

Milton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123984
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	380768
Inspection dates	19–20 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Judith Straw

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	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracey Stanyer
Headteacher	Jean Meredith
Date of previous school inspection	16-17 September 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 15 lessons taught by nine teachers and held meetings with pupils, members of the governing body, members of staff and a representative from the local authority. They spoke informally with parents and carers bringing their children to school in the mornings. They observed the school's work, and looked at the data the school has collected about pupils' progress. They looked at the school's procedures to safeguard pupils, samples of pupils' books and records of the school's monitoring and review processes. They also scrutinised 78 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as analysing questionnaires from pupils and staff.

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

- The quality of support provided for pupils so that they make rapid progress in the course of a lesson.
- The impact of the curriculum on promoting the basic skills and supporting the learning of girls, boys, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and higher-attaining pupils.
- The extent to which changes in the Early Years Foundation Stage have resulted in improved outcomes for children.
- The rigour by which leaders and managers at all levels, including members of the governing body, monitor and evaluate the impact of initiatives on improving outcomes for all groups of pupils.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are from White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The school holds the Activemark and Healthy School Award.

Since the last inspection the nursery and reception children have been relocated to a new purpose-built Early Years Foundation stage unit which is separate from the main building. The school took possession of the new unit in September 2011. The school has just appointed an acting deputy to cover the long-term absence of the deputy headteacher.

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 is a good school. This is because of the success of its leaders in bringing about improvements. Since the previous inspection all aspects of provision are better and outcomes for pupils' achievement and personal development are good. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy many opportunities to take on responsibilities. Typical comments from pupils include, 'the staff always make sure we are safe and they look after us' and 'learning is always made fun'.

Children make a good start to their schooling in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of excellent leadership of this phase of their education. The warm and welcoming environment ensures that children settle in very quickly, start learning at once and make good progress. Achievement is good across the school. Progress has improved since the previous inspection and is currently good. Whilst attainment is broadly average overall, it is rising strongly and is sometimes above average. Very successful interventions help pupils to achieve well and to make better than expected progress.

Since the previous inspection the most significant developments have been in the quality of teaching and the curriculum. Because they are now well taught, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school. There are still some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and in a few lessons pupils' progress is slower. This is because the work is not pitched at the right level and lesson observations by leaders have not always emphasised what pupils are learning and the progress they make. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and pupils know their targets but they do not always receive clear enough information about how to improve their work. The curriculum is enhanced by regular visits and visitors which contribute well to pupils' enjoyment and understanding. Strong partnerships with other agencies and good management systems ensure that pupils receive the care and support when they need it.

Senior leaders and members of the governing body have an accurate view of what the school does well and where improvement is needed. Middle managers are still developing their practice in monitoring the quality of the school's work and some staff would like to be more involved in this process. Effective partnerships with the local authority and local schools have led to good developments. They have supported the school through a long period of staffing difficulties caused by unavoidable absence. The pace of learning has accelerated and the regular tracking

and analysis of pupils' progress introduced by the headteacher has become a valuable tool for checking where pupils' need extra support and taking the necessary action. The impressive progress made by the school since the previous inspection demonstrates its good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consolidate and increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:
 - consistently providing appropriately challenging work for all pupils
 - improving the quality of assessment so that pupils receive better guidance about how to improve their work.

- Embed the delegation of leaders' responsibilities to secure improvement by:
 - developing the effectiveness of lesson observations by consistently focussing on the learning, progress and attainment of pupils and then disseminating good practice
 - ensuring that all staff are involved in procedures for school improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils respond well to the challenges they are set in lessons, demonstrating positive attitudes to learning and good enjoyment. They show interest and enthusiasm and achieve well in most lessons. For example, spending time in the wooded area of the school grounds identifying the sounds, smells and sensations of the outdoors resulted in Year 5 pupils writing some eloquent descriptions of the world of nature. Across the school, pupils make good progress from starting points that, whilst typical for their age overall, are sometimes below in language and communication. Attainment is at least average and sometimes above average by the end of Year 6. Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant improvement in attainment in writing and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress against their targets because of the consistently good support they receive in lessons from teachers and teaching assistants.

Pupils learn extensively about how to keep themselves safe, for example through the popular 'bikeability' courses and a recent day devoted to 'e-safety' (how to remove risks from using the computer). They say there is little or no bullying and if anyone is upset it is quickly sorted out by the staff. Pupils from different backgrounds work and play very harmoniously and have a good awareness of cultures other than their own. For example, in assembly during the inspection, several classes, including some of the younger pupils, shared their learning about the festival of Diwali. Pupils are exceptionally keen to take on responsibilities within the school. The head girl and boy are proud of the contribution everyone makes. Pupils relish being peer mentors and helping individual younger pupils; the friendship squad leads activities before school and at break and lunchtimes and provides support for children who find it harder to join in and playground monitors ensure there is plenty to enjoy. The house system encourages friendly and positive competition. Lessons on health education and diet ensure pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy. The school choir regularly performs for local residents and the school council has a strong voice in

deciding which charities the school supports and how funds will be raised. Attendance is above average which contributes to the pupils developing good basic skills. They are keen to make a difference to society. As a result of the good outcomes of pupils they are well prepared for the next stage of education.

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	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is much more consistent than it was at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers' enthusiasm and creativity inspires pupils to want to work hard, behave well and do their best. Lessons are carefully planned to take account of the differing abilities of pupils but just occasionally work is not as challenging as it needs to be to ensure good progress. In most lessons the pace is brisk and teachers regularly make sure that pupils understand what they are to learn and how to recognise success. Teachers manage behaviour well. Teaching assistants are well-briefed and make a valuable contribution to lessons. Marking is regular and tells pupils how well they have done but does not always provide enough information on how they can improve their work.

The curriculum effectively meets the needs of different groups. The school has worked hard and successfully to eliminate the differences between the achievement of girls and boys and to narrow the gap in the attainment of pupils in reading and writing. Programmes are put in place to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and to support higher-attaining pupils in danger of failing to reach their potential. Strategies to improve writing and mathematics have resulted in pupils' higher attainment in these areas. Pupils' personal development is promoted well so that all outcomes are now good. Pupils particularly enjoy trips which help to take learning beyond the classroom. The school is aware of the need to develop a more consistent approach to information and communication technology across the curriculum.

Staff are caring and support pupils well, fostering strong, positive relationships and

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

boosting self-esteem. Pupils are confident that they are safe in school and feel well supported. They particularly appreciate the role of the learning mentor, commenting that 'she always understands your problems and is always there for you' and they said of the learning support staff 'they always help us; they don't do our work for us but explain it clearly'. Support for pupils who are vulnerable due to their circumstances is well-organised and precisely targeted. Well thought-through transition arrangements help pupils to settle quickly into school, move through classes and then on to the next stage of education. The quality of care and support that pupils receive has resulted in good learning and progress across the school and above average attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's drive and determination have been key factors in the school's progress. Despite considerable turbulence caused by unavoidable staff absences and some budget constraints, she has driven through necessary improvements. The other senior leaders share her ambition and high expectations. All aspects of the school's work are carefully monitored but some of the lesson observations have been too general and not focussed on the learning that is taking place. Monitoring activities are increasingly being shared by all leaders who have received professional training to help to develop their skills. Responses from the staff questionnaire showed that while the very large majority of staff are proud of the school some support staff felt that they do not contribute as much as they would like to school evaluation. Partnerships with other agencies support many aspects of pupils learning and personal development. The school is committed to working with parents and carers by inform them about what is happening in school and providing support so that parents can contribute effectively to their children's education.

Governance is good. Members of the governing body are fully involved in finding out about the school at first hand. They are well informed, committed and enthusiastic, always ready to support and challenge the school to do even better. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. The school goes to great efforts to ensure that individual pupils are supported effectively to get the best out of their education. The school promotes community cohesion successfully. The school is a cohesive and welcoming community. Links with other communities are developing all the time, for example, Milton is working to become a 'Fair Trade' school, has forged links with Uganda and is developing video conferencing to link up with an Asian school. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are good and reflect good practice in every way. Formal training for staff is a priority, high quality records are carefully maintained and the security of the school site is very well managed. The school has successfully managed a budget deficit and with the good outcomes for all pupils it provides good value for money.

These are the grades for the 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

The newly built Early Years Foundation stage unit provides a stimulating, exciting and vibrant environment in which children clearly enjoy learning and discovering things for themselves. Children settle quickly because of the excellent induction procedures and soon become confident as they settle into the routines of the day. Relationships are good and staff always have time to listen to children and interact with them. Children's behaviour is good. Children make good progress so that they enter Year 1 with attainment that is above average. Their progress now is much better than at the time of the last inspection so that attainment at the start of Year 1 is rising. Children with delays in their development of speech and communication skills are very well supported and provision is adjusted to take account of their needs. A regular focus on learning letters and sounds in the Reception classes and some exciting ways of helping children to develop numeracy skills is having a positive impact on progress in all aspects of learning. The excellent outside learning area is superbly equipped and is already being used very well, even though the staff and children have had access to it for less than half a term.

The provision is outstandingly well led and managed. Relationships with parents and carers are excellent. The home-school learning books in which parents and carers are encouraged to share their children's learning and in which school regularly sets small challenges and tasks for families to enjoy together at home are a model of good practice. The leader has clear plans for further development, one aspect of which is to devise ways of including support staff as well as the teaching staff in planning. Children's safety and well-being is given the highest priority.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	2
Taking into account:	
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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents who returned the questionnaires were positive about the school and appreciated the way in which the headteacher and all the staff have the best interests of the children at heart. There was particular praise for the induction process in the Nursery, the quality of pastoral care and the commitment of the headteacher and staff. Inspectors endorse the view that the school takes good care of its pupils. A small minority expressed concern at the many staff changes which they felt had affected morale. Inspectors found that the changes had been unavoidable and that leaders and managers are working to successfully restore the morale of staff by ensuring that all feel valued. The great majority of staff are proud of the school. A small minority of parents and carers disagreed that the school deals effectively with pupils' unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team investigated carefully the school's policies and strategies for managing behaviour and their impact on pupils' behaviour and found all of these to be good.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Milton Primary School 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 78 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 248 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	44	40	51	4	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	55	31	40	3	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	36	43	55	2	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	44	31	40	5	6	3	4
The teaching is good at this school	25	32	45	58	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	37	38	49	6	8	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	40	37	47	8	10	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)	23	29	31	40	13	17	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	31	44	56	5	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	31	31	40	15	19	6	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	31	37	47	13	17	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	22	28	35	45	13	17	6	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	40	40	51	3	4	3	4

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



21 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Milton Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST2 7AF

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when me and my colleagues inspected your school. We would like to especially thank the pupils who gave up part of their playtime to talk to us. You were excellent ambassadors for the school. We have judged that Milton is now a good school. These are some of the reasons why:

- you make good progress because you have good teaching
- you generally behave well which lets everyone to enjoy their learning
- the school arranges interesting visits and visitors to bring learning alive for you and takes good care of you so that you always feel safe
- children in the Nursery and Reception classes settle quickly and really enjoy their learning
- you take on many jobs around school so you make a good contribution to your school and the community
- your school leaders do a good job and that is why the school has improved so much since the last inspection.

To help the school to move forward we have asked teachers to make sure the work in lessons is always challenging so that you make the best progress and to give you a little more advice on how to improve your work. We have asked the leaders to always check on how much progress you are making in lessons and to make sure that all the adults in school are involved in helping it to improve.

You can play your part by continuing to attend regularly, working hard and enjoying your learning. We wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Straw
Lead Inspector

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