

Milton Court Primary Academy

Brewery Road, Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, ME10 2EE

Inspection dates 27–28 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	N/A	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Pupils' achievement has been too varied since the academy opened.
- By the end of Year 6 in 2014, attainment was below average in writing and well below average in mathematics.
- Pupils had made too little progress in mathematics.
- Pupils' progress is not yet consistently good in all classes and some pupils have to make up lost ground because of weaknesses in teaching and learning in the past.
- Teaching has not been good enough over time to promote consistently good progress for most pupils, especially in mathematics.
- Teachers do not always set work at the right level of difficulty, especially for the most able pupils.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not yet consistently high across the academy.
- A number of leaders are new to their posts and their roles are not yet fully developed. The changes they have made are too recent to have had a full impact on pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths:

- The headteacher, other leaders, governors and the Academy Trust are taking positive steps to raise pupils' achievement and to improve teaching.
- Pupils often make good progress in reading and writing and their progress in mathematics is improving.
- Pupils enjoy the academy and show consideration and respect for others. Their behaviour is good in lessons and around the academy.
- Procedures to ensure that pupils are safe are effective. Pupils feel safe and well looked after.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. Some lessons were seen jointly with the headteacher or the executive principal.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised and the information about their attainment and progress was analysed.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other staff, a representative from the Academy Trust, governors and pupils.
- The inspectors took account of 18 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the academy's own survey.
- Nineteen questionnaires from staff were taken into account.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including academy policies, safeguarding procedures and the academy's self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Bryant

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Milton Court is a smaller than the average-sized primary academy.
- The academy is federated with Kemsley Primary Academy. The two schools became academies in April 2013 and are sponsored by REAch2 Academy Trust.
- The headteacher took up the post in May 2014. An executive principal oversees a number of academies in the Trust.
- About three quarters of the pupils are White British. Other pupils are from a range of ethnic heritages with Any Other White background being the next largest group.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is about a quarter. This is above average.
- Almost half of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium and this is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A number of staff have been recently appointed to the academy, including the deputy headteacher and the inclusion manager who both started in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that most pupils make good or better progress over time and raise pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - making sure that in all class teachers expect pupils to do their very best
 - ensuring that all work set is at the right level of challenge for pupils, particularly the most able
 - filling the gaps in pupils' learning.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - building on the development and training of new subject leaders so they play a full part in checking performance and improving their areas of responsibility
 - taking speedy action to improve teaching which is less than good.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management **require improvement**

- The leadership and management of the academy have not been consistently good since its opening. As a result, teaching has not been effective enough to ensure that most pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' achievement has been too varied. By the end of Year 6 in 2014, pupils' attainment was well below average in mathematics and these pupils had not made enough progress. By contrast, pupils made much faster progress in reading and attained broadly average standards.
- The new headteacher and new leadership team have carried out a thorough review of the academy's performance. They have an accurate and realistic view of the academy's strengths and its most pressing areas for improvement. With good support from the Academy Trust, the new leaders and staff are taking decisive and positive action to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement. This action is having a good impact and pupils are making faster progress.
- Most of the academy's key leaders are new to their posts. While they are receiving good quality support and training, they are not yet fully developed in their roles. Furthermore, some of the positive changes they have made to improve the academy are too recent to have had a full impact. Nevertheless, all leaders are determined to improve the education provided for the pupils in their care. Staff work well together in striving for improvement.
- The headteacher, leaders and staff have created a positive climate where pupils can learn and thrive. All leaders and staff promote good behaviour and ensure that all pupils are safe. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are effective and robust. The academy successfully fosters positive qualities such as consideration for others, kindness, respect, responsibility and tolerance. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are firmly focused on improving teaching. Teaching is regularly checked by senior leaders and the Academy Trust. Coaching, training and support are provided to help improve teachers' practice. Teaching is now stronger, but not consistently good throughout the academy and some weaknesses remain. The arrangements for the management of teachers' performance are contributing to the improvement of teaching. The targets set to improve teachers' skills are well linked to pupils' progress and to priorities in the academy's improvement plan.
- The academy provides an appropriate range of subjects. An increasing number of additional activities, such as clubs, educational visits and sport, enhance pupils' learning and contribute well to their personal development. All pupils have full and equal access to the activities on offer. The academy promotes equality of opportunity, fosters good relations and tackles all forms of discrimination well. Leaders and staff are beginning to implement new arrangements for assessment.
- The pupil premium is used properly to provide eligible pupils with additional help, particularly in literacy and numeracy. These include well-planned programmes of extra and specific support.
- The primary school physical education and sports premium is used well to promote pupils' physical development and to extend their sporting opportunities. Specialist coaches have been employed to provide quality teaching for pupils and training to develop the skills of staff. Pupils participate well in local competitive matches such as hockey, rugby and cricket.
- The Academy Trust provides a good network of development, training and support to Milton Court. The executive principal has a clear overview of the academy and regularly checks the progress of the academy against its improvement priorities. There is a productive partnership with the federated academy where the two organisations share expertise and good practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective. Governors have a clear overview of the data on the academy's performance. They are very aware of the pressing need to raise achievement in mathematics.
 - Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and how it is improving. They understand requirements relating to the management of staff performance and ensure that promotion and pay increases are based on the progress that pupils make. They know how to tackle any underperformance.
 - Governors make sure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively and check the impact of spending on pupils' achievement.
 - The governors are supportive and provide appropriate challenge to check that teaching and pupils' achievement are improving.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils say that they really enjoy the academy and that it has got better. In lessons, pupils show positive attitudes to learning and participate well in the activities provided. Pupils are attentive, cooperative and keen to learn.
- Pupils are well behaved in the classroom, in the playground and in other areas of the academy. Only when work is not sufficiently challenging and engaging are pupils' attitudes and behaviour less than good.
- The academy has a positive and warm atmosphere. Pupils show consideration and respect for others. Relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils are strong. The pupils informed the inspectors that behaviour is good most of the time by most of the pupils. They were keen to add, 'We try to make everyone feel welcome.'
- Parents and carers state that the academy promotes good behaviour.
- Pupils respond well to additional responsibilities provided, such as serving on the school council and being on the learning council.
- Attendance has been below average but is improving. Staff are active in checking and promoting regular attendance. However, a few families whose children have low attendance are not fully supporting the academy's efforts.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The inclusion manager, leaders and staff take effective steps to ensure that all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, are well cared for and protected.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying. They report that there is very little bullying in the academy. Pupils are confident that bullying will be dealt with. They stated, 'Teachers would deal with it in a fair and positive way.'
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe at the academy and at home. For example, they know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- All staff have had recent training in child protection and safeguarding. The effective systems for checking and recording safety matters ensure that any concerns are dealt with promptly. All staff are appropriately checked before being appointed to the academy.
- Leaders and staff carry out regular risk assessments and make sure that the academy is a safe place for pupils to learn and thrive. There are clear procedures to help ensure that pupils are safe on academy visits.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching has not been strong enough since the academy formed to promote good progress for most groups of pupils. Past weaknesses in assessment and teaching have hindered pupils' progress, especially in mathematics. Teaching in reading and writing has been stronger.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been high enough and there are occasions in a few classes where this is still the case. At times, the work set for pupils is not sufficiently challenging and demanding, especially for the most able.
- Teaching is improving because of the action taken by leaders. The assessment of pupils' attainment has been strengthened and so teachers now have a more accurate view of pupils' abilities and needs. Most teachers use this information well to plan their lessons and to set suitably challenging work for different groups of pupils.
- In some lessons, the work set is not sufficiently challenging, particularly for the most able. When this happens, pupils do not make the progress they should because tasks are too easy for them.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is improving and pupils are making faster progress in acquiring early reading skills. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to apply their reading skills.
- There have been further improvements to the teaching of writing. Interesting novels and stories are often used as a basis for pupils' writing. Teachers are well focused on developing pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling. In most classes, the teacher provides clear guidance on writing techniques to help pupils develop their skills. In some classes, teachers are not expecting pupils to write enough and so their writing

can be brief and sometimes incomplete.

- The teaching of mathematics is improving well. Pupils are effectively taught calculation and most teachers clearly explain and demonstrate mathematical methods. They provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to apply knowledge and skills to solve relevant problems. At times, the tasks provided are not demanding enough to enable pupils to acquire a deeper understanding of mathematical ideas.
- Teachers set useful learning targets for pupils in writing and mathematics so they know what they are aiming for. In the best practice, these learning targets are challenging and specific to the needs of the pupils. They are regularly referred to in lessons and guide pupils' learning well.
- The marking of pupils' work is much improved. Teachers identify good work and provide helpful comments to guide improvement. As a result, pupils know how well they are doing and know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed and are increasingly making a contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for those who need additional help with language, literacy and numeracy.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because it has been too varied. By the end of Year 6 in 2014, pupils' attainment was well below average in mathematics, below average in writing and broadly average in reading. This group of pupils made good progress from their starting points in Year 2 in reading and writing. However, they did not make enough progress in mathematics.
- The headteacher, key leaders and staff are taking positive action to raise pupils' achievement. Pupils are now making faster progress but it is not consistently good in all classes. Furthermore, there are gaps in some pupils' learning because of weak teaching in the past. Nevertheless, the academy is tackling and eradicating past underachievement.
- In 2014, the Year 6 pupils supported by the pupil premium attained similar standards to the others in reading. However, these pupils were about six months behind the others in mathematics and about five months behind in writing.
- When they are compared to other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils at Milton Court were five terms behind in mathematics, three terms behind in writing and about six months behind in reading. Better teaching and well-planned support programmes are helping to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are making faster progress this year and gaps in attainment are closing.
- In 2014, a below average proportion of pupils attained the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Improvements to teaching mean the most able are being presented with more challenging work. However, there are occasions in some lessons where tasks are not sufficiently demanding to extend their learning.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is improving because of better teaching. Pupils also receive well-focused and specific support that meets their needs.
- The school's assessments and learning in lessons indicate that there are no significant differences between the achievements of different ethnic minority groups.
- Pupils' achievement in reading has been a stronger area, particularly in Years 3 to 6. The proportion of pupils that reached the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check was below average in 2013. Results improved in 2014 and a closer to average proportion of pupils attained the required standard. During the inspection, pupils in Year 2 applied their reading skills well to find interesting and useful facts about sharks. By Year 6, pupils apply more advanced reading skills, such as skimming and scanning when examining a piece of text.
- Pupils write for a range of different purposes. Their grammar, punctuation and spelling are developing well. They use vocabulary imaginatively. For example, pupils in Year 5 made good progress in using descriptive language. Inspired by the book, *Earthquake in the Early Morning*, they described the beautiful and ideal city of San Francisco. By comparing and contrasting, they described the same city after an earthquake. Most pupils take care with handwriting and presentation. Pupils' writing in Years 1 and 2 sometimes lacks detail and depth.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is improving. Most pupils show clear knowledge and understanding of how to make calculations and carry out mathematical operations. They apply their knowledge and skills competently to solve problems. However, some pupils' learning is impeded because of gaps in their knowledge and understanding of mathematics.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Children join the Reception class with knowledge, understanding and skills at below the levels typical for their age, particularly in communication, language and number.
- The early years provision requires improvement because children's progress has not been consistently good over time. In 2014, a below average proportion of children achieved a good level of development. Children's speaking, reading and writing were the weakest areas. Teaching has not been good enough over time.
- The new early years leader has already begun to tackle these issues, and teaching and children's progress are improving.
- Children are making good progress in their personal and social development. Adults have established positive relationships with them. The children feel safe and relate well to adults and to their peers. They share resources, take turns and show consideration for others. Their behaviour is good.
- Adults are promoting children's language skills well. Children talk about their learning and use new vocabulary. For example, in learning to tell the time, children used 'half past' and 'quarter past' correctly.
- Clear guidance is provided to help children's learning. Adults have increased the attention given to children's early reading and writing skills. The setting of learning activities to meet the needs of different groups of children is being strengthened.
- Leaders have made recent improvements to the early years as a place to learn and to the quality of learning resources but there is still more that requires improvement.

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	139397
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	449892

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eileen Hargreaves
Headteacher	Jason Pearn
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01795 472972
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