

Millfields Church of England (Controlled) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	136056
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	382016
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2012
Lead inspector	Diane Auton

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Weise
Headteacher	Mrs Michelle Holford
Date of previous school inspection	NA
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Introduction

Inspection team

Diane Auton
Elaine Maloney

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited eight teachers in their classrooms and observed fourteen lessons. They listened to pupils read in Year 3 and observed letters and sounds teaching sessions in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and parents and carers. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, safeguarding and equality policies, and minutes of the governing body meetings. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and reviewed information provided by parents and carers in 35 completed questionnaires. They also took into account the views of pupils in Key Stage 2 and those of staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

Information about the school

The school opened in September 2010. It is smaller than most other primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils, pupils with special educational needs or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school meets the current floor standard.

The school's building and grounds were previously the site of a community primary school which closed at the end of the summer term in 2010. Many of the school's pupils previously attended the closed school, but a significant proportion of new pupils have joined the school at various points over the past four terms. The deputy headteacher led the school in the headteacher's absence during part of the spring and summer terms of 2011.

The school shares its site with a children's centre. Pre-school provision and before- and after-school care are provided by the children's centre. These provisions are subject to separate inspection by Ofsted and reports are available on the Ofsted website.

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

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Pupils' overall achievement is good. Children join the Nursery class with skills levels well below those usually expected for their age group; they make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2011 standards were broadly in line with national expectations. Attainment was below average in reading and writing in Key Stage 1, however, and too few pupils reached the higher level in English in Key Stage 2. The school is addressing these issues decisively in the current year. Progress across the school is good and attainment is continuing to improve rapidly.
- Good teaching across all the classes contributes well to positive outcomes for pupils. Lessons are well planned and structured, with a range of effective strategies in place to support learning. Teachers continuously review and develop their methodology and practice to ensure that pupils' learning needs are fully met.
- Pupils thrive in an environment where every child is known, cared for and valued and this is helping them to progress well in both their academic and their personal development. They feel extremely safe and secure in school. Their behaviour is good and, on occasions, excellent and they are considerate of others. Older pupils frequently act as buddies to younger ones, enhancing the school's supportive 'family' ethos. Pupils work hard in lessons and take a pride in their work and achievements.
- The headteacher provides extremely effective leadership. She has created a strong team ethos, with a clear focus on continuous school improvement. Governors are supportive and well-informed. The curriculum is designed well so that lessons are interesting and engaging for pupils. Resources for information and communication technology have not yet been fully updated and this has delayed development in this aspect of the curriculum, however.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Reinforce the ongoing drive to raise attainment by:

- applying the school's strategies for teaching letters and the sounds they make and developing pupils' writing skills in order to bring standards of reading and writing into line with national expectations in Key Stage 1
- ensuring support and challenge for more-able pupils in Key Stage 2, so that an increased proportion are enabled to reach the higher level of attainment in English by the end of Year 6
- improving resources for information and communication technology, in order to provide a wider range of opportunities for pupils to enhance their learning by using new technologies.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is good and they are quick to say how much they enjoy lessons. They are eager to offer their ideas in discussions, listen carefully to instructions and try hard to present their work neatly. They work together well with a partner or in a group. Attainment is now broadly at age-expected levels across the school. This represents an ongoing improvement over the school's first four terms.

Despite their relatively low starting points on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage, children settle in quickly and develop interest, curiosity and positive attitudes to learning in the Nursery and Reception classes. Pupils across the school are responding well to the good teaching they are given and this is enabling them to approach more challenging tasks with growing confidence. Although attainment in Key Stage 1 is below average, pupils' rate of progress in reading and writing has started to accelerate. This is supported by regular, well-targeted teaching of letters and the sounds they make, which is giving pupils the tools they need to move their learning forward. In Year 3, also, where attainment in literacy had been low at the end of the last school year, pupils are now starting to be confident readers, using their developing skills well to decode new or difficult words and reading with interest and enjoyment. In Years 4, 5 and 6 pupils demonstrate good speaking and listening skills in lessons and their written work is of good overall quality. However, more-able pupils are not yet reaching their full potential. Attainment in reading by the end of Year 6 is average. Attainment in mathematics rose rapidly across the age-groups during the last school year, partly as a result of the school's involvement in a 'make it count' project. The momentum of improvement has been sustained successfully into the current year, with pupils showing great enjoyment of the challenges set for them in mathematics lessons.

Evidence from the school's assessment data, from lesson observations and from scrutiny of work in pupils' books all confirmed that pupils in all year groups are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and disabled pupils also progress well as a result of the very well-

targeted support the school provides for them. Overall, the majority of responses from parents and carers indicate that they are happy with their children's progress and attainment.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is consistently good across the school. Parents and carers, with very few exceptions, indicate that they are pleased with the quality of teaching provided for their children. Lessons are planned well to take the range of learners' needs into account and the pace of learning is brisk; this is helping pupils to progress well in lessons. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Well-trained and skilled teaching assistants work in professional partnership with class teachers and contribute extremely well to all pupils' learning and progress and particularly to that of pupils with additional needs. Excellent relationships in the classroom mean that pupils are secure and happy and ready to learn. Strategies are currently being developed to ensure an appropriate level of challenge in learning activities for more-able pupils; however, there has not yet been enough time for this to impact on outcomes at the end of the key stages.

Imaginative teaching strategies are often used to good effect, making learning attractive for pupils. For example, in a writing activity in the Reception class, a group of children were captivated by their teacher's idea of sprinkling the sentences they had written with 'magic dust' to enhance their use of interesting vocabulary. This motivated them to think about how they could improve their work and then to go on to raise the standard of their independent writing.

Curriculum planning contributes well to pupils' very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In many of the lessons seen pupils were encouraged to consider complex and sensitive issues. In a literacy lesson in Year 2, for example, pupils discussed how settings in a story can reflect characters' feelings; they showed mature understanding and empathy and listened very well to each other's ideas. However, too few opportunities are planned in lessons for pupils to extend their learning through using information and communication technology.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is good, often excellent. The school is highly inclusive and pupils show a sensitive awareness of the individual needs of their peers who have special educational needs or disabilities. In conversation with an inspector pupils remarked that, 'One or two people have bad days sometimes, but it always gets sorted out.' They have great trust in the adults in school. They say that school is a safe place and that help is always on hand if they encounter any problems. Peer mediation is used to positive effect and pupils show a good awareness of how they can help and support each other. They have a well-developed understanding of different types of bullying and were able to explain clearly why they believe that there is no bullying in the school. Although a small minority of parents and carers express some concerns about bullying, most feel the school deals effectively with any behavioural issues that may occur.

The school works effectively in partnership with the parents and carers of vulnerable children to help to break down barriers to learning and progress that some pupils occasionally encounter. Attendance has improved rapidly during the past four terms and is now in line with the national average figure for primary schools.

Leadership and management

The new school has made a good start, despite many challenges, in its first four terms. The headteacher is an excellent and highly strategic leader. She is supported by an effective leadership team. Staff and the governing body wholeheartedly share her firm commitment to continuous improvement and her ambition to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils. Staff at all levels contribute increasingly effectively to helping drive forward improvement initiatives. The school chooses and plans appropriate actions for raising attainment and promoting pupils' learning and progress. The information gained from regular and rigorous progress reviews is used well to ensure appropriate levels of challenge and support in learning activities. Leaders have correctly identified areas for improvement and actions are already under way to address them. A programme of continuous professional development contributes well to the quality of provision and to positive outcomes for pupils. The actively involved and well-informed governing body challenges and holds the school to account effectively. All of these factors, together with the skills and talents of leaders and staff, mean that the school has good capacity to continue to improve.

The school complies very well with statutory requirements for safeguarding through well-managed procedures and through an ongoing review of their effectiveness. Its inclusive ethos supports the good promotion of equal opportunities and access to educational entitlement; discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

The curriculum is good. Subjects are brought together in topics and themes that are interesting, relevant and engaging for pupils. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for pupils to develop skills in sports and the arts. A range of visitors and visits, including several residential trips, contributes effectively to promoting pupils' academic, personal, social, health and citizenship education. The school has plans in place to improve provision for information and communication technology, but currently the lack of this provision detracts from the quality of curriculum planning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils clearly understand and adhere to the school's simple code for behaviour, which they helped to draw up. They show an excellent understanding of the sound moral and social values the school promotes. There are many opportunities in lessons and assemblies for them to reflect on and discuss important issues and they show mature and thoughtful attitudes in their discussions. They are gaining valuable insights into what life is like for children in other countries through the school's links with schools in South Africa, Nigeria and Australia.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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.
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.
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.



27 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millfields Church of England (Controlled) Primary School, Eastham, CH62 9EB

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning. We enjoyed our visit and it was a great pleasure for us to meet you all.

We found that Millfields is a good school and that it is a very happy place for you to learn in and grow together. Your education gets off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes and you continue to do well as you move up through the school. You are well-behaved and very polite young people. Your attendance has improved and is now average – keep up the good work and see if you can make it even better! It was good to see that you work hard in your lessons, enjoy your work very much and get on very well with each other and with the grown-ups in school. They look after you well. They work very hard, too, to make sure that you are provided with good teaching and a really interesting curriculum, and we were very pleased to hear you tell us how much you enjoy your lessons. Because of all this, you are making good progress in your learning and your overall achievement is good.

These are some things I have asked the school's leaders to do next, because I think they will help your school to carry on improving.

- Continue with the sessions that teach you about letters and the sounds they make, and further develop your writing skills so that all of you, but especially those in Key Stage 1, keep on improving your reading and writing.
- Carry on finding ways to help those of you who learn more quickly to do as well as possible in English, so that more of you will reach level 5 at the end of Year 6.
- Improve the information and communication technology equipment in school, so that teachers can plan more opportunities for you to use it in lessons.

You can help with all of this by continuing to be happy, hard working learners. Thank you once again and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Diane Auton
Lead inspector

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