

Milton Hall Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115313
Local Authority	Southend-On-Sea
Inspection number	373145
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Ruth McFarlane

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	564
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Slark
Headteacher	Debbie Priest
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 26 lessons and 21 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation, including policies, safeguarding arrangements and the school improvement plan. They looked at data showing pupils' progress over the last three years and pupils' current work. The inspection team spoke with parents and carers and analysed 64 parental questionnaires, as well as questionnaires completed by 122 pupils and 34 staff.

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

- The effectiveness of the strategies for improving writing throughout the school and whether these have made a significant impact on the attainment of the more able.
- The impact of the initiatives devised to help break down barriers to learning.
- The effectiveness with which children are helped to learn and develop writing and calculating skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The range of ways that subject leaders contribute to the work of the school.

Information about the school

Milton Hall Primary School is well over twice as big as most schools of its type. About half the pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. That is a far higher proportion than average. Far more pupils than is usual are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also well-above average and a much higher proportion of pupils than average joins or leaves the school other than at the usual times during the year. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with statements of special educational needs are both above average. The pupils' difficulties are mainly specific or moderate learning difficulties; behavioural, emotional or social difficulties; or autistic spectrum disorders. The school provides a breakfast club and holds a number of awards for its provision, including the Gold Clean Air Award and the full International Schools' Award. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery and three Reception classes. A new headteacher, appointed from within the school, took up her post in September 2010.

A Children's Centre, on the site, is managed by the governing body. It was not a part of this inspection.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Milton Hall is a good school. Its key strength lies in the outstanding care, guidance and support provided for pupils and their families. In consequence, pupils feel exceptionally safe in school. That makes a particularly strong impact on the large groups of pupils who may have barriers to their learning, such as those at an early stage of speaking English, those who enter the school after the start of the year, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. It leads to pupils' confident development and good achievement.

Almost all aspects of pupils' personal development are good; the pupils are confident and enthusiastic, with a ready willingness to learn. Pupils, rightly, take great pride in their school; they grow in confidence due to the school's focus on building their self-esteem. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and results in pupils' good behaviour and thoughtful attitudes towards each other. Older pupils care thoughtfully for younger ones. Vibrancy in the curriculum underpins pupils' enjoyment of school. The curriculum includes a good range of visitors that promote learning and cultural development well. In 'Music Week', the school hosted a different orchestral section each day to play and demonstrate their instruments and allow pupils to 'have a go'. Those enhancements and the mostly good teaching lead to the majority of pupils making good progress in their learning through the school.

Children are given a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the majority from very low starting points, especially in writing and calculation. Attainment by the end of Year 6 has fluctuated over recent years, but pupils are closing the gap with others nationally by the time they leave the school. That is especially evident in writing and mathematics as pupils have responded to the intensive strategies implemented throughout the school to improve these aspects. For instance, speaking and listening skills have been targeted as a means of benefiting writing. As a result, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher National Curriculum levels has increased.

At their best, lessons are exciting and teachers use different and interesting strategies to engage the pupils fully. In the few weaker lessons, sessions listening to the teacher were over-long and tasks too general, limiting the time available for pupils to get on with their own work or receive additional individual help. In a small minority of classes, pupils are not sure of their targets and occasionally teachers' written marking fails to correct errors and point the way forward.

Staff manage improvement well. The headteacher has been rapid in developing strong distributed leadership with the two deputy headteachers and the team of subject and other leaders. In consequence, all work together successfully on key priorities which are identified accurately through sharp self-evaluation. The governing body is a strong supporter of the school. It is working with the school to ensure identified weaknesses are

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rectified. The progress so far and the staff teamwork now evident demonstrate the school's good capacity to sustain improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by improving the quality of all lessons to that of the best by:
 - ensuring that the pace is always fully engaging
 - ensuring that pupils spend the major part of each lesson engaged in their own active learning, pitched precisely to their ability.
- Ensure the best use of assessment in the classroom by:
 - improving the consistency with which pupils' targets are set and shared and understood by pupils
 - reminding pupils more frequently in lessons of their identified targets and ensuring that they understand how to move to the next level in their learning
 - correcting pupils' errors in teachers' written marking and offering guidance in written comments as to how pupils might improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy their varied education thoroughly. They enjoyed particularly being able to handle the orchestral instruments brought in by musicians during the inspection. Pupils enthused, too, about their class gardens, which are a source of pride and endeavour for pupils of all abilities to enjoy success. Pupils develop good listening skills and are keen to answer teachers' questions. In all lessons observed, they understood how important it is to work hard, although they were less sure about their targets and how to reach the next level in their learning. They have good team-working skills, seen in a number of lessons where working well cooperatively is the norm. As a result, most pupils achieve well and make good progress.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills levels and experiences that are often low compared with those expected for their age. Levels attained by the end of Year 6 are broadly average. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 is rising. Careful analysis of their needs and high-quality individual and group support assists those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language to make good progress. Those who have other barriers to their learning, such as being late entrants to the school, make good progress also from their differing starting points because the standard of analysis and care is so good. Pupils' areas of weakest attainment, in writing and calculation, are now improving because they are being targeted successfully. Pupils are working hard and regular assessments help identify problems promptly so that support can be given.

Outstanding outcomes in keeping safe underpin pupils' growing confidence in themselves. They thrive on the high levels of responsibility they are given. The pupils participate widely in community events and have numerous awards and successes to celebrate, such as the International Schools' and Gold Clean Air awards. They have a good understanding that exercise and a good diet are needed to stay healthy. Pupils are confident users of information and communication technology (ICT) and they know how to handle simple

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budgets. However, pupils' preparation for future economic well-being is not better than satisfactory overall. That is because their final level of attainment and their attendance are only broadly average, despite the school's excellent and successful action to engage families.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Pupils achieve well as a direct result of good teaching, a responsive and meaningful curriculum and, above all, the outstanding care, guidance and support systems. These are extremely focused to assure the welfare and well-being of all pupils. Pupils who may be vulnerable are given first-class support. Thriving partnerships with services such as the speech and language specialists result in well-targeted intervention. Links with the on-site Children's Centre are strong. The school's breakfast club is held there and provides an outstanding service for pupils. It is one of the many ways in which the school has raised attendance rates. The school is rightly ambitious to raise the levels further and is doing everything it can to engage the parents and carers of the few families affected to achieve further improvement.

The skills the school imparts to pupils through its personal, social and health education lead to pupils' strong personal development. The curriculum is well adapted and the excellent resources for ICT are used to the full, making a good impact on learning. It is enriched by a popular range of additional activities, which have included badminton,

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country dance, chess and Chinese, and special activities for those who may be gifted and talented, whatever their ethnicity or background.

Lessons observed were most successful when they were fast paced and highly engaging, such as when a group of Year 6 pupils reacted to a possible alien artefact, that, reportedly, had landed in the night in the teacher's garden. This made a strong impact of the development of pupils' speaking and listening. Weaker teaching relied on the teacher directing from the front for too long, limiting the time pupils spent on separate, ability related learning. Assessment information is increasingly well used and is leading to improvements, especially in writing. However, teachers' use of pupils' longer-term targets is less successful and few pupils could recall them. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make progress equivalent to their peers due to close monitoring and good support from the skilled teaching assistants in tackling small steps in learning. Teachers' planning is good and usefully evaluates effectiveness.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Changes in the leadership and management since the last inspection have led the school to reassess its effectiveness and take accurate account of the many new initiatives that have not yet made their full impact on pupils' outcomes. Leaders have focused well on providing an environment where pupils are able to learn and make progress on a wide variety of dimensions. There is a strong and successful emphasis on promoting equality and inclusion for all pupils, irrespective of their background and ability. As a result, pupils feel valued and grow in confidence. The analysis of the trends within pupils' progress is sharp. The senior leaders and the governing body know the school well and have a clear understanding of what works and what needs to improve. They check robustly on the quality of lessons and pupils' work and they work with teachers to develop aspects of their practice. Good subject leadership is contributing to improved standards in current classes. The governing body holds school leaders to account and members are strong ambassadors for the school in the wider community. Child protection arrangements and safeguarding are good. The governing body checks the implementation of procedures on a regular basis. Risk is carefully assessed and policies are implemented well. Community cohesion is a strong feature of the school, with good involvement in local and regional competitions and projects as well as interesting international links that have led to a prestigious award.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents and carers say their children like coming to school and it is easy to see why. The helpful and supportive arrangements to introduce the children to school are good so that they settle well. In the classrooms, there is a 'buzz' of excitement and children are eager to come in and 'have a go'.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress because they are well cared for and taught in a dynamic and joyful way and make a smooth transition into Year 1. They achieve well, even though they enter Year 1 with skills levels that are below average. The school targets the weakest areas of writing and calculation successfully through planning a range of exciting activities that are often linked to themed work to make learning more meaningful. For instance, during the inspection, Nursery age children donned goggles to go 'deep sea diving' in a 'boat', as part of the seaside theme.

The children's independence is promoted well through a good balance of activities directed by adults and others that children select for themselves. They learn to play cooperatively and are encouraged to consider each other's feelings. Children concentrate on activities for reasonable periods. The increasingly wide range of children's needs, including those of some who learn quickly, is met well. Throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, including in the very imaginative and interesting outdoor provision, children behave well because staff handle conflicts sensitively and calmly. All staff give good help, support and guidance if it is needed. Just occasionally, transitions between activities could be dealt with more swiftly to avoid any slackening of pace in learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. The arrangements for developing the role of a key person to link with each child's parents or carers are not fully developed, but the 'learning journeys' are an excellent celebration of children's accomplishments, shared readily with parents and carers.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
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

Fewer parents and carers than average responded to the questionnaire. Those who did respond expressed strong support for the school. For most questions, nine out of ten parents and carers are pleased with the school. All respondents indicated that their children are happy in school. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed dissatisfaction, predominantly regarding the way unacceptable behaviour is managed. Inspectors looked into those concerns during the inspection. They judged pupils' behaviour as good and records showed any incidents are managed effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Milton Hall Primary School and Nursery 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 64 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 564 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	75	16	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	61	24	38	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	36	56	25	39	3	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	48	31	48	0	0	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	40	63	22	34	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	61	24	38	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	52	27	42	3	5	0	0
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)	33	52	23	36	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	42	34	53	2	3	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	45	28	44	3	5	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	41	35	55	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	50	29	45	1	2	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	64	20	31	0	0	3	5

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



22 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Milton Hall Primary School and Nursery, Westcliff-on-Sea, SS0 7AU

Thank you for the help you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed seeing all your activities. Also, we liked talking to those of you who came to speak to us and our polite and helpful tour guides. Thank you for filling in the pupils' questionnaire. It was good to find out how much you enjoy school. We agree with you that you go to a good school. These are some of the best things about your school.

The youngest of you get off to a good start in your learning.

You are guided and cared for exceptionally well by all staff, including the teaching assistants and lunchtime staff. That means your school is a happy community and you are exceptionally knowledgeable about how to keep safe. Most of you attend school on almost all the days it is open, but just a few children do not. If you are not at school, your progress slows down and you miss all the fun.

You have good opportunities to do lots of exciting things because the curriculum has lots of opportunities for things like gardening and cooking. Playing the orchestral instruments looked fun!

Your behaviour is good. You listen and learn well in your lessons because they are mostly interesting and lively and this means that you are making more progress than before and getting closer to the national standard.

So that your school gets even better, we have asked the governing body and headteacher to make sure that lessons are all as good as the best ones and that teachers' marking and the targets they set you explain clearly how you can reach the next level in your learning. All of you can help by coming to school regularly and continuing to work hard in your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Ruth McFarlane

Lead Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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