

Mandeville Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117142
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312510
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Susan Aldridge

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 on roll	
School	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Elisabeth Mayo
Headteacher	Ms Amanda Godfrey
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2002
School address	Mandeville Drive St. Albans Hertfordshire AL1 2LE
Telephone number	01727 754078
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school that serves a part of St Albans with areas of high social and economic disadvantages. There are above average proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need. Two thirds of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, mostly Bangladeshi, and a third are White British. Half of the pupils speak English as an additional language. A higher than usual proportion of pupils leave or join the school other than at the usual time, mostly in Years 3 to 6. Mandeville is the lead school in a 17 school extended schools consortium, aimed at community regeneration. A Children's Centre has just been added to the school's building, but is not yet open. As part of its extended services, the school provides adult learning, parental support including family learning and a range of after school clubs and holiday activities. The school has Healthy Schools status and the Basic Skills Quality Mark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Mandeville is an outstanding school, although it modestly sees itself as good with outstanding features. It is most successful in its aim to make a difference to children's lives by removing barriers to their learning. It provides outstanding value for money. Through its extended services, the school provides high quality support for pupils and their families. It also presents opportunities for them and members of the wider community to take part in activities and receive services that they would not otherwise easily access. Pupils are justifiably proud of their school. Most parents really appreciate the provision it makes for their children. A few wrote critically, but inspectors found these criticisms were unjustified. Children in the Foundation Stage get off to the best possible start as the provision here is excellent. From very low starting points, pupils reach below average standards by Year 6, but this is not the whole picture. Those currently in Year 6 who have been at the school since they entered the Foundation Stage, have reached average standards, showing that they have made outstanding progress in their time at the school. Progress in English is very good. The level of improvement in pupils' basic skills means that they are prepared very well for secondary schooling.

Leadership by the headteacher and senior team is outstanding; they are forward thinking and determined. The committed staff work most effectively together. The school has found it hard to recruit experienced teachers so it 'grows its own' by systematically and successfully developing their skills. As a result, teaching is at least good and there is some outstanding teaching in Years 3 to 6. There is a very positive and nurturing environment, so pupils enjoy coming to school, and relationships within the school community are most harmonious. Pupils' excellent personal development and well-being are promoted very effectively through the school's outstanding curriculum, as well as through the high standards of care. Pupils have a wealth of learning experiences that broaden their horizons, and develop most effectively their awareness of how to lead healthy and safe lives. Excellent opportunities for socialising and developing interests and skills are provided through the many out of school clubs provided on the site as well as further afield, as part of the school's extended role. There are many opportunities for pupils to contribute to school life and they have a particularly strong voice. Writing letters to the headteacher is a common activity, from the Foundation Stage upwards. Pupils willingly contribute to the wider community too.

Staff leave no stone unturned in their efforts to make sure that pupils have all the support that they need. The governors are most supportive and several are regular and frequent visitors to the school. They are beginning to make visits with a particular focus in mind, although their responsibility for doing this is not explicit in the school's development plan. This plan shows very clearly the right priorities for the school, including the raising of standards further.

Developments have been identified by thorough and wide-ranging self-evaluation that makes most effective use of data about pupils' attainment. Ambitious planning and hard work have helped the school to make a great deal of improvement since its last inspection, and it has an outstanding capacity to sustain the high quality of its provision and improve even further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children enter the Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills that are very low. High standards of care, good staffing levels and close partnerships with parents help children to settle quickly. Thorough assessment is used skilfully to plan a curriculum that meets pupils' needs most

effectively and reflects their interests. There is a good emphasis on developing children's basic skills and a suitable balance between teacher-led activities and those chosen by children. There is an exceptionally vibrant and stimulating indoor environment. The outdoor areas, although good, are being further developed, incorporating children's ideas, such as a 'rainbow'. Teaching is outstanding, and this enables most children to make excellent progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make clear in the development plan the governors' role in monitoring so that they can visit with a particular focus in mind.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Despite their very low starting points on entry to the school, pupils make good and sometimes excellent progress. Since 2005, progress has improved each year. Last summer, the progress made by Year 6 pupils in English placed the school in the top 7% of schools nationally. Although standards by Year 6 are below average overall, for those who have been at the school throughout their careers, over half of the year group, standards are average in English, mathematics and science. This represents an outstanding achievement. The school's success in encouraging the development of literacy skills is linked to the strong emphasis placed on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills, the skilled support for pupils who are learning English, and the high quality of English teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2. There are no significant differences in the progress made by different groups because the school keeps a close eye on pupils' progress and intervenes swiftly to support any that experience difficulties or fall behind.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils know that it is 'good to be me.' Because they are sociable, considerate, well mannered, friendly and tolerant, they are excellent ambassadors for the school. Such is their enthusiasm for other activities the school offers, that clubs are sometimes over-subscribed. Although attendance is below average, the school does all it can to promote good attendance and punctuality. Family holidays in term-time reduce the figure. Attendance improves as pupils get older, and is above average in Year 6.

Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep safe. They have been involved in the risk assessment, for instance, of activities in the playground. They are fully involved in their community by taking on responsibilities in the school and by taking part in local events such as the St Albans School Music Festival. Behaviour is exceptionally good. Pupils have a very good awareness of the importance of exercise and eating well. They are prepared very well for future life by the acquisition of sound basic skills and the ability to establish excellent relationships with others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Parents and pupils are full of praise for the staff. Members of the leadership team provide excellent role models as outstanding teachers and effectively support staff in extending their

expertise. Thorough assessment is used well to plan tasks that are enjoyable and generally well matched to pupils' abilities. Speaking and listening are encouraged very well. Pupils know that 'one word is not enough' and they give extended answers to teachers' questions. Classroom environments are attractive, with displays that help pupils by reminding them about work covered or key vocabulary. Pupils know what they are learning about because objectives are shared with them, then reviewed later. Teachers seize every opportunity to encourage pupils' personal development, in particular self-esteem and appropriate learning behaviour. In the best lessons, there is a rapid pace and highly skilled questioning that keeps pupils thinking and challenges them to deepen their understanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school constantly looks for ways of improving its curriculum, and is quick to implement changes, for instance through the teaching of phonics, or 'Mathematizing' to develop problem-solving skills. Other subjects are linked into themes to make learning more meaningful to pupils. French is taught to pupils from Years 3 to 6. Pupils' personal development is encouraged particularly well. For instance, there are very good provisions for physical education both through lessons and the wide range of sporting activities on offer. Other clubs provide very good opportunities, for instance for street dance and choir, and there is a wide range of visits to enrich the curriculum, most recently to Kew Gardens, as well as a residential stay in Years 5 and 6. The school is developing well its provision for more able pupils, for example with science 'master classes', and pupils receive an excellent preparation for the next stage of their education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's care for its pupils is outstanding. Several parents wrote appreciatively about the support their children are given. Parents also feel better able to help their children with homework because of courses they have attended. Staff know the pupils and their circumstances very well and are quick to respond to any additional needs they have. For instance, the extended school provision provides a breakfast club so that pupils have a healthy start to the day. There is a wide range of support for pupils who are vulnerable and successful intervention by highly skilled teaching assistants for those who need extra help with learning or behavioural difficulties. There is a nurture group for those pupils who need to develop relationship skills and improve their self-esteem. Pupils for whom English is not their first language are supported very effectively in class, enabling them to achieve as well as other pupils. Pupils understand their targets well and are helped to improve their work through teachers' good marking and the feedback they give. There are very good arrangements for pupils to transfer successfully to their secondary schools.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

There is a strong emphasis on raising standards in the school. The headteacher works in partnership with class teachers to check the progress that pupils are making. Ambitious targets are set to raise standards further and all know their part in this, including the pupils. The headteacher has an exceptionally clear vision of a successful school at the heart of the

community. This is rapidly becoming a reality as the school increasingly provides high quality extended provision. The senior team support her very effectively, as do subject leaders. Governance is good. Governors hold the school to account and question proposals to check that these are wise. They often visit school, but their role in monitoring is not written into the development plan, so visits occasionally lack a clear focus.

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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mandeville Primary School, St Albans, AL1 2LE.

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school. We especially thank those who talked to us about school life. We really enjoyed our visit.

We are not surprised that you are proud of your school and enjoy coming so much because we think that your school is excellent. You are all making great progress, especially in English, and this will really help you in later life. We were very impressed with your behaviour, which is outstanding, and this is helping you to learn and make progress. What makes your school a very pleasant place to visit is the way you all get on so well together. It was good to hear that you all feel safe. The staff certainly look after you all very well, giving you all the help that you need if you find things difficult. We noticed that you eat healthily at breakfast club and lunchtime and were pleased to see how much exercise you get at school. You certainly know a great deal about how to keep safe and you help to make your school a safe place to learn and play. You do your jobs in school responsibly, think of others and also take part in events in the community so you are becoming great citizens. Ms Godfrey and the staff are doing an excellent job. They want the school to be as good as possible for you and to help your families and others in the community, and they are succeeding in doing this.

There are lots of plans for making your school even better than it is already, and we agree that these are the right things for the staff to do. One extra thing we have asked the school to do is write down in their plans how the governors can check, through their visits, how well things are improving. You can help with improvement in one very important way. You can make sure that you attend school as much as possible. Well done to Year 6, whose attendance so far this year is good!

With best wishes for the future.

Mrs S Aldridge

Lead inspector