

Mill Water School

Honiton Bottom Road, Honiton. Devon, EX14 2ER

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Senior leaders and the local authority do not have an accurate picture of the school and the areas it needs to improve.
- The school's view of its effectiveness is too optimistic. For example, information on pupils' progress paints a picture of outstanding progress, when it requires improvement.
- Leaders, managers and governors have not taken enough action to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement. Improvement has not been rapid enough since the last inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is patchy. It is good in English and art, but needs improvement in mathematics. Additional funding to help Year 7 pupils to catch up is not used as it should be.
- Teachers do not always give pupils interesting enough tasks. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are not as positive as they could be and, when learning slows, they lose concentration.
- Not all staff use signs and symbols well enough, nor pitch their language at the right level.
- Classwork and homework for the most-able pupils is often too easy. Teachers do not use marking to challenge these pupils sufficiently.
- Middle leaders have had limited impact on improvements. Many are relatively new to their role. They do not yet use assessment information well enough to pinpoint strengths and weakness and prioritise plans.
- Governors are willing and committed, but have not held the school to account effectively enough nor checked that all statutory requirements are met.
- The sixth form and the Early Years Foundation Stage require improvement. Leaders do not track students' and children's progress sufficiently well to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision.

The school has the following strengths

- Parents are supported well by staff who work closely with families.
- Pupils enjoy strong involvement with the community and in local arts projects.
- Pupils' spiritual, social, cultural and moral development is promoted well. Pupils enjoy school, and feel safe.
- Literacy is promoted well across the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 10 lessons, three of which were joint observations with different members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- There were insufficient responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to analyse them, but the school’s recent survey of parents’ views was considered.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation including the school’s information on pupils’ progress, its self-evaluation, development plans and information relating to the safeguarding of pupils, and 60 returns from the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Frank Price, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Emerson

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Information about this school

- Mill Water School provides for pupils with a range of learning difficulties, including moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and profound and multiple learning difficulties. A small number of pupils have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- All pupils at the school have a statement of special educational needs.
- There are twice as many boys as girls.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional funding allocated by the government for certain groups of pupils; in this case, those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and who are looked after by the local authority) is above average.
- At the time of the inspection five classes were without their regular teacher.
- The school is due to relocate to new purpose-built accommodation in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring the pace of lessons is quickened to sustain pupils' attention
 - providing all staff with training to use signing and symbols more effectively to help pupils' communication skills, and ensuring all staff use the right level of language
 - ensuring activities provided are more stimulating to fully motivate pupils
 - providing opportunities for staff to observe outstanding teaching and learning in other schools.
- Improve the learning of more-able pupils by:
 - providing them with additional challenge that meets their needs, rather than just extra of the same work
 - improving marking so that it informs pupils of the next steps they need to take in their learning
 - making better use of homework.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by:
 - making sure teachers balance better the introduction of new concepts with opportunities to consolidate skills
 - making sure teachers use imaginative and interesting resources, including practical resources.
- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the sixth form by:
 - making sure younger children do not wait too long when they need help in class and sixth form students have work that is geared to their age and ability
 - improving accommodation and resources
 - checking progress data effectively to identify what areas need most attention.

- Improve the leadership and management of the school through:
 - ensuring the school’s self-evaluation is accurate and more rigorous
 - focusing improvement planning to secure good teaching and learning
 - using additional Year 7 catch-up funding appropriately and measuring the impact of its use
 - ensuring middle leaders use assessment information better to identify strengths and weaknesses of each area and plan more systematically.
- Improve governance so that:
 - the single central record meets requirements and is monitored
 - statutory requirements for the website are met
 - governors check the work of the school rigorously and accurately.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved. Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The school's assessment information suggests that pupils' progress is outstanding. However, closer analysis of teachers' tracking records and pupils' work reveals that the progress of both boys and girls requires improvement.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics requires improvement. This is because pupils spend too long on the same work and do not progress quickly enough onto new concepts. Tasks are generally too worksheet based and lack imagination to inspire pupils.
- The progress of pupils in English is good. This is because the subject has been effectively led and managed. As a result, pupils make good improvements in reading. Effective staff training has improved teaching and enabled some pupils with severe literacy problems to read. Literacy is promoted strongly across the school. Pupils have developed both their reading and comprehension skills well. More-able pupils can spell tricky words and learn simple rules to help them with their spelling.
- The communication skills of some pupils with autistic spectrum disorder are hampered by some staff's inconsistent use of alternative forms of communication systems. On occasions, the language of support staff is not simple enough to allow those pupils with difficulties in following verbal instructions to succeed. However, other adults in the classes largely support pupils' learning effectively.
- The progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage requires improvement. Sometimes children wait too long for their turn in class. Although individual recording of pupils' progress is good, it is not analysed well enough. As a result, there is no overall clear picture of how well children achieve in the different areas of learning, such as communication, language and literacy or their personal and social development. Poor accommodation and equipment limit children's progress.
- The progress made by sixth form students requires improvement. Although they achieve appropriate externally accredited awards, the tracking of their progress over time is not sufficiently rigorous to identify how their achievement can be improved.
- The progress of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding broadly mirrors the progress of the rest of the school, with good gains in English but weaker gains in mathematics. Pupils who may be eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding are disadvantaged as the school lacks clarity on whether it has received this funding and, if it has, it has not been targeted on these pupils' needs.
- Primary sport funding has been used to provide extra keep fit equipment and more outdoor education opportunities. This has increased pupils' fitness, enjoyment and physical well-being.
- Year 11 pupils are not working at levels that make formal examinations appropriate, but gain externally accredited achievements, which are in line with their abilities.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The pace of learning is not always rapid enough to capture and maintain pupils' concentration and motivation. Sometimes activities are not changed quickly enough to keep pupils interested and, as a result, they become restless and learning slows.
- Activities in mathematics are often not engaging enough. As a result, pupils soon tire of what they are doing and the pace of progress slows. For example, pupils became bored with counting out cubes and recording their answer. Additional challenge is sometimes more of the same task, and so it does not stimulate interest.
- Teachers do not have a clear grasp of what outstanding teaching looks like, and have not been given enough opportunity to observe best practice in other schools in order to influence and improve their own practice.

- The written work of pupils is not consistently marked in a manner that tells them how to improve. Marking is not always written in a way that pupils can understand.
- Assessment information is not always well used to pitch work at the correct level for pupils and this means some more-able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently.
- Homework is not set systematically for pupils for whom it is appropriate. One parent commented, 'We haven't had any for two years. He is quite capable.'
- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement for the same reasons as teaching in Key Stages 1 to 4. Students are not always challenged enough. Their progress is limited by mundane activities, such as colouring sheets that are not appropriate for their age.
- Despite these weaknesses identified during the inspection, there was also some good teaching, and evidence about pupils' progress shows that teaching is not inadequate.
- When teaching is good, it is lively and holds pupils' attention. There is some effective use of sensory activities, which are highly appropriate for pupils. For example, in one lesson, pupils learned about letter sounds through writing the letter 's' in cornflour and glitter and feeling objects beginning with the 's' sound.
- Teachers and support staff provide a supportive and positive climate for pupils which gives pupils confidence and the courage to persevere.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- In lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning vary, depending on the quality of teaching. Where teaching lacks pace or imagination, pupils lose concentration, become fractious and, at times, this limits their achievements.
- Nevertheless, pupils enjoy school. Their behaviour is good around the school and lunchtimes are pleasant, sociable occasions. Sixth form students are keen to speak to visitors.
- Supervision of pupils is good. Every effort is made to ensure they are safe, and pupils say they feel safe. Bullying is not an issue. Although some pupils have challenging behaviours, which can upset other pupils, situations are dealt with effectively and, on the whole, they get on well together.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly average and exclusions are rare.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through art, music, sport and assemblies. They like their involvement in community art projects and visiting the local library adds variety and richness to school life.
- Pupils express their views effectively through the school council. They have made suggestions for equipment for their new school.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Self-evaluation lacks rigour and is inaccurate in its conclusions, so leaders and managers do not have a realistic view of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning. For example, two lessons that were jointly observed with senior leaders were judged to be outstanding by the school. However inspectors judged them to require improvement.
- Improvement planning does not rigorously address how teaching and learning are to be improved. Where the school has identified that some teaching requires improvement it has not prompted leaders to tackle these weaknesses with sufficient urgency.
- Cover arrangements, where regular teachers are not with their classes, are not always robust enough to meet the demands of the pupils. Some cover staff lack the required training in specialist strategies.
- The setting of targets for teachers has not had enough impact on improving teaching and learning. The link between pay and performance has not been effective enough to result in good teaching across the school.

- Recording of statutory safeguarding procedures is lax. In July 2013 a local authority audit highlighted weaknesses in the way staffing checks are recorded. However, these weaknesses had not been remedied by the time of the inspection.
- Middle leadership, including the leadership and management of the sixth form and Early Years Foundation Stage, has not yet brought about enough improvements, other than in English. Most of these roles are new and staff have not had time to make a positive impact, for example in mathematics. There is no systematic planning for improvements. Assessment information is not analysed well enough to identify priorities and evaluate success of plans, and so improvements are not secured.
- The school website has numerous statutory omissions, for example key policies and achievement information.
- Pupil premium funding for pupils has been appropriately spent, as has sports funding, but the headteacher is unclear if Year 7 catch-up funding for pupils has been received or not.
- The local authority has provided support for the school, but has not checked the work of the school rigorously enough to identify weaknesses.
- The subjects and experiences offered to pupils are appropriate. The curriculum for older pupils has been reviewed to better promote communication skills, independence and encourage them to make decisions and choices, and to prepare them for life after school. Pupils are provided with independent information, advice and guidance to prepare them for the next stage.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are supportive of the school and well intentioned. However, they do not challenge the school well enough to check aspects of the school's work in sufficient depth and have been misinformed by the over-optimistic self-evaluation. As a result, the governing body does not have a clear view of the quality of teaching across the school.
 - The governing body manages the overall school budget appropriately, but is unclear how pupil premium funding has been used and what effect it has had on pupils' progress. Governors have not ensured that the way teachers' performance is checked has led to better teaching across the school, nor that teachers' pay is closely enough linked to the effectiveness of teaching.
 - The governing body has had a very recent 'health check', which correctly identified areas for improvement, but governors have not had time to address them. Safeguarding procedures have not been monitored by governors.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	113635
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	426710

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	5
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Royston Williams
Headteacher	Alan Sheppard
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 December 2011
Telephone number	01404 43454
Fax number	01404 43402
Email address	admin@millwater.devon.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

