

Milton Abbot School

Milton Abbot, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0PS

Inspection dates

15–16 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Several changes in leadership in recent years have led to limited development of teaching and learning and a decline in pupils' progress.
- Subject leaders have only recently been appointed. Their skills in monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching, learning and assessment are not yet fully developed.
- The quality of teaching is uneven. Some teachers are not skilled in identifying the next steps in learning for all pupils, to inform their teaching and feedback.
- A system for tracking pupils' progress has not been developed fully to support the teachers.
- Pupils' progress is uneven across year groups and subjects, and particularly in writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make as much progress as others. Their language skills are often limited and a barrier to learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is not consistently good. This is due to the quality of teaching in a small minority of lessons and the fact that some teachers are not following the school's policy.
- The attendance of a few pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher is tackling weak teaching and has begun to develop middle leaders. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is improving, though not yet consistently.
- The headteacher is developing a curriculum that is beginning to engage all pupils and meet their needs.
- Governors are now holding leaders to account more effectively for the progress of all pupils. Disadvantaged pupils' progress has been identified as a priority for school improvement.
- There are examples of strong teaching where teachers ensure that all pupils are challenged to make rapid progress.
- The most able pupils are now making better progress in almost all year groups.
- Children in the early years make good progress due to effective use of assessment.
- Most children behave well and are very considerate of others. They attend school regularly. The arrangements for safeguarding ensure pupils feel safe in school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress, especially the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, by:
 - ensuring teachers consistently match the level of challenge to the specific starting points of all pupils
 - ensuring teachers consistently check how well all pupils are learning during lessons and deepen their understandingsharing the good practice of some teachers in providing feedback on pupils' work that identifies precisely the next steps they need to take to improve it.
- Improve pupils' progress in writing, by:
 - extending the vocabulary and sentence structure, and strategies for spelling, of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilitiesproviding more opportunities for pupils to apply their writing across the curriculum.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management in improving pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance, by:
 - developing the skills of subject and other middle leaders in monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - devising an effective whole school system for tracking the progress of all pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged and those who are low attaining or have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring all staff follow the school's behaviour policy and procedures consistently
 - working with parents to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, and the subsequent retirement of a long-standing headteacher in 2013, the school has experienced instability in leadership until the appointment of the current headteacher in 2015. During this period, the quality of teaching and learning was not developed effectively. This led to a decline in pupils' achievement over the past three years.
- Improvements being made by the current headteacher are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. However, they are too recent to have ensured that current pupils are making consistently good progress in all year groups.
- The introduction of a whole school system for tracking pupils' progress is being used to identify and address the gaps in pupils' learning. It does not yet include pupil groups, such as boys, girls, the most able, disadvantaged and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, some teachers are not focusing enough on identifying and meeting the specific next steps in learning for these pupils.
- The headteacher has appointed English and mathematics subject leaders to work with the special educational needs coordinator to improve the quality of teaching and learning. These leaders' skills in monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching and learning are being developed appropriately. However, the appointments are too recent to have secured a consistently good quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The headteacher and governors have evaluated accurately the areas in need of improvement. They have set higher expectations of pupils' achievement. School improvement planning provides clear direction for the staff, including a part-time pupil premium 'champion'. This post has been created to address the underachievement of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The headteacher is tackling weak teaching appropriately through managing the performance of staff and providing relevant training. However, support for new teachers has been hampered by staff absence.
- The headteacher and staff are improving the curriculum to ensure that it interests all pupils and meets their needs. It includes a suitable focus on developing pupils' communication skills, for example through presentations of their work.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It includes 'adventure days' and a 'forest school' where pupils develop team-building skills. It also includes a programme for pupils' personal development. A 'brilliant Britain' scheme of work engages pupils in discussing current affairs, and topics such as democracy and the importance of laws. In addition, it helps to develop pupils' understanding and tolerance of other faiths and cultures. This makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- The primary physical education and sport funding is used effectively to buy in expertise to lead a wide range of clubs, including football, rugby, table tennis and cross country. This is engaging an increasing number of pupils in sport. Pupils also enjoy an art club, choir and annual productions.

- The positive relationships between leaders, staff and pupils support a culture in which all are valued and any form of discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated.
- Some parents expressed concern about the impact of instability in the leadership of the school. Nonetheless, they appreciate the improvements being made by the current headteacher and the increased level of challenge for their children in some classes. They value the wide range of communication from the school and the fact that staff are willing to help if they have any concerns about their children.
- The school is accessing a wide range of external support to bring about the required improvements as quickly as possible. This includes support from the local authority for the governing body, headteacher, other leaders and new teachers. It also includes support from local schools. The impact is seen in clearer accountability for pupils' progress and improvements in teaching and learning, although the improvements are not yet consistent throughout the school.

Governance of the school

- The governors have steered the school through a difficult period of change and provided some stability for staff through their frequent visits to the school. They have supported the appointments of new leaders and staff, managed the performance of the headteacher robustly and supported him in tackling staffing issues.
- Following an external review of governance, governors are improving their working practices. They have increased their support for the strategic direction of the school, as in the decisions regarding the leadership structure. They increasingly hold leaders to account for pupils' achievement, including pupils supported by the pupil premium and special educational needs funding.
- Governors are beginning to challenge decisions about the management of staff performance and salary progression in relation to the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. The impact of the governors is seen in the higher expectations of pupils' achievement and priorities identified in the school improvement plan.
- Governors gain an in-depth knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement through their visits, examination of information on pupils' progress, and through reports from the headteacher and local authority. This enables them to monitor leaders' progress on the school improvement plan and to challenge them to sustain improvements.
- Governors ensure that the school's finances are properly managed and that the skilful deployment of staff and resources such as additional funding are now improving outcomes for pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher and governors have ensured that all staff are vigilant in identifying and reporting concerns regarding the safeguarding of pupils. The school works very well with external agencies to take appropriate action to address any issues. Records are detailed and of good quality. All staff and governors have up-to-date knowledge

and understanding of safeguarding requirements through regular training, for example in safeguarding, safer recruitment of staff and in preventing pupils' radicalisation and extremism. School policies and procedures are reviewed annually.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is uneven and promotes pupils' uneven progress across year groups and subjects, particularly in writing.
- Some teachers are not using assessment well to match the level of challenge to pupils' starting points, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Too often, particularly in writing lessons, pupils are all set the same expectation of learning, including in the mixed-age classes, rather than building systematically on their prior understanding.
- Some teachers are not checking how well all pupils are learning, and adapting their lessons to provide additional support or to deepen understanding as necessary. They are not identifying precisely the next steps in the pupils' learning in their feedback so that pupils know what to do to improve their work.
- There are examples of very effective use of assessment in planning lessons, checking and extending pupils' understanding during lessons, and in providing feedback. In these classes, pupils' work demonstrates that they act on this guidance and make rapid progress. However, this good practice is not shared consistently throughout the school.
- The teaching of phonics is improving. There is increased emphasis on checking the accuracy of pupils' blending and 'sounding out' of letters and more opportunities for pupils to demonstrate recognition of letter patterns. However, in some lessons pupils are not given enough opportunity to apply their new learning in their writing and so it is difficult for them to recall the letters and their sounds in future work. This contributes to weaknesses in spelling for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. Most of the teachers are now assessing how well pupils understand the topics and whether they need additional help or more challenging problems to solve. They make good use of practical resources to help pupils to see number patterns and to apply and extend their calculation skills. In addition, some teachers are asking probing questions to deepen pupils' understanding.
- A small minority of parents do not agree that their children receive appropriate homework. The headteacher is aware that this is an area for development. A few parents do not agree that they receive valuable information about their children's progress. School reports provide detailed feedback on how well pupils are learning in all subjects and their next steps in learning. In addition, parents are invited into class each week to look at the work in their children's books. However, due to staff absence, this is not yet consistent across the school.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The positive relationships between staff and pupils help to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- Most pupils work and play well together across the year groups. They respect each other's ideas and views.
- Pupils understand the importance of keeping healthy. They praise the nutritious school meals and many participate in the wide range of opportunities for sport.
- Pupils are eager to learn. The school's focus on developing a neat, cursive style of handwriting is increasing their pride in the presentation of their work.
- The school works well with external agencies to support those who have additional needs. It is also developing a programme to support pupils' social, emotional and personal development, although this is at an early stage.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school, and parents agree. Pupils learn how to stay safe through their lessons, life skills courses and visits, such as from the police. They are aware of how to keep safe, for example from cyber bullying. Pupils say there are a few incidents of bullying in school, but that staff deal with them effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement as it is not consistently good. Some pupils, parents and staff raised some concerns about behaviour. There are incidents of low-level disruption in a small minority of lessons which do not engage and challenge the pupils.
- Staff are not applying the school's behaviour policy and procedures consistently. Expectations of behaviour, therefore, are not always clear to the pupils.
- Support for a few pupils with emotional, social and behaviour difficulties is not helping them to learn to manage their own behaviour. The progress of some of these pupils has been hampered by staff absence.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons and at play and lunchtimes. They are very considerate towards others and polite.
- The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly. However, a few pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities are persistently absent. The headteacher is working with the parents and is beginning to address this. He is aware that more needs to be done to improve the attendance of these pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils are not making consistently good progress across subjects in all year groups, especially in writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not progressing in all subjects as well as other pupils with the same starting points. This is due to teachers' uneven use of assessment.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make good progress in reading in most year groups. They use a wide range of strategies to read fluently with good comprehension. They talk knowledgeably about a range of books. Pupils with low prior attainment, especially those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are not making strong progress. They tend not to read as widely and often as other pupils. They apply their knowledge of phonics when tackling unfamiliar texts, but they are not fluent in this. Achievement in the Year 1 phonics check varies from year to year, depending on the number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, recent improvements in the teaching of phonics are beginning to increase pupils' accuracy and fluency.
- The most able pupils are now making better progress in writing in most year groups due to teachers' higher expectations of what they can achieve. They write at length using increasingly varied sentences and vocabulary, in well-punctuated paragraphs. They are not yet applying these skills enough in their writing across subjects. Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are too often held back by their limited vocabulary and knowledge of sentence structure. In addition, their spelling is weak. These aspects of language led to their below-average progress and attainment in writing in recent national curriculum tests at the end of Year 6. School leaders have identified these as a priority for improvement.
- Pupils are making better progress in mathematics than in reading and writing, especially in key stage 1, as the work is set increasingly at the right level of challenge. In most year groups, the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are now working at a greater depth of understanding in the subject. They can apply their calculation skills, such as multiplying and dividing decimals in Year 6, in solving increasingly challenging problems. Teachers are addressing previous gaps in learning for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils are beginning to make better progress.
- The level of challenge for Year 6 pupils has increased in all subjects during this academic year. Consequently, the pupils are being better prepared than previously for secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- The headteacher and early years leader have an accurate understanding of the provision's strengths and areas for development. The most relevant priorities for improvement are identified and appropriate training secured. The impact is seen, for example, in the improved teaching of phonics.
- The accurate self-evaluation is based on ongoing observations and rigorous assessment of the progress of all children.
- The assessments inform the curriculum, which provides a broad range of interesting and demanding experiences both inside and in the outside area. The activities meet the children's needs and help them to make progress towards all the early learning goals.
- Leaders ensure that the children are given the support they need, including from external agencies and other providers when necessary.
- Safeguarding is effective. There are no breaches of statutory welfare requirements. The child protection policy and procedures are implemented consistently and reviewed regularly.
- Teaching is effective because it makes good use of assessment to inform the precise next steps in learning for each child. Teaching and support staff have high expectations of the children based on accurate assessment of their skills, knowledge and understanding when they join the school.
- Parents contribute to initial assessments of children's starting points. They value highly the daily communication and regular information online which keeps them well informed about their children's progress. The information also helps them to support their children's learning and development at home.
- The children are motivated and interested in the activities provided. They are keen to learn. They listen carefully to adults and each other. Routines, such as turn taking, are established quickly and support the transition of the pre-school children into the Reception Year.
- The children's behaviour is good and shows that they feel safe. They demonstrate that they understand how to keep safe when exploring the outside environment.
- Most children make good progress from their starting points. This includes disadvantaged children, the most able and, increasingly, children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of children attaining a good level of development is above the national average.

School details

Unique reference number	113258
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10019456

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Ridley
Headteacher	Christopher Luxford
Telephone number	01822 870273
Website	www.miltonabbot.devon.sch.uk
Email address	head@miltonabbot.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 November 2011

Information about this school

- Milton Abbot School meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Pupils are predominantly of White British background and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, and a high proportion of pupils have a special educational needs statement or an education, health and care plan.

- Children in the Reception Year attend full time.
- The governors manage a small pre-school for children aged three to four years. The children attend part time. Governors also provide childcare through breakfast and after school clubs.
- The school does not use any off-site alternative provision.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2015.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons taught by three teachers, all of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. The inspector looked extensively at pupils' work in their books in every year group and listened to small groups of pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, middle leaders, a group of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector met informally with parents and spoke to pupils in lessons and at play.
- The inspector observed the school's work and examined a range of documents, including those relating to the school's evaluation of its performance, plans for development, the safeguarding of pupils, and information on the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour.
- The inspector took account of 28 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey and comments posted online by parents, together with questionnaires completed by 10 members of staff.

Inspection team

Sue Frater, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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