

Milldown Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Milldown Road, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 7SN

Inspection dates

10–11 January 2017

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' actions to improve pupils' learning and behaviour have not been effective over time.
- The quality of teaching across the school is too variable. As a result, pupils, especially the most able, make insufficient progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not make consistently good progress, particularly in reading and writing.
- Assessment information used by teachers is too often overgenerous. Activities are not tailored well enough to the needs of the pupils.
- The work of middle leaders is not having enough impact on pupils' achievement.
- At times, pupils lack concentration and effort in their work. This is often when teaching is not holding their interest or motivation.
- Pupils are unclear how to improve their writing across the curriculum. This leads to poor presentation and poor quality of work in pupils' topic books.
- Teaching in the early years is inconsistent. Children's written and spoken language is not well developed, particularly for boys.
- Governors have not sufficiently challenged school leaders to secure the necessary improvements.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are working on the right priorities for improvement. The new headteacher has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. His vision for improvement is shared by middle leaders and governors.
- Parents are supportive of the new leadership and value the range of information that the school shares with them.
- Leaders have taken effective action to ensure that attainment information about pupils is now accurate. As a result, teachers are now being held to account for pupils' progress.
- Pupils' mathematics work shows recent improvements in their progress.
- Attendance is rising.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment to ensure good outcomes for pupils by:
 - giving the most able pupils work that is sufficiently challenging
 - ensuring that support for disadvantaged pupils is carefully targeted to help them catch up with others, particularly in reading and writing
 - providing effective guidance so that pupils, especially boys, are able to edit and improve their writing
 - making sure that teaching in the early years is carefully focused on children's learning needs, especially the development of spoken and written language, so that they are better prepared for Year 1.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring governors hold senior leaders to account for the impact of teaching on pupils' outcomes
 - developing middle leaders' skills to focus their work more effectively on improving pupils' outcomes.
- Improve pupils' behaviour in lessons by ensuring that:
 - learning activities meet the pupils' needs and sustain their interest and enthusiasm
 - teachers' expectations of effort and concentration are consistently high and learning time is not wasted.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not acted swiftly enough to raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Internal assessment information shows that, all too often, current pupils are not making good progress. Consequently, too few pupils are working at the expected standards for their age.
- Leaders have not improved the quality of teaching over time so that it is at least good. Until recently, leaders' checks on teaching have not been regular or sufficiently focused on its impact on pupils' learning. As a result, some teachers do not have a secure understanding of how well pupils need to progress in reading, writing and mathematics in order to meet national standards. Some assessments have been overgenerous.
- Historically, middle leadership has been underdeveloped but is now improving as a result of external training and support to improve leaders' subject knowledge and skills. Middle leaders now have greater involvement in monitoring pupils' progress and teachers value the support they provide. However, this development has not yet had the required impact on pupils' achievement.
- Leaders do not ensure a high level of challenge in subjects other than English and mathematics. As a result, pupils do not use and apply their English and mathematics skills sufficiently across the curriculum. For example, recent work in topic books, on the United Kingdom, does not build on what pupils already know and understand.
- Leaders ensure that a range of visits and visitors to the school add variety and purpose to the school's curriculum. For example, community members talk to pupils about topics such as the second world war. Pupils enjoy and respond well to the variety this brings to their learning.
- As a result of additional training and support for school leaders, pupils' progress at key stage 2 in writing and mathematics, and the percentage of pupils reaching expected standards in the phonics screening check at Year 1, have improved.
- Leaders do not make best use of the pupil premium funding. Although this is used to target specific needs for pupils in their learning, this is not always precisely focused enough. As a result, current pupils make similar progress to their peers, but the difference between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally is not diminishing quickly in reading.
- The physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used effectively by the school. There is a range of after-school clubs which are well attended, and pupils are proud of their achievement in local sporting events.
- The funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is having greater impact this year. Changes to teaching arrangements since September 2016 are enabling more pupils to get the additional support and guidance they need. As a result, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in Year 6 is now good in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. Pupils enjoy

the stories shared in morning worship, and are proud of the new system for recognising and celebrating the school's values. Pupils' understanding of British values is less well developed.

- The newly appointed headteacher and governors now use a broad range of information to check teachers' performance and give precise and timely guidance. As a result, teachers are increasingly knowledgeable about what they must do to improve their own skills and are becoming more effective.
- The headteacher is a determined leader. He has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is working on the right priorities for improvement. He has gained the confidence of staff, parents and governors quickly. In the short time since his arrival, the impact of his high expectations and clear vision are evident. There are already clear improvements in teaching and the rates of pupils' progress.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not provided consistent challenge to school leaders over time. They have not ensured that leaders have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in a timely manner, which has resulted in low standards.
- Recently, governors have received detailed assessment information from the new headteacher. This has helped them develop a more secure knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are supportive of school leaders and now understand the actions needed to drive improvements.
- Governors are aware of their responsibilities around safeguarding. Issues are discussed and recorded at regular meetings. They have attended training and ensure correct procedures are followed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff have been trained in how to keep children safe, and in child protection. They are aware of the government's 'Prevent' programme to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. As a result, staff know how to raise concerns and take appropriate action, which is carefully logged.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. They understand and use the regular information they receive about keeping safe on computers. They are able to identify areas of the school where they feel improvements could be made, and this information is shared with school leaders who take swift action to address any issues raised.
- Risk assessments for school trips and other events are completed well. However, some aspects of record-keeping and the monitoring of site safety need to be strengthened. Statutory safeguarding requirements are met.
- Staff show an awareness of the need to keep all pupils safe. They are vigilant and know how to escalate concerns so that pupils are protected.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable across the school. As a result, too few pupils make good progress to meet the standards expected of them.
- Teachers' assessment is not precise enough. As a result, activities planned do not meet pupils' needs, and teachers' guidance does not enable pupils to know exactly how to make improvements to their work. This hinders the progress that pupils make, particularly in writing in Years 3 and 4.
- The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Teaching does not consistently build on what pupils can do, know and understand. Pupils have too few opportunities to deepen and extend their thinking. Consequently, there are not enough pupils in key stage 2 working at higher levels in reading, writing or mathematics.
- At times, teachers do not ensure that pupils are participating in their learning effectively. Consequently, pupils lack sustained concentration and learning time is wasted. This hinders pupils' progress over time.
- The teaching of reading in key stage 2 is inconsistent. Historically, teachers have not had high expectations of pupils, and their progress has been too slow. More recently, strategies have been introduced, such as developing comprehension skills. Questioning and debate is used well in some lessons. For example, in Year 6, pupils are asked probing questions and demonstrate an understanding of what the author has written or implied. Consequently, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making faster progress in reading than previously.
- When pupils are given clear instructions and guidance in their writing, they write with purpose and engagement. For example, in Year 2, pupils are able to apply their understanding of noun phrases well and create well organised and structured reports. In Year 5, pupils write effectively to create suspense.
- Pupils' skills in grammar are improving, which results in writing that is more sophisticated and interesting. Pupils' spelling is improving and is increasingly accurate. However, too often feedback to pupils is not in line with school guidance, and pupils are unsure how to improve their writing.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. Recent training and development have improved the teaching of problem-solving. As a result, pupils now have a more secure understanding and can show better reasoning in mathematics. This is enabling pupils to make good or better progress in multiplication, decimals and problem-solving. Many pupils say that they enjoy mathematics. During the inspection, pupils showed disappointment when it was playtime because they wanted to continue their work on fractions.
- Phonics teaching in Reception and Year 1 is effective. However, in Year 2, teachers do not insist that pupils use their phonic knowledge to spell accurately. This has led to some pupils not meeting expected standards in writing.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement because some systems to support pupils' safety and personal development are not rigorous enough. Records of bullying and racist incidents are not always up to date. Class behaviour logs have only recently been in place and do not always contain information about how pupils' behaviour was followed up or what underlying issues might be. This means there has been little improvement in the behaviour of some pupils.
- Pupils with emotional and social needs are supported well and are given the appropriate support and care. This results in such pupils being able to participate in the full curriculum and learn alongside their peers.
- Information from parents, including Parent View, shows that parents feel their children are well cared for, and they have confidence in the new headteacher and staff. Pupils and parents say that teachers are approachable and deal with any worries or concerns they may have.
- Pupils are delighted with the 'Golden Book' which celebrates pupils' achievements. They also value the new 'School Values' token system, where principles such as 'patience, peace, kindness' are noticed and rewarded.
- The breakfast club provides a safe and happy place for pupils before school. The children enjoy the activities and are supported by caring and enthusiastic staff. This contributes to a positive start to the school day for these pupils.
- There is a range of after-school clubs. These allow children with a variety of interests and skills to engage in additional activities, including sports. Clubs are valued by the pupils, who are proud of the many sporting trophies the school has achieved.
- Overall pupils are proud of their school. Pupils value the opportunity to share concerns with school leaders who take appropriate action. For example, when pupils raised concerns that toilets and cloakrooms are left messy, plans were agreed and set in place for improvement.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. It is not consistently good across lessons or the school day. In particular, inspection evidence found that pupils' behaviour in afternoon sessions is not always as good as it should be.
- Low-level interruption occurs at those times when teaching does not suitably meet the needs of the pupils. Consequently, when a task is too easy, pupils finish too quickly and become disengaged. Teachers' expectations of when pupils should be listening are not consistent, which leads to poor concentration and frustration from the children.
- Pupils behave well when consistent and high expectations are set for them. For example, in Year 3, pupils concentrate well on reading tasks with no noise or

distraction.

- Pupils' presentation in work books has improved. They are responding well to resources that help them write more neatly.
- Pupils enjoy playtimes. They are happy, safe and well supervised. Pupils adhere to school routines well, and leaders collectively ensure that pupils walk quietly back into the building at the end of play.
- Attendance historically has been below national averages for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for disadvantaged pupils. However, rigorous systems introduced by the new headteacher this year now involve parents and the local authority. There is a clear approach which is understood by staff and parents. As a result, the percentage of pupils with persistent absence is much lower, and there is a significant improvement in attendance for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Historical weak teaching has resulted in pupils' underachievement in reading and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. The legacy of this underachievement can still be seen, and the rate of current pupils' progress remains too uneven to be good overall. However, leaders are now taking effective action to improve pupils' achievement and consequently pupils' progress is improving, particularly in mathematics.
- Lower-attaining pupils are still not catching up quickly enough to meet standards expected nationally. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 are not making rapid progress to build on skills and knowledge from the end of key stage 1.
- Pupils' achievement in writing is variable but improving. Some pupils write with a good use of vocabulary and structure. However, despite recent gains, too few current pupils are on track to meet the standards expected nationally at the end of key stage 2.
- The school's specific focus on mathematics this year is resulting in pupils having a greater understanding of calculation strategies, reasoning and problem-solving. More pupils are on track to meet expected standards than previously. However, too few higher-attaining pupils are on track to reach the higher standards.
- The most able pupils in the school make uneven progress. Expectations for this group of pupils in lessons are often too low. As a result, too few pupils are on track to exceed the standards expected nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the most able Year 1 pupils in reading and writing are making good progress and are able to organise their thoughts well and use interesting vocabulary.
- In 2016, middle-ability pupils did not make enough progress in reading by the end of key stage 2. However, current key stage 2 pupils read more widely and show a deeper understanding of the text. As a result, progress is improving and more pupils are on track to achieve the expected standards, although there is still too great a difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- By the end of key stage 1 in 2016, too few pupils made sufficient progress in writing

and mathematics. Current assessments show that boys' progress in reading and writing is still not rapid enough.

- Current pupils in Years 1 and 2 are making expected progress in their reading. Pupils can read complex words and can answer questions about how non-fiction texts are organised. In Years 5 and 6, pupils' reading skills are developed well. Pupils read with enthusiasm and interest and can answer complex questions about what they have read.
- Current progress for disadvantaged pupils is too variable. In Year 6, disadvantaged pupils are well supported and this contributes to good progress in all subjects since September 2016. However, disadvantaged pupils in Year 2 are not yet making enough progress. Neither are those disadvantaged pupils in Year 4 in writing, or Year 5 in reading.
- Progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is too variable. These pupils tend to make better progress in mathematics overall. Additional adult support is in place for Year 6, and these pupils have made stronger progress than previously.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Over time, the percentages of children leaving the early years with expected standards has been in line with, or above, national averages.
- Pupil premium funding is used appropriately in the early years. Leaders identify the needs of disadvantaged children so that they reach a good level of development.
- The quality of teaching is variable. At times, teaching does not meet the children's needs or build well enough on their previous learning because adult guidance or support is not clear enough. For example, some support for the development of children's spoken language is weaker than other areas of learning. However, some strong learning is evident. For example, children use the 'Fairy Castle' imaginatively to develop their language around fairy-tales. One child was heard to say 'Look at my long hair – I'm Rapunzel!' and others were eager to tell inspectors about the magic wand's powers.
- The classrooms have a good range of resources both inside and outside. These enable children to develop skills in reading, writing, mathematics, creativity and physical development. Care is taken to ensure the environment is interesting and exciting. As a result, children benefit from a wide-ranging curriculum, they are proud of their classroom and they enjoy their time at school.
- Children typically understand classroom routines well. They move swiftly from one activity to another, and they are able to learn and play without adult support. This supports them in being ready for Year 1.
- Parents are involved in their children's progress and achievements through an online system. This is appreciated by parents, who feel they are well informed.
- Early reading and writing skills are taught regularly and a wide range of activities are available. However, the development of early writing is not supported well enough by

adults. This limits children's ability to practise and apply their writing skills to a range of contexts.

- The culture of safeguarding is secure in the early years. Children feel safe and staff know how to support children if there are concerns about safety or welfare.
- Overall, children demonstrate good social and emotional development. This is supported by adults showing good manners, warmth and kindness.
- Leadership of the early years is developing. Leaders are aware of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and assessment. More recently, this information has been used to support teachers and train teaching assistants. This has improved the quality of learning activities provided for children.

School details

Unique reference number	113755
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10024920

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Jonathan Triffitt
Headteacher	James Law
Telephone number	01258 452 456
Website	www.milldown.dorset.sch.uk/
Email address	office@milldown.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 December 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This school is an average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- There is a breakfast club, which is managed by the school.
- The school met the floor standards in 2016, which are the minimum standards pupils are expected to achieve in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning across a range of classes and were joined by the headteacher for some of these observations.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders in the school, representatives of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with teachers to share their views on school development.
- Inspectors checked safeguarding systems and documentation, and met with staff from the school office.
- Pupils' work in books was scrutinised. The inspectors were joined by school leaders in some of this scrutiny.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons and in breaks between lessons.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and spoke to them when they were at play and at lunch. A group of pupils also spoke at length to one inspector about their views of school and their learning.
- An inspector visited the school's breakfast club.
- Inspectors took the views of 43 parents on Parent View into account, as well as speaking to parents at the beginning and end of the school day.

Inspection team

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