

Mile Cross Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	134958
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	381763
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2012
Lead inspector	Stephen Walker

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	443
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Mackay
Headteacher	Stuart Allen
Date of previous school inspection	11 September 2008
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	18–19 June 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Stephen Walker

Additional Inspector

James McAtear

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Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 35 lessons and observed 16 teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence, including the school development plan, the tracking system to monitor pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation, and a sample of pupils' work. They also analysed questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and 191 parents and carers.

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The new school was built four years ago after the amalgamation of a middle school and two first schools. The very large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a very small number from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also above average. The school has specially resourced provision for 10 pupils with special educational needs. These pupils have moderate learning and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school meets the current floor standard, which sets the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is made through the Nursery and Reception classes. The school provides a breakfast club which was included in this inspection. The school has received the Food for Life Partnership Bronze Award and has achieved National Healthy Schools status.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This satisfactory school provides a safe and happy environment. Despite some considerable improvements, it is not yet good because the quality of teaching and the actions of leaders and managers have not led to good progress in all classes. Pupils in the specially resourced provision are supported well and make satisfactory progress. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress from low starting points and attainment is below-average overall by the end of Year 6. Attainment is improving in the school after a previous period of some underachievement. More pupils' attainment is now in line with the national average, which represents good progress in an increasing number of classes. However, pupils are not fully developing their skills in writing or mathematics and too few reach the higher levels in their work. Pupils at risk of underachieving do not always get additional support quickly enough.
- Teaching is satisfactory. There is a positive atmosphere for learning in most lessons and some good practice in a number of classes. However, teachers do not always check the understanding of the pupils, provide a range of engaging activities, or encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They feel very safe, are polite and respectful, and have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy school and develop into friendly and considerate individuals. Attendance is now above average.
- Leadership and management, including the leadership of teaching, are satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear understanding of the areas for development and is implementing a plan for improvement. However, senior leaders are not consistent in sharing good teaching practice or holding teachers fully to account for the progress of their pupils. Parents and carers are not

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sufficiently involved in supporting their children's learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the achievement of pupils across the school so that attainment is at least in line with national averages in English and mathematics by:
 - building on the systems for tracking pupils' progress and providing timely additional support for pupils identified as at risk of underachieving
 - further developing pupils' abilities and confidence in writing, and in applying skills in mathematical calculation
 - ensuring that the more-able pupils are consistently challenged so that they attain the higher levels in English and mathematics.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning so that it is good or better by making sure that all teachers are:
 - checking more regularly the understanding of their pupils and ensuring that they make good progress in all lessons
 - ensuring that all activities in lessons are fully engaging the pupils in their learning
 - using every opportunity to encourage pupils to be more confident in taking greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve the consistency and impact of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders are rigorously holding teachers to account for the progress of all pupils in their classes
 - sharing the best practice in teaching and learning across the school in order to ensure consistently high quality of learning in all classes
 - encouraging all parents and carers to be more involved in supporting their children's learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' current work and the lessons observed show that the majority are making satisfactory progress. This is also the view of parents and carers. While attainment in English and mathematics remains below average by the end of Year 6, there has been a gradual but significant rise in attainment at the school. The school has been active in making up for previous underachievement and ensuring a greater emphasis on developing the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below the levels typical for their age. They make good progress in lessons, thanks to a good range of structured activities that have a positive impact on their personal development as well as promoting their number and language skills. The good start in the Nursery and Reception is underpinning the improvements in the school. Pupils

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make satisfactory progress in reading although attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 remains below average. Reading is a key focus, and pupils read regularly in school and increasingly at home each day. The school has been particularly successful in improving speaking skills through presentations by pupils, talking with partners in classes and talking with parents and carers for some homework. The more coordinated approach to mathematics across the school has also led to satisfactory progress as the school has been more successful in teaching the key skills and supporting identified underachievers.

Assessment data indicate that well-structured teaching is currently leading to good progress in English and mathematics in an increasing number of classes. For example, most pupils in the current Year 6 have made satisfactory or better progress during their time in Key Stage 2. Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those in the resourced provision, make satisfactory progress in line with their peers. This is because effective additional support helps them to overcome barriers to learning and take part in lessons with the other pupils. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who have English as an additional language, also make satisfactory progress.

However, the skills and confidence of a number of pupils throughout the school in writing and mathematics have not been consistently developed. The new systems for tracking pupils' progress, and additional help for underachieving pupils, are supporting improvements in achievement. Nevertheless, a small number of pupils are not fully benefiting from this extra support because they are not identified quickly enough for additional help. Similarly, some of the more-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to attain the higher levels in English and mathematics.

Quality of teaching

The vast majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires feel that their children are taught well. Inspection evidence is that, although some teaching is good, it is satisfactory overall. Most teachers manage their classes well and create a positive learning atmosphere, as confirmed by the pupils. Displays in classrooms provide a stimulating environment for learning and celebrate the work of the pupils. Teachers' marking provides encouragement and guidance for pupils on how to improve their work. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those in the resourced provision, are effectively supported and challenged by teachers and teaching assistants in class or withdrawn on a regular basis in small groups for extra help in reading, writing and numeracy. Teaching is satisfactory in these small group sessions. All pupils have daily periods of literacy and numeracy, and this aspect of the curriculum greatly supports the teaching of basic skills, including reading. Teaching in the school is actively supporting the satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. The emphasis on developing speaking in most lessons is supporting greater confidence from pupils, and subsequently improving their social skills.

Good teaching was generally seen when teachers challenged their pupils with high-

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quality questioning and encouraged them to take more responsibility for their work. For example, the teacher's good use of imaginative resources and high quality questioning ensured that Year 4 pupils were fully engaged and made good progress in their English lesson on persuasive writing in advertising. Similarly, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage showed tremendous curiosity and enthusiasm as they were motivated by the range of structured activities in and out of the classroom. These had a significantly positive impact on their personal development as well as developing their number and language skills.

However, teachers are not consistently checking understanding in lessons and ensuring that all pupils are making accelerated progress. Most teachers are conscientious in their planning but not all teachers are ensuring that the activities in lessons are fully engaging the pupils in their learning. Teachers do not always encourage pupils to take enough responsibility for their own learning. In some lessons, pupils sit passively listening for too long without being actively involved, and some teachers tend to do the thinking and problem solving for the pupils.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is typically good in lessons and around the school, and this contributes to a calm and positive atmosphere for learning. The school has well-developed systems for promoting positive behaviour and pupils respond well to the rules of the school. Pupils are gradually becoming more involved in supporting the good order in the school by acting as play leaders and 'child problem solvers'. Pupils are encouraged to manage their own behaviour although this is at the early stages of development. The vast majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires believe that behaviour is good and that their children are safe in school. In lessons, pupils consistently meet the school's expectations and respond well to teachers' good use of praise and encouragement to promote good behaviour. As a result, pupils work hard and enjoy their learning. The very small number of pupils who display challenging behaviour, including those from the resourced provision, are managed well by the teaching assistants so that they make progress themselves and do not disrupt the learning of the other pupils. Pupils confirmed that disruptions are very rare and that any misbehaviour is dealt with appropriately by the teachers.

Although bullying of any kind is extremely rare, pupils, parents and carers say any unkind behaviour, such as teasing and name-calling, is dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils are aware of the different forms of possible bullying such as cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying related to sexual orientation, gender, race and disability. Teachers and other adults take good steps to ensure that all groups of pupils have an equal chance to thrive in an atmosphere of fairness, trust and without fear. Pupils feel very safe and secure and they have a good awareness of issues relating to safety. They talk confidently about how they would keep themselves safe in a variety of situations such as using the internet, talking to strangers and crossing the road. The school has been very active in improving attendance by following up all absences and addressing issues regarding persistent absentees.

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Leadership and management

The school development plan is a comprehensive working document, sharply focused on improving pupils' attainment and progress. There are clear signs of improvement in the school, particularly in terms of pupils' behaviour, achievement and attendance. The senior leaders are regularly monitoring the quality of teaching and have already organised appropriate training to improve particular aspects of teaching as identified in lesson observations and performance reviews. However, the best practice in teaching and learning within the school is not being fully shared as an effective means of improving the quality of teaching in all classes. The school has comprehensive assessment data but leaders are not always rigorously holding teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their classes. Subject leaders are increasingly involved in monitoring in their subjects, although this is still at the early stages of development.

The members of the governing body are well informed and are developing their evaluating and monitoring roles. They are becoming more active in holding the school to account for the necessary improvements. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements and underpin its very caring approach. There is a strong commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination. Pupils from the resourced provision are fully included in school life.

The curriculum, although imaginative and relevant to pupils' needs, is satisfactory as it has not yet led to good progress for all the pupils. A variety of visits provide effective enhancement for the curriculum, as do the large range of extra-curricular activities which greatly increase pupils' enjoyment and experience of school. The range of opportunities within the curriculum contributes adequately to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The large majority of parents and carers are very supportive of the school and value the education provided for their children. Teachers recognise that parents and carers are more involved in their children's learning in Early Years Foundation Stage than when they are older. They have identified that, although parents and carers are invited and welcomed into school, this has less of an impact on helping them to support their children's learning in Key Stages 1 and 2.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



20 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mile Cross Primary School, Norwich, NR3 2QU

Thank you for making us so welcome and for sharing your views with us during the inspection and through your questionnaires. We greatly enjoyed watching your lessons and looking at your work. It was also good to see you during assembly, playtime and lunch. Your school is satisfactory. Your parents and carers are very pleased with the improvements in the school and praise the work of the headteacher and staff. There are many positive things about your school.

- You enjoy school, attend regularly and feel safe.
- You are friendly and well behaved.
- You show kindness and consideration to others.
- You work hard in your lessons.
- Your teachers and their support staff care greatly for you as individuals.
- The curriculum supports your personal development and experience of school.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governing body to do the following things to make the school even better.

- Help and challenge all of you to make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Support your teachers in sharing good practice so that you can make even better progress in all lessons.
- Check your understanding and help you to take more responsibility for your work.
- Encourage your parents and carers to be more involved in helping you with your learning.

You can all help by asking the teacher for help when you do not understand the work and trying hard when you are asked to work on your own. I wish you every success during your time at Mile Cross Primary School and in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Walker
Lead inspector

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