secure consistently good rates of learning.
- How effectively the curriculum is matched to the needs of a diverse range of pupils.

Information about the school

Millbrook Combined is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is high. The largest group of pupils (55%) is of Asian or Asian British heritage. A high proportion of pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also broadly average; predominantly, these pupils have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties or moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils who enter and leave the school at other than the normal times is high. The governing body manages out-of-hours provision in the form of a wrap-around care in a nursery called Nursery Plus, a breakfast club for up to 16 pupils and an after-school club for up to 24 pupils. In the summer vacation the governing body also manages a holiday club. In recent years, the school has experienced a high turnover of staff, particularly at leadership level and in Key Stage 2.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Millbrook Combined is a satisfactory and improving school where pupils behave well as part of a harmonious and cohesive community. Some features of the school's work, particularly those related to ensuring pupils are safe and well cared for, are good. The school strives successfully to support pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable and to engage with families who have limited communication with the school. An impressive range of initiatives are put in place quickly when pupils' learning falters. These are having evident impact on improving pupils' basic skills as well as building their confidence and self-esteem. Consequently, pupils' attendance is beginning to improve although it is still too low; persistent absence has reduced significantly. Nonetheless, some pupils lose valuable learning time through extended family holidays in term time. Pupils' behaviour is consistently good and they display positive attitudes to learning and towards each other. The views of almost all parents and carers concur with those of their children. The comment, 'I am more than happy with this school', is typical.

Children make consistently good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because they experience stimulating and well-planned activities that are effectively matched to their diverse needs. Rates of progress from Year 1 through to Year 6, although satisfactory overall, are more variable because the quality of teaching is inconsistent. The headteacher has been particularly effective in tackling evident weaknesses in teaching so that current rates of progress are now improving steadily and are satisfactory. Nonetheless, pupils' attainment, although strengthening in most classes, remains below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, boys, those of White British or White Other heritages and high-attaining pupils make similar rates of progress, from their varying starting points.

Teachers are beginning to use the assessment data available to inform lesson planning. They are less secure in assessing pupils' learning in the classroom in order to check on understanding, to move learning forward or in adapting activities to better match pupils' day-to-day needs. At times, learning is hampered because opportunities are frequently missed to develop pupils' speaking and discussion skills so that they can share their ideas and explain their thinking. Consequently, pupils' abilities to evaluate their own work and develop independent learning strategies are underdeveloped. Teachers' marking is generally accurate and punctual but is not used effectively to accelerate learning and increase challenge.

The good leadership of the headteacher has ensured that the school is moving effectively forward on a number of fronts. Staff morale is high and there are high expectations for the future. One teacher's comment that 'the tide is turning' reflects the impact of recent initiatives. The school has been particularly effective in limiting the impact of high pupil mobility so that new pupils, many of whom arrive with very limited English or low self-

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esteem, settle swiftly. Recent strategies to improve teachers' understanding of the components of a good lesson are beginning to bear fruit but there is still some way to go to establish greater consistency. The school's self-evaluation is very accurate and middle leaders are now developing the skills and experience to track the impact of teaching on pupils' outcomes. The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is starting to evaluate the work of the school through systematic monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress. Taking into account key improvements since the last inspection, the school demonstrates good capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that, by December 2011, 80% of lessons are good or better, by:
 - ensuring teachers confidently understand the components of good and outstanding lessons by giving them targeted training and support
 - providing intensive coaching from lead practitioners to all teachers so their practice is securely good
 - monitoring teaching and learning to gauge the impact of the training and support
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information to plan work that is better attuned to pupils' learning needs.ensuring that teachers use assessment information to plan work that is better attuned to pupils' learning needs.
- By July 2011, develop a wide range of opportunities for pupils to improve their speaking, listening and discussion skills, by:
 - reviewing current strategies for assessing these skills
 - extending programmes that develop pupils' speaking skills to all classes
 - creating opportunities for pupils to explore issues and to develop skills of enquiry.
- By July 2011, improve attendance to at least 94% for all groups, by:
 - establishing clear systems to continue to challenge persistent absenteeism and taking a robust position regarding extended family holidays, with the support of the local authority
 - widening strategies to engage and support families and for promoting and rewarding good attendance
 - setting personal attendance targets for all children whose attendance is below 94%.setting personal attendance targets for all children whose attendance is below 94%.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are well motivated and demonstrate good attitudes to learning and, consequently, respond well in most lessons, especially where activities are accurately geared to their needs. They, however, lack proficiency and confidence in using their speaking and listening skills to develop and explore ideas. Pupils are polite, courteous and play well together. They appreciate the

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cultural diversity of the school. They report that, since the recent introduction of the reward system, behaviour has greatly improved and bullying and racism are increasingly rare. They feel safe and well cared for. Pupils can confidently explain how to stay healthy and what they are doing to adopt healthy lifestyles. They particularly enjoy the varied sports and swimming provision at school.

Pupils' concentration and enthusiasm for learning are strong features. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils rose confidently to the challenge of quick-fire multiplication questions. The questions were matched well to pupils' abilities so that everyone succeeded. The challenges ranged from mentally multiplying 35 by 10 to calculating two sevenths of 1,000. The teacher's good subject knowledge and high expectations ensured that all pupils made secure progress.

Pupils take on additional responsibilities with enthusiasm and vigour. The active school council is proud of its role in raising funds for various charities, in organising Anti-Bullying Week and improving the range of playground toys. Pupils are less aware, however, of local issues. Aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory. Their basic literacy and numeracy skills are improving, and they show increasing proficiency in using information and communication technology (ICT) skills in their learning. Taking into account these factors, their positive attitudes and their improving attendance, the school prepares them soundly for life's future challenges.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

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How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching varies considerably, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Particular strengths are teachers' subject knowledge, good use of resources and technology to enhance learning and a colourful learning environment that celebrates pupils' work. A common weakness of some teaching is that work is not matched well enough to pupils' needs and the level of challenge is undemanding. Consequently, rates of progress are inconsistent. Teaching assistants are committed and enthusiastic. They are not always deployed effectively, for example, when teachers are leading the whole class or when the lesson plan is insufficiently focused on how best to support the needs of those with learning or language difficulties. Across the school, the use of assessment to track pupils' progress and adapt day-to-day activities to each pupil's stage of learning is inconsistent. Opportunities are often missed to develop pupils' discussion skills in reviewing their own work and that of their peers. Consequently, pupils' independent learning skills are underdeveloped.

The satisfactory curriculum is broad, balanced and adequately matched to most pupils' needs. Recent revisions to the curriculum, particularly to inspire boys, include topics such as Superheroes and Robots. However, it is too early to fully gauge the impact of these. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular visits, activities and themed weeks. Sport is a particular strength. Pupils are actively encouraged to participate in daily physical exercise and cross-curricular links are being established so that pupils are beginning to develop secure skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT across a range of learning activities. In the breakfast club, activities are appropriate to pupils' needs but do not always offer them opportunities to explore their own ideas.

Good quality support and care are provided to potentially vulnerable pupils and their families. The school's evident commitment to the care, guidance and support of all pupils is at the heart of all its actions. Pastoral care is a clear strength and pupils are very confident that staff are always on hand to help them. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive sound support from their teachers and effective support in intervention groups. Effective transition arrangements within and beyond the school, for example, in the induction of pupils who join at other than normal times, are a strong component of the school's work.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is raising teachers' expectations rapidly through a systematic and rigorous approach to monitoring the school's work. The effective induction of new teachers and a comprehensive training schedule demonstrate a strong commitment to school improvement. Consequently, a clear collective spirit permeates the school and staff fully share the leadership's vision. Rising levels of attainment from low starting points is testament to the recent impact of new initiatives. Nonetheless, there are too few opportunities for the best teachers to model good teaching for others to emulate. School leaders at all levels are beginning to develop a more secure understanding of how to use assessment data more effectively, the fruits of which are more evident, for example, in better target setting for some pupils' learning. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is supportive and knowledgeable. It is increasingly effective in monitoring the work of the school.

Procedures for safeguarding and child protection are good because leaders at all levels are well trained and proactive in ensuring staff and pupils are safe and well cared for. All staff and the governing body are fully committed to promoting equal opportunities and challenging discrimination. However, the lack of challenge in some lessons and the variable progress of key groups of pupils in specific classes place some pupils at a disadvantage. The school has positive relationships with most groups of parents and carers including those who do not make regular enough contact. Sound partnerships, for example, with local sports organisations and visiting artists, bring added enrichment to the satisfactory curriculum. Links with other professionals, such as the health service, support pupils' growing understanding of health issues such as smoking, obesity and drug abuse. The school reaches out well to some other communities but has yet to evaluate the impact of this work on promoting community cohesion both locally and beyond.

These are the grades for 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	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with skills well below the levels expected for their age. As a result of the early identification of individual needs and effective support to parents and carers, children settle into class routines smoothly and swiftly. Levels of care for the children are high so they develop into increasingly confident learners and their behaviour is exemplary. Good quality provision and effective tracking of learning ensure that children make good progress so that, by the time they move to Year 1, they have attained skill levels in line or very close to those expected in all areas of learning. Parents and carers greatly appreciate their involvement in tracking their child's progress. Children display evident enjoyment in the balance of activities directed by adults and those initiated by the children themselves. The indoor and outdoor environments are stimulating and learning activities flow seamlessly between the two. Consequently, children develop a wide range of social, emotional and practical skills. Resources are rich, varied and imaginative. Leadership is good. Effective assessment and subsequent planning ensure that children's learning and welfare needs are met well. The curriculum in the nursery wrap around groups is satisfactory.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Approximately half of parents and carers returned completed questionnaires. The responses of the overwhelming majority were positive about their child's overall experience at school. A very small minority expressed concerns about the leadership's response to their suggestions and concerns and how effectively the school manages unacceptable behaviour.

In discussions with parents and carers at the start and the end of the day, inspectors heard very positive views about the school's response to their suggestions and concerns. They reported that any issues brought to the attention of the school were generally dealt with promptly and effectively. The school has further plans in place to seek parents' and carers' views on issues such as attendance and improving home-school communications. Inspection evidence indicates that the school's approach to managing misbehaviour is having a clear effect so that behaviour is improving rapidly and is currently good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Millbrook Combined 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 194 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 401 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	95	49	96	49	1	1	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	91	47	99	51	3	2	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	65	34	96	49	23	12	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	57	29	109	56	20	10	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	68	35	103	53	18	9	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	70	36	105	54	18	9	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	60	31	120	62	7	4	3	2
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)	65	34	105	54	5	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	51	26	122	63	13	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	28	111	57	19	10	5	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	45	23	120	62	21	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	69	36	104	54	10	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	74	38	108	56	10	5	2	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

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.



17 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millbrook Combined School, High Wycombe HP12 4BA

The inspection team really enjoyed our recent visit to see you at work. You made us feel very welcome and all of you spoke positively about your school life.

You clearly enjoy school. Your parents and carers are equally happy with the school. Your school is a satisfactory and improving school. This letter is to tell you what we found, including those aspects that we thought were good.

- Your behaviour is good and you get on well together as a community.
- You make satisfactory progress overall, although we know that with extra help you can do even better.
- You make satisfactory progress overall, although we know that with extra help you can do even better.
- You feel safe and secure and thoroughly enjoy your lessons.
- The staff work hard to ensure that you develop as good citizens and develop good attitudes to learning.
- You are keen to improve your school and you play your part well by taking on responsibilities such as being a school councillor and a Millbrook Messenger.
- The school offers you lots of after-school clubs which improve your physical, creative and personal development. The staff work hard to ensure that you develop as good citizens and develop good attitudes to learning.

The school community at Millbrook Combined rightly wants the school to be even better, and to help make this possible we have asked the staff and governors to:

- provide more help and guidance for those of you who do not come to school regularly enough so that your attendance improves significantly
- improve the quality of teaching across the school, including teachers' marking and how accurately they set you targets for the next steps in learning
- offer you more opportunities to develop your speaking and listening skills so that you learn to discuss your ideas and explain how well you are learning. offer you more opportunities to develop your speaking and listening skills so that you learn to discuss your ideas and explain how well you are learning.

We hope that all of you will continue to play your part in making Millbrook Combined an even more successful school.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Ewing

Lead inspector

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