

# Milldene Primary School

65 Barbrook Lane, Tiptree, Colchester, Essex CO5 0EF

**Inspection dates**

5–6 October 2016

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Milldene Primary has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- The school continues to develop at a good pace because of the strong determination of the headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher.
- Governors are more effective than when the school was previously inspected. They have benefited from the local authority's support.
- The skilled English and mathematics subject leaders drive improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in those subjects. In other subjects, leadership is in its infancy.
- Thorough checks of pupils' progress ensure that the tasks they are given are neither too hard nor too easy. As a result, pupils do well in writing and mathematics.
- In reading, most pupils also do well. However, some pupils, particularly the most able, try to read books that are too difficult.
- In science, pupils have too few opportunities to work things out for themselves.
- Staff are proud to work at the school. Teachers and learning support assistants form a cohesive team. They benefit from good-quality training.
- Classrooms are a hive of purposeful activity because pupils' very positive attitudes to learning mean they approach every new day with a thirst for new knowledge.
- Staff give pupils' well-being high importance because they believe happy pupils learn best.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils say they feel safe, and that they are well cared for by staff.
- Good teaching and learning in the early years enable the majority of children to make good progress. They are well prepared for Year 1.
- Parents say their children enjoy school. One parent said, 'My daughter says it's not fair school is closed at the weekend.'
- Parents' support is strong. Every parent responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Further raise reading standards by ensuring that pupils, particularly the most able, read books more closely matched to their abilities.
- Raise standards in science by providing more opportunities for pupils to plan their own scientific investigations, evaluate their results and draw their own conclusions.
- Develop the leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics to ensure that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are as good as those of reading, writing and mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- School leaders, governors and staff share a strong determination to see that the school builds further on the good improvements made since the previous inspection.
- Staff promote the school ethos of 'living and learning together' in the daily life of the school. Parents say, for example, 'My daughter's confidence has come on, she always talks about what she has learned, and she never worries about making a mistake.'
- School leaders' clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve ensures the accuracy of improvement decisions. They carefully check changes make the difference expected, and adjust them if they do not.
- School leaders' forensic analysis of information about pupils is used to identify, and then attempt to eradicate, barriers to their learning. For example, they identify pupils with no or limited access to the internet out of school, and ensure that teachers' planning incorporates activities in school to compensate.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher's complementary skills benefit the school greatly. Priority has rightly been given to improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics.
- English and mathematics subject leaders' impact on outcomes is strong because they have accessed good-quality training focused on their roles. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. They glean accurate information based on regular checks, and skilfully train teachers in new techniques. Leadership of other subjects, however, is just beginning.
- Staff morale is high. All responding to their online survey agree the school has improved since it was last inspected. They all say they are proud to be members of Milldene staff, and that they share a clear understanding of the goals the school aims to achieve.
- Learning support assistants are effective. They set high expectations for themselves and contribute greatly to pupils' learning.
- The curriculum includes many opportunities for pupils to delve deeper into areas of interest. Events, such as 'the big book sleepover', make learning fun. However, while pupils learn about science, occasions to plan their own investigations, or to evaluate their results and draw their own conclusions, are few.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in the everyday life of the school. Pupils are given time for reflection in assemblies. They are mindful of those less fortunate than themselves, and regularly raise funds for charities.
- Pupils' understanding of British values is good. They understand 'democracy' because they see it in action through the school council. They are clear that, 'You should always treat others the way you want them to treat you.' They understand elections give everyone a voice, and can explain the potential pitfalls of dictatorship, drawing on their learning in the curriculum. They know rules are important and found in all aspects of our lives, including the games they play and the smooth running of the school.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. Every pupil is known as an individual and offered help closely matched to their needs. Well-trained learning support assistants are particularly skilled at recognising when

these pupils need a break, or change of activity, so they do not become frustrated.

- Leaders target pupil premium funding effectively. Careful checks of what pupils know enable gaps in learning to be identified. Extra help enables pupils to catch up. Eligible pupils benefit from wider opportunities such as instrumental tuition.
- Pupils and staff gain from the prudent use of primary school physical education and sports funding. Pupils enjoy a wider range of activities, including squash and dance. Pupils know the value of exercise to healthy living. Teachers learn from working alongside coaches and instructors. Pupils particularly appreciate summertime swimming in the school's pool.
- Links with local schools are beneficial. All staff gain from access to a wide range of good-quality training.
- Good links with the nearby high school benefit pupils. They use the high school's facilities, for example in computer studies. Teachers benefit too, because they bring new ideas back to school.
- Following the previous inspection, the school received good support from the local authority. For example, an improvement board helped focus energies and resources so that rapid progress was made.
- The school's very strong relationship with parents is based on successfully meeting their aim to 'value every child and their family'. Parents are appreciative that the headteacher or other leaders, such as well-being mentor, are available at the school gate when parents arrive each morning. Every parent responding to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, would recommend the school to other parents.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance is effective.
- Governors responded positively to the local authority's review. They reorganised to be more efficient. For example, their monitoring is now more closely aligned to the targets in the school's improvement plan.
- Good use is made of each individual member's skills and expertise. For example, a governor with particular knowledge of special educational needs monitors these pupils' progress and the impact of the school's actions.
- Governors use the school's information about pupils' progress effectively to gain a view of how well pupils learn. Information is triangulated from other sources to check it is consistent, and to question leaders if it is not.
- Governors' regular visits to the school, and the feedback they share, provide an independent view and greater insight into the school's functioning.
- All decisions taken about spending are firmly based on improving outcomes for pupils. Those with financial expertise help ensure that spending is prudent. Governors check that additional funding, such as pupil premium, is used effectively. For example, they recognised a dip in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and worked with the school to check and change the type of help given.
- Governors oversee the performance of staff, including the headteacher, rigorously to check targets have been met.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding is a priority, and that everyone plays their part in keeping pupils safe.
- The headteacher's vigilance is mirrored by her colleagues. Staff say she often reminds them, 'No matter how unlikely you think it may be, it could happen here.'
- Frequent training and regular updates mean awareness levels never drop. In the last two weeks, school leaders, including governors, have attended extra training.
- All staff receive regular training in aspects of safeguarding and their 'Prevent' duty. This training equips staff with the up-to-date knowledge they need to detect pupils who are potentially vulnerable so that action to intervene can be taken quickly.
- Staff say they are confident in raising any concerns with the designated lead for safeguarding. Effective systems carefully record and note concerns.
- The trusting relationship with parents gives parents confidence that their children are safe in school, and enables them to share concerns.
- Relationships with outside agencies are very strong. Action is taken swiftly to address any concerns and seek help to support vulnerable families.
- Documentation is comprehensive and detailed. Checks on the suitability of staff, governors, regular volunteers and contractors are thorough.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Areas for improvement have largely been addressed. For example, teaching of writing and mathematics is much more consistent so pupils, including the most able, make better progress.
- Classes run smoothly because relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils responding to their online survey overwhelmingly agree their teachers make sure they understand and help them to do their best.
- The well-organised classrooms invite pupils to learn. Good-quality resources are readily available for pupils to use. Pupils routinely refer to information and prompts on display to support their learning, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Staff's effective use of a wide range of checks on pupils' progress promotes learning. This is a strength of teaching. Assessment of prior learning is used to pitch work so it is neither too hard nor too easy, and to spot any gaps in pupils' learning to be rectified.
- Staff effectively guide pupils to reflect on their learning. This, too, is a strength. During the inspection, for example, groups of Year 6 pupils shared their progress at the end of the lesson, and how they might discuss with their teacher how to extend the activity the following day. They had a clear understanding of themselves as learners.
- Staff deploy learning support assistants effectively. Learning support assistants are well prepared for their roles in lessons. Good training gives them the confidence to take the initiative, for example to reshape learning if pupils understand or struggle.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Adults' interactions with children move learning on well. Adults know when to intervene and show children how to do new things, and when to step back and let them figure things out for themselves.

- Staff promote speaking and listening skills well. All around them pupils see examples of incorrect grammar, such as 'we was', alongside correct grammar, such as 'we were'.
- Reading skills are taught well. Although early in the term, Reception children have mastered many letter sounds. This good start is built on through the school. However, staff do not sufficiently check reading books selected by the most able pupils. These pupils pick books for themselves and sometimes pick books that are too hard for them. They are heard to read less often, so this can go unnoticed by staff.
- The teaching of writing is good. Pupils enjoy writing. More exciting units of work, such as 'Out of this World', engage all pupils, but particularly boys, so they want to write. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. Pupils learn calculation skills well because all staff understand the school's policy, an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Homework is used effectively. Parents say their children benefit because they are given tasks to prepare them for future work in school, so they have a basic understanding.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Every parent responding to Parent View agrees their children are happy at school. Pupils responding to their online survey agree they enjoy school.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes are beneficial to their learning. In particular, they tackle the unknown and challenge themselves to strive to improve. One pupil told an inspector, 'I need to choose bigger numbers, my brain is a muscle and it needs exercise.' They recognise mistakes as learning opportunities. When stuck, they know what to do. One parent said, 'My children tell me what they are good at, but also know precisely what they need to master next.'
- The most able pupils, including those who are also disadvantaged, are equally positive about their learning.
- Pupils enjoy 'books and biscuits' when they talk to the headteacher about their work and how they view their progress. The headteacher in turn gleans valuable information about pupils' learning and perceptions of school.
- Pupils accept responsibility willingly. Older pupils enjoy the opportunity to help those younger than themselves. Those applying to be anti-bullying ambassadors are proud to 'be there for anyone needing our help' and to design and present an assembly to promote positive behaviour.
- Pupils understand how to stay safe when using the internet. They understand the potential hazards of social media. They use equipment safely.
- Pupils enjoy the before- and after-school clubs. Pupils benefit from the good range of activities and healthy snacks. They enjoy one another's company.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Behaviour in lessons is better than when the school was previously inspected. This is largely because the quality of teaching has improved, but also because pupils are encouraged to take a more responsible and proactive attitude to their learning.

- The vast majority of parents responding to Parent View agree the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved. A similar proportion agree the school deals effectively with bullying. One parental comment, typical of many, was 'Staff are excellent, any worries, they help you and sort them out.'
- Children in Reception quickly learn the school's strong values that promote their good behaviour.
- Pupils know the rules and usually stick to them. They respond positively to rewards such as a few minutes of extra playtime.
- The vast majority of pupils work and play together harmoniously. Pupils mix well. The school grounds provide many opportunities and promote pupils' good behaviour at breaktimes.
- The well-being mentor works closely with pupils struggling to manage their own behaviour, so they begin to understand the signs to look out for to stop themselves becoming angry.
- Pupils move around the school building sensibly and safely. They have good manners and are respectful towards adults.
- Pupils confirm they feel safe in school. They say bullying is rare. They know friends fall out sometimes and can explain why this is not bullying. They know who to turn to in school if they are worried, and are confident anything would be quickly resolved.
- Attendance is above the national average. The school is vigilant to ensure that everyone is accounted for. Persistent absence levels are low. The school works closely with outside agencies, and the well-being mentor checks for any underlying barriers to attendance.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection. The strong focus on improving the quality of teaching has largely eradicated the variations in pupils' progress reported at the previous inspection.
- The school's checks on progress, and the quality of work in pupils' books from this year and last year, show that the vast majority of pupils now make good or better progress in their reading skills, writing and mathematics.
- Children make good progress in the Reception class. From starting points that are generally typical of those usually expected for four-year-olds, the majority reach a good level of development by the end of the year in readiness for the transition into Year 1. This proportion is building year-on-year because of leaders' good improvements to provision and teaching.
- Results of the Year 1 phonics screening have been above the national average in two of the last three years. School checks and inspection evidence suggest that pupils' results are on track to be similarly high again in 2017 if they maintain the good rate of progress begun in Reception.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is good overall. Since the previous inspection, the writing curriculum is livelier and more interesting, particularly for boys, so they achieve better. While attainment in mathematics is good, it is not yet as strong as in reading and writing. This is because teachers and pupils took time to become familiar with the new calculations policy.

- The small proportion of disadvantaged pupils make good progress. These pupils are seen as individuals, not as a group. The school accurately measures each one's different starting points and barriers to their learning. As a result, all pupils receive extra help, tailored to their needs. Some pupils receive extra help with their general class lessons. Others receive specialist teaching to fill gaps in their learning. The impact of this help is measured to check it is effective, and changed if it is not.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make good progress from their starting points. These pupils regularly work with their class teachers. Their teachers consequently have a good grasp of their progress, and plan their next steps in learning well.
- The most able pupils, including the most able who are also disadvantaged, make good progress overall. Teachers regularly check that tasks challenge them. Increasingly, pupils are asked to articulate their own thoughts about their next steps. However, while reading skills are taught well and these pupils make good progress in them, reading books are sometimes too difficult for them.
- The proportion of boys and girls can be very different in some classes. Teachers make sure the lesson content, and the way it is delivered, engages both sexes.
- Leaders scrutinise outcomes and use the information gleaned effectively. For example, they noticed spelling standards were lower than those for grammar and punctuation. As a result, a new approach was introduced so pupils are taught more systematically.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- The early years provision is much improved since the previous inspection when it was judged to require improvement. With the help of the local authority, the setting, equipment and learning activities have all been improved significantly.
- Children settle quickly so each day gets off to a good start. Although still early in the term, they understand the structure of the day, know what to expect and know what is expected of them.
- Children's thirst for learning is unabated as they move from activity to activity, inquisitive and keen to learn. Staff know the children's interests and plan tasks that incorporate them. This attracts children's attention and curiosity so they are keen to learn more. Children regularly make decisions and choices about what they want to explore or try.
- Children work and play together well. They take turns and cooperate well. They are helpful to one another. Relationships between staff and children are strong. Children listen closely to instructions and want to do the right thing.
- Staff work well together. Their questioning often encourages children to think for themselves. Every opportunity is taken to practise basic skills, such as letter sounds and numbers. Ideas from training and visits to successful settings are used well to improve the children's learning further. Technology is incorporated into teaching, too. During the inspection, an activity was downloaded to a tablet computer for children to practise and extend their learning.
- The well-planned curriculum offers a range of interesting activities covering all areas of learning. Planning begins with children's interests.
- Staff regularly and accurately track children's progress from their starting points to



check children are making the progress they should. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The leader has identified the most able children as a group that has not achieved as well as others and this is increasingly taken into account in curriculum plans. For example, during the inspection, the most able were challenged to add a caption when they practised their handwriting.

- Staff are constantly vigilant to ensure that children are safe. Equipment is checked and every opportunity taken to remind children, for example, of how to use scissors safely.
- Parents say their children's transition to Reception was very smooth because the relationship with pre-school is very positive. They and their children had many opportunities to visit and see all aspects of the school for themselves.
- The relationship with parents is very strong. One parent, typical of many, said of her daughter, 'She loves every minute of it.' Parents say they like that their children's learning can be seen online. It gives them a 'real-time' understanding of their children's progress. Parents say that at home they can talk to their children about the day's learning, and sometimes follow it up with similar activities.

## School details

Unique reference number	114760
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10019594

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vic Prior
Headteacher	Susan Locke
Telephone number	01621 816 490
Website	<a href="http://www.milldeneschool.co.uk">www.milldeneschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@milldene.essex.sch.uk">admin@milldene.essex.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	18–19 September 2014

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- There is one class in each year group.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is below average.
- The overall proportion of pupils who receive support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- In 2015, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school operates a before- and after-school club, five days a week.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited all classrooms. Some visits were conducted jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspectors observed small groups of pupils being taught.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors observed pupils in other activities and as they moved around the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, teachers, other staff and governors. Inspectors also met with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors met with pupils to discuss their experiences at school.
- The views of 40 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspectors also held informal discussions with parents. The inspectors considered the views of 15 members of staff and 57 pupils who responded to their online surveys.
- The inspectors looked at a range of school documents and information. These included the school's development plan, checks on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body and pupils' behaviour and attendance records. The inspectors also looked at arrangements for and records of safeguarding procedures.

## Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, Lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Tomkins	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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