

# Maesbury Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123381
<b>Local Authority</b>	Shropshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	292644
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11 July 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Eadie

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	53
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Carol Williams
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Rosemary Finney
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21–23 January 2002
<b>School address</b>	Maesbury Oswestry SY10 8HD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01691 652850
<b>Fax number</b>	01691 652850

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This very small school serves the village of Maesbury and a scattered rural community. There are far more pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than one might expect in a school of this size. All the teaching staff have joined the school since April 2006, and the headteacher started in January 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

**Grade: 3**

'My child could not be in a better place,' was typical of comments made in the very positive response to the parents' inspection questionnaires. This is not surprising as, although the school is currently satisfactory, it is improving and has several good features. One of its major strengths is pupils' personal development, which is good. Pupils behave exceptionally well and say such things as, 'We're just like one big family.' Pupils care for each other very sensitively and this is reflected in their enjoyment of school, which is outstanding.

The improving picture is particularly clear in pupils' progress. Although pupils' achievement is currently satisfactory and they are reaching average standards by the time they leave, this is beginning to improve quite rapidly. The school has started to keep good records of pupils' progress and these show that most are beginning to make good, and a few exceptional, progress. Children make a sound start when they join the Reception Year as, although they are taught with pupils in Years 1 and 2, appropriate plans are made for work to suit their needs. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is another area of improvement as the school is successfully building on developments started by the previous headteacher. These pupils have very specific targets for their learning and this is beginning to result in their improved progress. A number of parents commented on the effectiveness of the school in meeting the needs of these pupils.

The main reason for pupils' developing progress is an improving picture of teaching, which is good. Teachers plan well and give pupils lots of opportunities to think for themselves and make decisions about their own learning. Relationships in classes are excellent, so pupils want to work hard. Marking, although positive and encouraging, does not always show pupils how they can improve their work. The curriculum is satisfactory. It has been planned well to interest the pupils, in particular through a good range of trips. However, clear links have not been made between subjects so that, for example, literacy and numeracy skills can be practised in other subjects.

Pastoral care provided by all adults is outstanding and is much of the reason for pupils' enthusiasm for school. Academic guidance is satisfactory, as although targets are set for pupils to help them improve their work, they are too long-term and imprecise. Pupils do not, therefore, know what they need to learn next. Care, guidance and support are good overall.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new staff team has quickly developed into a cohesive unit and this is one of the major reasons for the improvements noted. Effectively led by the headteacher, who provides very clear direction for the school, it has started to put in place developments that are beginning to result in pupils' improved progress. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, particularly in terms of provision for physical education. Although indoor space for gymnastics and dance is limited, the school has developed good links with other schools and professional coaches to improve provision. An accurate picture has been built up of the school's strengths and areas for development, despite the fact that there are few formal systems for this. Until recently, governors have not been sufficiently involved in the process of monitoring and evaluation.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Set precise targets for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics so that they know what they need to learn next and ensure teachers evaluate progress towards these targets when marking pupils' work.
- Put in place a thorough system of monitoring by managers at all levels, including governors, so that the effectiveness of the school and the impact of initiatives can be measured.
- Ensure that links are made between subjects so that pupils have more opportunities to practise literacy and numeracy skills.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

**Grade: 3**

When children join the school in Reception, they have levels of skills and knowledge broadly in line with those expected of children of their age. By the time they start in Year 1, they have made satisfactory progress and are working at expected levels. However, they make good progress in their personal, emotional and social development and are above expectations in this aspect of their learning. Satisfactory progress continues through the school and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Their progress is improving quite quickly as a number of initiatives have been put in place. For example, the new leadership team recognised that standards in science were not as good as those in English and mathematics. Effective plans have ensured that standards in science are catching up quickly.

With the very small numbers of pupils in each year group, standards in the national tests vary quite considerably from year to year. However, standards are broadly average by the time pupils leave. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress as clear plans are made for their learning and they are supported well in class.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In particular, they are especially sensitive to the needs of others, this being noticeable even with the youngest children in the Reception Year. Pupils play happily and safely and are very confident that they can talk to an adult if they have any problems. They are adopting safe practices well. Although they have good knowledge of other cultures, their awareness of the multicultural nature of society is less well developed. Attendance is above average, though a few pupils have poor attendance records and are not learning as well as they could.

Pupils have good knowledge of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and they take plenty of exercise and most make healthy eating choices. The new school council is already beginning to have an impact on improving provision. For example, they requested that fruit be provided for all pupils in break, which is now happening.

Pupils fulfil well the variety of opportunities to assist in the running of the school. There are very close links with the local church and community, for example, pupils help with the village fête. Pupils' satisfactory development of basic skills and their developing skills of team working are ensuring that they are satisfactorily prepared for their future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

Classes are lively centres of learning and this is one of the key elements in pupils' improving progress. Teachers plan well for the different ages and abilities in their classes and pupils are given lots of opportunities to work independently and in groups. They take these opportunities responsibly and work hard. Pupils are encouraged well and are proud of their achievements. However, marking is often just encouraging, without giving pupils clear guidance about how they could improve their work.

Good use is made of resources to aid learning, particularly interactive whiteboards. Teaching assistants make a considerable contribution to pupils' learning, often enabling pupils of different ages to be taught separately. They also support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well and enable them to make satisfactory progress. Teachers do not always share with pupils what they are expected to learn in a lesson. They then cannot return to these objectives at the end of the session and pupils are unable to evaluate the effectiveness of their learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

The curriculum has been planned well to take account of the wide range of age groups in each class so that pupils do not repeat work. However, insufficient thought has been put into the problem of pupils not covering specific topics for a long time. For example, it is possible for some pupils to leave having not covered some aspects of science since Year 3. The school is aware of this problem and it is a targeted area for development. This development also takes into account the fact that there are few links made between subjects to enable pupils to practise basic skills in other subjects. There are few planned opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in subjects such as history, for instance. A good range of visits adds interest to the curriculum and extends pupils' learning. A good variety of well attended after-school clubs also augments provision.

### **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

All adults provide outstanding pastoral care for pupils. Child protection procedures are very secure and the school has good measures to keep pupils safe. Pupils appreciate the family atmosphere and parents say such things as, 'Our children feel part of a greater whole.' This ethos contributes considerably to pupils' personal development.

Good systems have been put in place to record pupils' progress and targets are beginning to be set so that pupils know how they can improve. However, these targets are too long-term and general to be much help to pupils in seeing their next steps in learning. Targets for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are much more specific and, therefore, more helpful in enabling pupils to make progress.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

Although leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development, this is largely through the hard work of the headteacher. The processes of self-evaluation are not sufficiently rigorous and the programme of monitoring and evaluating effectiveness does not involve governors, for example. However, leaders have put in place effective initiatives to improve provision and pupils' progress. For example, analysis showed that pupils' skills in mental mathematics were weak and good strategies have addressed this so that pupils' progress in mathematics is improving. This is but one example of the way that provision and pupils' progress are improving significantly and is an indicator of the school's satisfactory and improving capacity to move forward.

Governors are beginning to be increasingly involved. Although they have always been supportive, they relied too much on being told rather than finding out for themselves the effectiveness of the school. This is changing and plans are in place to involve them more fully in self-evaluation.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	<b>3</b>
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	<b>3</b>
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	<b>3</b>
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	<b>3</b>
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	<b>3</b>
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	<b>Yes</b>

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	<b>2</b>
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>2</b>
The behaviour of learners	<b>1</b>
The attendance of learners	<b>2</b>
How well learners enjoy their education	<b>1</b>
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	<b>2</b>
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	<b>2</b>
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	<b>2</b>
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	<b>3</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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



12 July 2007

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Maesbury Primary School, Oswestry, SY10 8HD**

Thank you so much for welcoming me to your school. I very much enjoyed meeting you and hearing about all the fun things that you do. I was particularly impressed with the way you look after each other. Although your school is satisfactory at the moment, it is improving and it has a number of good features.

#### **I think these are the best things about your school:**

- You behave really well and enjoy being at school and part of 'one big family', as many of you described it.
- Although you are making satisfactory progress at present, this is improving because teaching is good.
- All adults look after you extremely well and make sure that you are safe and well cared for.
- Your headteacher knows exactly what she wants to do to make your school even better.
- The planning for the various subjects is good and makes sure that you don't repeat work. Although the curriculum is satisfactory at present, the teachers are working hard to improve it.

#### **These are the things that I have asked your school to improve:**

- Make sure that the targets that you are set are clearer and changed more regularly so that you know what you need to learn next.
- Put in place a plan so that all teachers and governors check more regularly how well the school is doing.
- Make links between subjects so that you can practise your literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.

You can help, too, by making sure you know your targets and working hard to achieve them. I am sure you will do everything you can to help the headteacher and teachers make your school even better. Keep up the good work!

Yours sincerely

John D Eadie  
Lead inspector