

Miltoncross Academy

Milton Road, Milton, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO3 6RB

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The dedicated headteacher and her team have a clear vision and sense of direction. Governors, The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT) and staff across the school are committed to the school's continued improvement.
- Leaders are increasingly ambitious for pupils' achievement. Outcomes for pupils have improved.
- Pupils make good and improving progress across most subjects, including English and science. Where outcomes have not been as strong in the past, for example in mathematics, progress is improving as a result of more effective teaching.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved substantially. However, these pupils still do not attain highly enough.
- Teaching is effective and teachers plan interesting lessons. Their subject knowledge is good and this contributes to strong engagement by pupils.
- Teachers' consistent approach to planning and assessment is helping pupils to make faster progress. However, sometimes their expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low.
- The curriculum and provision for extra-curricular activities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Pupils are encouraged to 'live a good life' and careers advice is helping raise aspirations. Consequently, pupils are very well prepared for their next stages.
- Behaviour and attendance of pupils have improved markedly. Pupils appreciate the positive rewards they receive for continued good behaviour. Extra support for pupils who need it is carefully targeted.
- Care and support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are often well directed. However, some pupils who have special educational needs do not make fast enough progress, or have low attendance.
- The school's safeguarding and child protection procedures are well thought-through and effective. Positive relationships between staff and pupils help ensure that pupils' welfare has the highest priority.
- Pupils have a positive attitude to learning. They say they enjoy school and know how to stay safe. Bullying is rare and reducing. Most parents agree.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further increase expectations of what pupils can achieve, so that pupils make faster progress from their starting points, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Make sure that the needs of all pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are met more precisely so that these pupils make better progress and attend more frequently.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The determined and passionate headteacher has rightly focused on raising aspirations and expectations of all in the school. Staff and pupils are proud to be part of the school and are clear that it has improved since it joined TKAT in 2014. The headteacher, governors, other leaders and staff are highly ambitious for pupils at Miltoncross to 'flourish'.
- Senior leaders and governors have taken effective action to improve the school since it became an academy. They know the school well and have a comprehensive understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Leaders evaluate the impact of their work thoroughly so that their planning for further improvement focuses on appropriate priorities. Further support and challenge from the regional director of TKAT also helps leaders to improve the school.
- The leadership of teaching is good. There is a range of systems in place, which meet teachers' professional development needs well. Leaders make sure that teachers new to the school are inducted fully, so that they know the school's expectations of how they use their teaching skills. Leaders give good support to teachers and teaching assistants who need it to improve their practice. Leaders use the system to reward teachers' performance fairly. Staff say that they feel invested in professionally. The impact of training is evident in the improvement in pupils' progress. Staff say that the school is 'a happy place to work'.
- Skilful subject and pastoral leaders are strongly committed to the school. Good-quality, nationally recognised training has helped them to gain a sound understanding of their roles. They carry out their duties with dedication and confidence, and monitor the work of their teams well. Middle leaders feel held to account appropriately and supported well by senior staff. Subject leaders' collaborative work with other schools in TKAT to share good practice, and to moderate pupils' work, has helped to improve standards in the school. Heads of house and their assistants are seen as a valuable point of support by pupils, one of whom described them as 'a force for good'.
- Leaders are tackling the previous very low performance of disadvantaged pupils well. The pupil premium grant is used to fund a carefully managed programme of extra help for such pupils, especially in key stage 4. Leaders have especially focused on raising pupils' aspirations for future careers and on improving their literacy skills, so that pupils can read more fluently. Recent unvalidated key stage 4 results show that disadvantaged pupils' achievement has risen. Additionally, close scrutiny of the work of disadvantaged pupils currently at the school shows that they are making faster progress than in the past. However, leaders are not complacent. They continue to monitor carefully the provision for disadvantaged pupils. Their current development planning is closely focused on the needs of this group of pupils.
- Pupils follow a broad academic curriculum, which is carefully designed to prepare pupils for further study and to meet local employment needs. For example, a large proportion of pupils study a modern foreign language to GCSE so that they can access a wider variety of local jobs and careers in the coastal city of Portsmouth. Leaders have reviewed the curriculum so that pupils' opportunities to achieve, in subjects such as

science and maths, are maximised. The school is rightly proud that larger proportions of pupils than previously study science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects (known as STEM) when they leave Miltoncross at the end of key stage 4.

- The curriculum develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding very effectively. Themed assemblies highlight the many ways of getting involved in school and the community. Tutor times are used to discuss topical issues such as racism in sport. Pupils demonstrate fundamental British values; for example, they regularly take part in raising awareness of and substantial amounts of money for local charities. Pupils are especially proud of their recent high participation in the local Race for Life, and of their considerable donations to a local food bank and homeless shelter.
- The curriculum is further enhanced by an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities. Sports and drama clubs are especially well attended. Pupils appreciate the large number of trips they are offered. For example, recent visits have included to universities to see what it is like to be a student, to Belgium to commemorate the centenary of the First World War, and to Ghana to help improve community facilities. Large numbers of pupils and staff also take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme every year. Such experiences deepen pupils' understanding of the topics they learn about in school as well as broadening their horizons and ambitions. Consequently, pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have made sure that care for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has a high priority. Quality resources and well-trained staff benefit pupils who have an education, health and care plan, and those who have disabilities, so that these pupils achieve increasingly well. However, while the provision for the welfare of all pupils who have special educational needs is effective, leaders have not made sure that teachers know how to support their learning needs well enough. Consequently, some pupils who qualify for special educational needs support do not make enough progress.
- A minority of parents are dissatisfied with the school. Their concerns include worries about behaviour and bullying, or a lack of communication from leaders. However, most parents praise the school for its happy atmosphere and teachers' dedication to helping pupils learn. One recognised the improvements made to the school over the last couple of years. Another said, 'Miltoncross is a safe place to learn.'

Governance of the school

- The governing body makes an effective contribution to the overall leadership of the school.
- The make-up of the governing body has changed since the school became an academy. Governors have made sure that they are well trained so that they can carry out their duties effectively.
- Governors' challenging questions help leaders to constantly improve the school. They visit the school to check how leaders are implementing changes, asking pupils and staff about the impact of new initiatives.
- Governors have ensured that pay increases for teachers and leaders are only awarded when staff are effective in their work, including in securing good achievement among

pupils.

- Governors have made sure that the pupil premium grant is spent appropriately to meet these pupils' learning and welfare needs. Similarly, funding for pupils who have disabilities is used effectively. However, they have not monitored closely enough the impact of additional funding on the progress of pupils who qualify for support for special educational needs.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors make sure that pupils are safe. Staff know pupils' needs well and are able to tailor their support accordingly when pupils face difficulties. Work with outside agencies is effective for pupils who need additional help.
- Staff are well trained in safeguarding and child protection procedures. They know how to respond to a range of situations, including knowing the signs of radicalisation. They liaise effectively with staff at the alternative provision to make sure that pupils educated there are safe.
- Leaders follow safer recruitment procedures effectively. Employment checks are thorough and the single central record is accurate.
- Pupils said that 'e-safety is a big thing here'. Leaders have made sure that pupils know how to stay safe online, including an awareness of the dangers of sexting. Many are also aware that their online presence could affect a future employer's perception of their suitability for work.
- The vast majority of pupils feel safe in school. Pupils were clear that there is always someone to go to if they have a concern. They especially like the recent changes to the offices of the heads of house, as they believe this has made it easier for leaders to communicate with each other to keep pupils safe. The majority of parents agreed that their children are safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good. This is because regular monitoring by leaders ensures that teachers use similar teaching and behaviour management methods across the school. This helps pupils to know what to expect in each lesson; they know there is a consistent expectation of participation and maintaining focus throughout the day.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. This enables them to plan activities that hold pupils' interest and are, in most cases, well matched to their learning needs. Teachers understand the need to stretch pupils, including the most able. As a result, pupils make good and improved progress across a range of subjects, particularly at key stage 4.
- Teaching in science and English is especially effective. Leaders ensure that the most effective teaching and planning are shared across the department. Teachers' questions challenge pupils to think hard. Extra resources, to help pupils use subject-specific terminology, are targeted carefully. As a result, pupils make rapidly improving progress in these subjects.

- Teaching in mathematics has not been strong in the past. However, leaders have made sure that it has improved over the past year. In the most successful mathematics teaching, assessment is used well to enable pupils to identify areas they need to improve on. Opportunities to deepen their understanding of topics are well matched to pupils' needs. Improvements in the quality of teaching in mathematics have resulted in pupils' increased progress.
- Regular assessment helps teachers to know what pupils can do so that they plan pupils' next steps in learning effectively. Moderation with other schools has made sure that assessments are rigorous and accurate. Pupils say that this assessment is helpful, as it makes them remember things and gives them a sense of achievement when they do well. They also appreciate knowing clearly which areas they need to work on more.
- Pupils like the consistent approach teachers use to provide feedback to them. Pupils say that this is helping them to know what to do to improve their work. They value the regular opportunities they have to edit their work, saying that it is helping them to prepare well for their exams.
- Pupils produce a lot of work in lessons. They write in depth across a broad range of subjects throughout their time in school. In most cases, pupils' presentation of their work is careful and neat. However, sometimes pupils do not present their work neatly enough, especially some boys.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive in nearly all lessons. Should a pupil not quite cope with a teacher's expectations, adults skilfully help them to refocus on their learning and encourage them successfully to 'try'.
- Leaders make sure that pupils who speak English as an additional language receive some extra teaching in their own language, so that they do not fall behind in their learning as they develop their English skills.
- Over time, teachers have increased the level of challenge for pupils so that they now make improved progress. However, expectations of what pupils can achieve are sometimes not high enough. Leaders' plans to set more challenging targets for pupils are in their early stages.
- Sometimes, teaching does not meet the needs of all pupils well enough. In a few cases, when work is not challenging enough or teachers do not use the behaviour management system consistently enough, some pupils lose interest and can disrupt learning with off-task chatter.
- Additional support for pupils who need extra help with their learning is usually targeted efficiently. For example, teaching assistants provide timely additional explanations for pupils who need help to get started with an activity. However, leaders have not made sure that teachers know how to meet the different requirements of all pupils who have special educational needs. As a result, not all these pupils make consistently strong progress.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff at Miltoncross Academy care a great deal about pupils' personal development and emotional well-being. Consequently, relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Adults' calm approach when dealing with pupils who may have become upset helps to maintain a tranquil atmosphere around the school. Pupils value highly the support they receive from adults in the school. As one pupil said, 'There is always someone to speak to.'
- The school's ethos of 'living a good life' permeates the school. Adults recognise that some pupils lack the resilience to deal with situations that may arise in a positive manner. As a result, leaders have prioritised raising pupils' self-esteem and aspirations. The vast array of extra-curricular activities and trips available for pupils supports this ethos very effectively and creates a community feel in the school. The curriculum also reflects this theme. For example, food technology lessons highlight the importance of a healthy, balanced diet.
- Pupils told inspectors that they had lots of opportunities to discuss their views of the school. For example, they have spoken to the governors about the improvements in behaviour. They feel that they are listened to, but would appreciate even more opportunities to put forward their views on a regular basis.
- Bullying has reduced substantially so that it is now rare. Although a very small minority of parents noted a concern about bullying, others recognise that leaders are effective in dealing with such issues. Pupils say that bullying is limited to a small number of younger pupils and tends to be about day-to-day relationship problems. Pupils are confident that adults will listen to any concerns they have and sort out issues promptly and effectively. Leaders' records show that they deal with any incidents swiftly and supportively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have improved behaviour in the school substantially. Pupils enjoy each other's company at break and lunchtimes. In nearly every lesson, pupils show an enthusiasm for their work so that there is a purposeful atmosphere throughout the school. Very occasionally, some pupils do lose concentration and can disrupt learning with off-task behaviour. However, this is uncommon and dealt with well by staff, who bring these pupils back on track very quickly and skilfully.
- Pupils have responded well to the introduction of a fair and transparent system of rewards and sanctions. Leaders' records show that the proportion of positive rewards to negative sanctions has improved year on year since the system was introduced. Pupils say that they appreciate the regular rewards that recognise their consistently good behaviour.
- Attendance has improved so that it is in line with the national average, and far fewer

pupils are now persistently absent. Attendance officers work very effectively with families and individuals to highlight the importance of attending school regularly. However, leaders recognise that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not attend school regularly enough.

- Exclusions for poor behaviour are rare. This is because of the improvements seen to pupils' behaviour. Leaders make effective use of alternative systems such as the 'achievement centre', where pupils who struggle to maintain good behaviour are helped to stay on track.
- Leaders work well with other schools and with outside agencies when pupils need extra support to manage their behaviour. The very small number of pupils who attend alternative provision are cared for well. Their progress and welfare are overseen by a member of staff, who liaises frequently with the provider.
- Nearly all pupils are respectful to each other, staff and visitors. Leaders are quick to act should a pupil forget themselves and behave inappropriately.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Unvalidated information about pupils' performance at GCSE in 2017 shows much improvement from the published results of 2016. Pupils' progress, by the end of key stage 4, is much improved across a broad range of subjects, but especially in mathematics. This is as a result of higher-quality teaching, improved systems of assessment and better support for pupils' learning in school.
- Most pupils enter school having achieved standards below those of other pupils nationally. However, their rates of progress have improved so that many attain standards close to or in line with others nationally by the end of Year 11. This is particularly the case in English and increasingly so in mathematics, where leaders have increased their expectations of what pupils can achieve. For example, younger pupils attempt GCSE-style questions in preparation for the harder curriculum they will study in key stage 4.
- Current pupils make strong progress. This is because teaching and assessment are allowing pupils to develop secure knowledge, understanding and skills in the subjects they study. Standards of work seen in science and English are especially high, but improved progress was seen in most subjects, including in mathematics, history, geography and languages.
- Leaders make sure that disadvantaged pupils' literacy improves so that they are better able to access the curriculum. This is helping them to make faster progress as they get older. As a result, some disadvantaged pupils make stronger progress than their peers. This is helping them to catch up, so that more pupils are on track than in the past. However, leaders recognise that there is more to do to make sure that this group of pupils makes consistently rapid progress from their starting points, so that their attainment improves still further.
- Pupils read widely and often. Leaders have created a growing culture where reading well is valued by pupils. All pupils are expected to read regularly in school and at home. Leaders keep track of pupils' reading abilities so that they can provide extra support for those who need it. Records show sharp improvements for pupils who need to catch up

with reading in Year 7, for disadvantaged pupils and for some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- Leaders have made sure that pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. Numerous and frequent opportunities exist for pupils to learn about the different career paths they might take, including through a programme of visits to the school by local employers. Assistance is also on hand to help pupils prepare practically for their next stages, for example by learning how to write an effective letter of application and how to use the internet to search for jobs.
- Leaders are raising pupils' aspirations about what they can achieve in the future. They make sure that they know about the types of courses it is possible to study at university. One pupil, who aims to become a solicitor, said she was especially grateful for the help teachers provided to make sure that she knew what she needed to do to achieve her dream.
- As a result of leaders' focus on next stages, increasingly high proportions of pupils take up further education or training positions; this year it was 100%. Leaders are especially proud of the large numbers of pupils who go on to study academic qualifications in key stage 5, including a high proportion studying STEM subjects.
- While there have been improvements in the progress of pupils who have an education, health and care plan and those who have disabilities, improvements for other pupils who are supported for special educational needs are less evident. Work to improve pupils' reading skills has had some impact, but work to improve writing is still in its early stages.

School details

Unique reference number	140605
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10036798

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	894
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Peter Laggan
Principal	Fiona Calderbank
Telephone number	02392 738 022
Website	www.miltoncross-tkat.org
Email address	info@miltoncross.portsmouth.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized 11–16 secondary school. The proportion of boys is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disability is above average.
- Most pupils are of White British origin. A lower-than-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- A small number of pupils attend Harbour alternative provision, which provides help for pupils who need additional intervention and support.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 49 lessons and part-lessons across a range of year groups and subjects. Some lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, other staff, the regional director of TKAT and with governors. Inspectors took account of the 62 responses to the confidential questionnaires received from staff.
- Inspectors held telephone conversations with a parent, staff at the alternative provision, a representative from the local authority and the police liaison officer.
- Inspectors evaluated key documents, including the school's strategic planning documents, minutes of meetings, reports of attendance and behaviour, parent surveys and records related to pupils' safety and academic progress.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes, around the school and in assemblies, tutor periods and lessons.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally and formally.
- Inspectors took into account of the 62 responses to the confidential staff survey and the 42 responses from parents on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul McKeown	Ofsted Inspector
Alistair Brien	Ofsted Inspector
Lise Sugden	Ofsted 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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