

Milton Abbot School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113258
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	378676
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Ridley
Headteacher	Peter Jones
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2007
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons taught by four teachers. The inspectors also attended collective worship/assemblies and observed break times, and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, pupils, and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress. In addition, questionnaires completed by 58 parents and carers, 50 pupils and 12 staff were analysed.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work. They looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which teaching and learning is consistent in engaging pupils in learning, both independently and cooperatively, as they move through the school.
- The effectiveness of strategies to integrate pupils arriving from other schools and to meet pupils' needs across the range of ability.
- The effectiveness of strategies taken by leaders and managers, at all levels, to build on effective practice and sustain improvement, especially in mathematics and writing.

Information about the school

This primary school is smaller than average in size. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils attending the school are of White British heritage and there are a below average percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, but varies significantly in the differing year groups across the school. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the normal times is above average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a combined Reception/Year1 class. The substantive leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage was on maternity leave at the time of the 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 Abbot is a good school with a strong commitment to inclusion. By working closely with dedicated staff and the well-organised governing body, the experienced and well-respected headteacher has played a key role in sustaining good teaching in all classes. Other strengths include the pupils' high standards in mathematics, and the good care and support systems and curricular provision, which have continued since the previous inspection. Systematic improvement in the school's facilities, both indoors and outside, and enhanced facilities for children in Reception, have also enhanced pupils' learning and reflect the school's good self-evaluation. The pupils' above-average levels of attainment in English, science, and information and communication technology (ICT) represent good pupils' achievement, including by those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and others arriving from other schools. This track record of improvement and above-average outcomes clearly shows the school's good capacity for sustained improvement.

In recent years, the school's determination to serve the needs of all pupils in the community has included welcoming increasing numbers of pupils from other schools, often with varying levels of ability and needs. The school has risen to this challenge well by strengthening its procedures to identify and tackle their needs and to keep pupils safe. Additionally, by providing a good range of indoor and outdoor learning activities, the school sustains pupils' enjoyment and encourages them to follow healthy lifestyles. Children make a good start in Reception and continue their good progress through the school. This good learning continues for all pupils across the range of ability and backgrounds, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and by more-able pupils. Pupils achieve exceedingly well in their numeracy and mathematical skills. Although pupils develop good levels of expression in their writing, at times, the weaker handwriting and presentational skills of some pupils cloud the creative quality of their work.

Teachers in all classes assess the pupils' skills effectively to ensure that their work tackles individual needs, presents a good level of challenge and engages pupils in learning successfully. The staff's good knowledge of each pupil's stage of development underpins their effective use of questioning to move learning forward at a lively pace and to promote pupils' interest. The pupils' above-average attendance also reflects their enjoyment of school and the school's good links with parents and carers. Pupils contribute well to school events and their learning. They are keen to please, learn well with each other and confidently share their ideas. They are able to show initiative and work well collaboratively, for example when using computers, to

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research their topics. However, opportunities for pupils to reach their full potential as independent learners are not developed with sufficient consistency as they move through the school and this constrains the progress for some.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation skills by:
 - raising expectations that these skills need to be developed systematically as pupils move through the school
 - more consistently including these skills, when relevant, as pupils' specific targets for improvement, which they too can assess for themselves.
- Enhance the development of pupils' independent involvement in learning by:
 - strengthening the way that staff in Reception draw new learning from the children during their self-chosen activities
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to decide for themselves how they are going to find things out.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From broadly expected levels of skill on entry, pupils achieve well and enjoy their time at school. Currently, pupils across the range of ability make similarly good progress in relation to their needs and starting points as they move through the school. Pupils show good attitudes, settle down quickly and contribute well to their learning. For example, when exploring stories from imaginary worlds in a literacy lesson in the Years 3 and 4 class, pupils continued good learning with some sharing their ideas about 'cliff-hanger endings', very enthusiastically. Similarly, when listening to the story '*Peace at Last*' read by the teacher in the Reception and Year 1 class, pupils demonstrated their sustained concentration and understanding by joyfully responding with gestures and sounds when prompted by the teacher. As a result, pupils' attainments progressively build to an above-average level by the end of Year 6 and represent good achievement. Pupils love to share their ideas and are very keen to please their teachers, especially in numeracy, as, for example, in a mathematics lesson in Years 3 and 4, when reciting their multiplication facts. Over time, this lively focus on mathematics and pupils' interest in these lessons leads to outstanding achievement in this subject. At times, though, in some other subjects, there is too much adult-led activity as pupils complete the tasks set for them. This approach limits the pupils' ability to develop their independent learning skills further.

Behaviour is good in and out of lessons, with those pupils with emotional and behavioural needs receiving timely and effective support. Most pupils interviewed and those that responded to the questionnaire showed that they feel safe at school. Pupils perform their various roles conscientiously, for example, as school councillors or playground partners. Their willing contributions in and out of lessons reflect their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In addition, pupils welcome opportunities to offer ideas and to suggest activities, especially when some are taken up by the school, for example repairs to a bench in the playground, to the outdoor

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toilets and donations to ‘Shelter Box’ for the Tsunami Appeal. Pupils show a good commitment to healthy living, especially during their very active playtimes and good participation during games lessons and sports clubs. The pupils’ above-average skills, good achievement and positive attitudes to learning prepare them well for their future economic well-being.

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	2
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?

The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good in all parts of the school and is particularly effective in mathematics when pupils are grouped by ability. At times, teaching and learning are outstanding, for example during a mental mathematics session in Years 3 and 4, when the teacher challenged pupils at the right level, developed a lively pace and stimulated pupils’ enthusiasm and understanding of multiplication. Consistently effective features of the teaching and support across school include very warm relationships between adults and pupils, clearly shared lesson objectives and good questioning. Teaching assistants are also deployed effectively to ensure that each pupil is fully engaged and helped to build on previous learning. This was seen, for example, in a lesson in Years 2 and 3, where good discussions accompanied the pupils’ joyful making of ‘Pudsey Bear Cakes’. Good quality questioning making clear connections with previous work and promoting the pupils’ understanding was clear during the whole-school and class assemblies about ‘Children in Need’. This led to pupils showing genuine empathy with those less fortunate than themselves.

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

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Pupils greatly benefit from the close support they receive from adults, who, because they know the pupils very well, interact effectively to promote good learning. All teachers are careful to identify pupils’ individual learning and emotional needs as soon as possible and use assessments of their developing skills effectively to target the next steps in developing pupils’ skills. Teachers’ marking is also consistently effective. For example, the use of writing ladders which list success criteria is successful in extending the pupils’ ability to write expressively. The focus on developing pupils’ handwriting and presentation skills is less consistent, however.

Good pastoral care, links with outside agencies and with parents and carers, especially for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those considered vulnerable and pupils new to the school, reflect the school’s inclusive ethos. As result, pupils feel valued, readily offer and share ideas, and contribute well to learning and make good progress. Procedures to promote the children’s good attendance and to keep them safe are implemented effectively.

The school’s good curriculum links subjects together to enthuse pupils and to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. The pupils’ cultural understanding is also enriched by theme weeks and the teaching of French. Activities are planned carefully to make sure that the work of the pupils in the mixed-age classes progressively develops skills and understanding. For example, opportunities to examine genuine artefacts in the Years 5/6 topic on the Second World War captured their interest, prompted lively discussion and enhanced their observational and collaborative learning skills. However, as they move through the school, opportunities are not always taken to accelerate pupils’ independent learning skills by getting them to set up their own lines of enquiry. The curriculum is enhanced by an appropriate range of visits, visitors and clubs, which, together with regular use of the school’s extensive outdoor facilities, make good contributions to the pupils’ adoption of healthy living and enjoyment of school.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher’s caring and effective leadership underpins the staff’s strong teamwork and high morale. The headteacher and staff work closely with the governing body to carefully plot the future development of the school. Together, they are committed to raising standards and promoting pupils’ well-being and enjoyment of learning. Members of the governing body provide good support, are

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well organised and challenging, and diligent in fulfilling their statutory duties. These include good procedures for safeguarding pupils’ welfare, including the effective vetting of new staff and other adults working with pupils. The quality of provision and pupils’ progress is checked accurately and good self-evaluation ensures that the right areas for improvement are targeted. The continuing development of the school’s facilities, especially for children in Reception and to promote interesting, practical outdoor learning opportunities, reflects innovative thinking.

There are good partnerships with other schools, the local community and with parents and carers. This helps to ensure equal opportunity by enabling staff to meet pupils’ individual needs and promote their good progress, and keep pupils free from discrimination. The inclusive nature of the school is also clearly evident in the way newly arriving pupils are so warmly welcomed into school life. The school accepts though, that at times, school improvements may not have been communicated fully to parents and carers, including for example, to reassure a few of them that pupils’ behaviour has improved as a result of a more consistently applied anti-bullying policy. The school promotes community cohesion effectively, and encourages and values the contributions of pupils and parents from minority ethnic backgrounds. Partnership events with local schools, charitable events, which include donations, for example, to ‘Children in Need’, and topics such as ‘Mali’ and ‘Fair Trade Chocolate’ also promote the national and global dimensions well.

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

Staff work well as a team to sustain good shared leadership during the absence of the substantive leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Together, they work very closely with parents and carers, and this promotes the children’s happy and

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successful start to school. Children enjoy their time in the Reception/Year 1 class where a stimulating, spacious and very well-equipped learning environment, both inside and out of doors, supports their development well. For example, they crawl inside their 'Dark Den' and learn well, by sharing their ideas about what might happen in the dark.

Children clearly feel safe and their excellent behaviour reflects the very caring way that staff safeguard their welfare. The staff get to know the children well, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to ensure that teaching and learning are effective. Children enjoy a variety of adult-led activities and those they choose for themselves. Adults develop the children’s knowledge and understanding of letter sounds and words effectively through discrete teaching and children also make particularly good progress in developing self-confidence, numeracy and co-operative learning skills. At times, though, during activities chosen by the children, staff are not as consistent in building on ideas to develop new learning as they are during adult-led sessions.

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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

An above-average proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The very large majority of those who responded to the questionnaire and the parents and carers interviewed by an inspector expressed agreement with the work of the school and, in particular, indicated that they are content with their child’s happy, safe experience at this school. There were a few parental criticisms, mainly associated with how the school manages unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors examined these concerns during the inspection and conclude that the staff, following a careful review of procedures, which involved full support from the governing body, have strengthened the way they assist pupils with emotional and behavioural needs, and manage pupils’ behaviour effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Milton Abbot 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 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 90 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	55	24	41	0	0	2	3
The school keeps my child safe	35	60	20	34	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	23	40	27	47	4	7	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	40	23	40	4	7	3	5
The teaching is good at this school	29	50	22	38	1	2	2	3
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	26	45	24	41	7	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	38	29	50	6	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)	22	38	24	41	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	24	38	24	41	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	24	25	43	5	9	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	28	32	55	6	10	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	23	40	23	40	6	10	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	23	50	23	40	3	5	2	3

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 are 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.



18 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Milton Abbot School, Milton Abbot PL19 0PS

Thank you very much for welcoming us so warmly during our recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed our visit and were impressed by the courtesy you showed towards us. We were very interested to see you at work and play, and I particularly welcomed the opportunity to hear the views of those of you who are members of the school council and some of you in Years 5 and 6. We agree with most of you, and your parents and carers, that Milton Abbot is a good school.

These are the other main things we found.

- You make good progress overall, but achieve extremely well in mathematics.
- You behave well, and say that you have lots of friends and that the staff take good care of you. Again, we agree with you.
- Teaching is good because teachers plan their lessons very carefully, and make sure that you are challenged at the right level and have lots of interesting things to do. As a result, you work hard and learn well.
- You attend well and enjoy school, especially sports and practical activities, both indoors and outside in the spacious, well-equipped school grounds, and these show that you are good at living healthily.
- The headteacher, staff and members of the governing body work closely together. They know you very well and make sure that you benefit from your time at school.

To help the school to improve, we have asked the teachers to help you to improve your handwriting and the presentation of your work. We also want them to give you more opportunities to learn by following your own ideas and enquiries.

As you do in mathematics, all of you can help by always giving of your best and trying even harder to finish your work in good time.

Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter
Lead Inspector

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