

Mill Lane Primary School

Wellington Street, Stockton-on-Tees, Teesside TS18 1QX

Inspection dates

27–28 February 2018

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and new leadership team have quickly addressed weaknesses that caused a dip in the school's performance. Governors provide leaders with good support and challenge.
- Most pupils currently in the school are once again making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Although standards of attainment are below those seen nationally at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2, they are rising quickly. The progress of White British boys is less strong and needs to improve.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Leaders have decisively addressed weaker teaching. A strong programme of training has ensured that teachers have good subject knowledge and hold high expectations of their pupils. Some aspects of mathematics teaching are less well developed.
- The school provides effective support for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Teaching assistants are skilled in developing pupils' speech and language.
- The curriculum is well designed and meets the needs of the school's diverse community. In particular, the curriculum ensures that pupils' personal development is outstanding.
- Reading is taught very effectively. Most pupils, including the many who speak English as an additional language, become fluent readers by the time they start key stage 2.
- Pupils consistently display positive attitudes and an eagerness to improve themselves. The school's focus on developing their values is embodied in the excellent way they conduct themselves.
- Leaders' relentless efforts have improved overall attendance. Current levels of attendance for the year are above last year's national average.
- Safeguarding in the school has a high priority. Pupils feel safe and trust adults to help them if they have any concerns. Bullying in the school is rare.
- The quality of early years provision has been transformed. Ensuring that pupils make a good start has been the highest priority for the headteacher and the governors. The quality of teaching in the Nursery and the Reception is consistently good.
- Pupils who attend the additionally resourced provision for speech and language make good progress. The provision is well led and staff who work in it are highly committed.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve standards of attainment so that they match those seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of each key stage, especially for White British boys.
- Develop the mathematics curriculum so that there are more frequent opportunities for pupils across the school to apply their calculation skills and solve mathematical problems.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since her appointment in September 2015, the headteacher has successfully reversed a decline in the school's performance and restored a good standard of education. She is well supported by an aspirational senior leadership team who have the capacity to sustain the improvements being made. Leaders have created an ambitious culture and provide good support for the staff. Morale across the school is good.
- The headteacher's accurate evaluation of the school has ensured that areas of the school's work that were underperforming have been addressed. Most notably, early years provision has been transformed, special educational needs and the additionally resourced provision for speech and language has been improved and pupils' personal development has been enhanced.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching and learning have been well led and managed. Weak teaching has been challenged and a regular programme of training and development has equipped teachers with the skills and resources to ensure that pupils make good progress. Outcomes improved markedly last year and current pupils in the school are now, once again, making good progress. Gaps in pupils' learning, resulting from weaker teaching in the past, are being systematically addressed.
- As the school serves a disadvantaged community and around one in five pupils is an asylum seeker or refugee, leaders and governors work hard to foster equality of opportunity. The pupil premium is used thoughtfully and every effort is made to ensure that no pupil is disadvantaged by poverty. Last year, there was little difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally and a similar picture exists across each year group of pupils currently in the school. This indicates the pupil premium is being used effectively.
- Leaders have made major changes to early years provision and targeted far more resources at the youngest children in the school. Despite the challenges many children face, especially in terms of language, outcomes for the youngest children are rising rapidly. Consequently, a much higher proportion of children are ready to start Year 1 than was the case in the recent past. The actions of leaders to target the youngest children and quickly remove their barriers to learning are proving highly effective.
- Leaders also now make effective use of special educational needs funding. Some weak practices in the past, that did not ensure pupils made the progress they should, have been fully addressed. As a result, pupils now make good progress from their different starting points.
- The leadership of English and mathematics is strong and middle leaders have clear plans in place to improve the curriculum further. Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and learning and consequently know what needs to be improved further.
- Thorough and detailed mapping of the curriculum ensures that pupils' academic progress is good and their personal development is outstanding. The school fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. The wide range of cultures and faiths within school are celebrated effectively so that all pupils learn about the customs of their fellow pupils. Leaders do much to draw upon the knowledge

within the wider community to enhance the curriculum. The school is working hard to be a welcoming and safe place for all pupils, especially those seeking sanctuary.

- The wider curriculum makes a positive contribution to developing culture. For example, specialist music teaching each week fosters a love of singing, a chess specialist visits each week and there is a rich programme of visits to places of interest, including residential trips for mainstream pupils and those who attend the additionally resourced provision. The primary physical education and sport funding is used effectively to provide a broad range of sports and after-school activities.

Governance of the school

- Many of the governors are relatively new to the role. Under the effective guidance of the chair of the governing body, governors are undertaking regular training and quickly developing their knowledge and understanding of governance. They have their own action plan in place and have clear responsibilities linked to their specific roles. The governors have an effective professional working relationship with the school's leaders and managers.
- Governors have a well-developed vision for the school. They are determined to ensure that children from all backgrounds have equality of opportunity and that disadvantage is not a barrier to educational success.
- The governors receive appropriately detailed information on the progress being made by different classes and different groups of pupils. Minutes of meetings show they ask suitably probing questions and ensure leaders are held to account. The scrutiny given by governors has made a positive contribution to the improvements made since the dip in the school's performance following the previous inspection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher and governors have responded quickly to the findings of their audit which identified some gaps in the quality of safeguarding.
- Thorough and systematic checks are made on adults who work in, or visit, the school. A wide-ranging programme of training has ensured that members of staff know precisely what actions to take if they have a concern about a child's safety. Leaders keep good records of the action they take to protect pupils and ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are fit for purpose.
- Leaders have excellent links with a wide range of external agencies, including the local authority early help team and health professionals. Good use is made of interpreters for families who arrive as refugees or asylum seekers and do not speak English.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Most teachers hold high expectations and plan lessons that stretch and challenge pupils, including the most able. Teachers successfully foster in their classes a positive approach and commitment to try their best.
- Leaders have challenged weaker teaching and continue to manage the performance of

teachers effectively. As a result, there have been a number of changes in staffing since the last inspection. Newly recruited teachers have benefited from frequent training focused on the areas of most pressing need.

- Teachers take every opportunity to foster an understanding of language. For example, there are well-structured reading and spelling sessions each day that help pupils understand the rules and patterns that govern how language works. Pupils take part enthusiastically. Most teachers are skilled at using a variety of strategies that effectively encourage rich discussion and debate. In all year groups, including the Reception class, pupils learn to spell and make use of 10 new words each week.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. In mathematics, teachers are adept at developing pupils' calculation skills. In Years 5 and 6, for example, pupils demonstrate confidence in using a range of calculation methods and a good grasp of algebra. However, teachers have not provided enough opportunities for pupils to apply their confidence in calculation to unfamiliar problems. The mathematics leader has very recently provided training on this issue and has begun to provide staff with some appropriate resources to develop their practice.
- The quality of teaching in the additionally resourced provision is strong. Teachers and teaching assistants have a detailed understanding of each pupil's particular needs and tailor the work they provide accordingly. All adults in the provision are Makaton trained and use signing as an additional form of communication. They ensure that much is done to develop pupils' self-esteem, as well as their speech and language. For some pupils, the support they receive clearly makes a profound difference to their ability to cope. Parents of children in the provision who expressed their views were highly supportive and delighted with the progress their children are making.
- Teachers provide pupils with regular feedback during lessons and when reviewing their work, in line with the school's policy. In addition, there are regular planned opportunities in lessons for pupils to review one another's work, or their own, using well-designed prompts. Consequently, pupils develop a secure grasp of the features found in effective work.
- The quality of pupils' writing, which was a weakness at the time of the last inspection, is now good. There are many interesting and creative opportunities that encourage pupils to write at length in other subjects, such as topics about the Second World War, polar exploration and castles. Pupils' work shows they become increasingly accurate in their use of spelling, punctuation and grammar over time. Almost all pupils take pride in their handwriting and the presentation of their work.
- Reading skills are fostered highly effectively. The school book shop provides a good range of texts at low prices. The library is well stocked and well used. All pupils take books home each day and parents are encouraged to be active partners in fostering a love of books. The school is currently trialling an innovative digital reading programme across key stage 2. There are early signs that the programme is improving pupils' comprehension skills.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders have thought carefully about the needs of the diverse community they serve and have developed a curriculum that fosters pupils' personal development particularly well. Consequently, the attitudes pupils develop prepare them well for life in modern Britain. All members of staff foster the school's values and ensure that children's rights are promoted effectively.
- Pupils live and breathe these values. They are kind and considerate towards each other and show a determination to never give up in lessons. Pupils told inspectors 'you can be who you want to be' at Mill Lane Primary and expressed the view 'we are all different and all equal'.
- Pupils from the 10 different ethnic groups in the school fully integrate with one another in lessons and at social times, such as when eating together. Children are encouraged to listen to, and learn about, one another from the early years onwards. Some pupils have taken on the role of language ambassadors and help pupils who arrive at the school with little English.
- Pupils' physical and emotional health is given a high priority. Many pupils attend after-school sporting activities and there is a good programme of competitive sports for boys and girls. As some pupils at the school have experienced trauma in their recent past, there is professional counselling available, which helps pupils to cope and settle in to their school life quickly.
- Bullying in the school is rare and pupils are confident teachers will deal quickly with any worries they may have. More widely, pupils feel safe and well cared for. The well-planned curriculum ensures there is regular teaching about risks and how to avoid dangerous situations, including how to stay safe when using the internet and digital media.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning and are quick to follow the teacher's instruction. Pupils like the rewards they receive for good behaviour and for demonstrating the school's values in the way they conduct themselves. There have been no exclusions for poor behaviour for many years.
- Pupils are eager to participate in lessons. Hands shoot up when a question is asked. When pupils are asked to discuss topics in groups, they participate enthusiastically and share their views and ideas readily.
- During the inspection, pupils were unable to go outside at social times because of heavy snow. However, they conducted themselves well inside, staying calm and self-disciplined and played happily with one another. Those pupils who work as playground buddies fulfilled the same helpful role inside.
- Despite the efforts of leaders, the level of overall attendance was slightly below the national average for primary schools last year. The continuing concerted efforts of

leaders and good support of the local authority are having a positive effect this year and, to date, attendance for the year has improved considerably. Far fewer families have taken extended leave to their countries of origin this year than in the past. However, the proportion of pupils who miss school regularly remains above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Following a period of declining standards that occurred after the previous inspection in 2013, pupils are, once again, making strong progress. This is because the new leadership team has addressed weaknesses in teaching and raised everyone's expectations. Pupils currently in the school are making good progress in a broad range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Pupils who took national curriculum tests at the end of key stage 2 last summer made broadly average progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, their levels of attainment were well below those seen nationally for pupils of their age. Only four out of 10 pupils attained the expected standard in the combined reading, writing and mathematics measure. Pupils currently in the school are doing considerably better. The school's assessment information and the work in pupils' books indicates that levels of attainment are on track to be close to national averages this summer.
- Across almost all year groups, disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to that of other pupils in the school and nationally. Leaders track the progress of different groups of pupils very carefully and act quickly to provide additional support for those who fall behind.
- Particularly good support is provided for pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school is a 'language rich' environment. Teachers and teaching assistants have been well trained and know how to help pupils develop their vocabulary and grasp of English. Frequent additional sessions are provided for pupils who are new to English, especially in the early years and key stage 1. As a result, these pupils rapidly acquire the skills and the confidence to thrive in school.
- Pupils from different ethnic groups are generally making good progress. Pupils of Pakistani origin do particularly well. However, White British boys currently in the school are making less progress. Leaders are fully aware of this and have begun to implement a number of strategies to accelerate their progress.
- Pupils make good progress in key stage 1. Weak practice in the past, in the early years, has meant the vast majority of pupils have entered key stage 1 well below expectations. However, much improved teaching is increasingly meeting their needs and accelerating their progress. Teachers develop pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics effectively. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is rising rapidly.
- Pupils who attend the additionally resourced provision make good progress from their typically lower starting points as a result of excellent teaching that is highly tailored to meet their individual needs. Each small step is carefully recorded and charted in each pupil's portfolio of work.
- A far reaching review of special educational needs (SEN) provision in the mainstream

school has improved the quality of teaching. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, currently in the school, are making good progress because teachers plan for, and meet, their needs effectively.

- The teaching of reading is a strength of the school. As many pupils enter the school with a limited grasp of English, leaders have created highly focused approaches to developing pupils' understanding of the sounds letters make. Pupils quickly progress to become fluent readers. They are heard to read frequently and reading sessions delivered by teaching assistants and volunteers are highly constructive and purposeful. Although outcomes in the Year 1 national phonics screening check are below the national average, they are improving steadily year on year.

Early years provision

Good

- Highly effective leadership from both the headteacher and the early years leader has transformed the quality of early years education. Expectations are now high and staff are confident the rapidly improving outcomes they are achieving will be sustained.
- As recently as 2014, no children attained a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year. As a result, the headteacher rightly targeted the early years as a key priority when she was appointed. She successfully recruited new staff and has worked effectively with the talented early years leader to improve facilities, both inside and outside. As a result, teaching is now consistently good and outcomes have risen sharply. Last year, well over half of children attained a good level of development. As many children entered the Nursery with skills well below those typical for their age, especially in speech and language, this represents good progress.
- The early years leader ensures that children's needs are carefully assessed before they arrive at the school. Home visits are made to gather a comprehensive range of information from parents and from private childcare providers about children's abilities, health and learning needs. As a result, teachers are well prepared to cater for children when they arrive in school.
- The special educational needs coordinator and early years leader work closely together to assess children and identify any specific barriers to learning. Very detailed support plans are in place for those children who need extra help and for those who speak English as an additional language. Their progress is good, in part because a speech and language specialist teaching assistant works with identified children each afternoon.
- Children quickly develop good routines and socialise well with one another. Relationships between children and members of staff are warm and friendly. During the inspection, children often displayed excitement and joy; for example, when they investigated what happened to their 'icy dinosaur eggs' when placed in different warm and cold locations.
- Teachers ensure that there are good sessions across the morning to help children develop early reading, writing and number skills. Teachers also provide thoughtful activities that encourage children to apply these skills when choosing what to do for themselves. Like the rest of the school, the early years is 'language rich', with many displays and table top resources available to foster an interest in words. Adults ask

good questions as children play. This effectively develops children's vocabulary and draws them into conversation.

School details

Unique reference number	111539
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10042210

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	251
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynda Lingard
Headteacher	Sue Skillcorn
Telephone number	01642 860055
Website	www.milllane.org.uk
Email address	milllane.school@stockton.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 October 2013

Information about this school

- Mill Lane Primary School is an average-sized primary school.
- Around two thirds of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The largest group is of Pakistani origin. Around six out of 10 pupils on roll speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- An average proportion of pupils have SEN and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is also average.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets measure, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of key stage 2.
- The school hosts a local authority additionally resourced provision for up to 22 pupils with speech and language difficulties. The provision is led and managed by the special

educational needs coordinator.

- Children attend the Nursery on a part-time basis.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2015. Since then, there has been a significant turnover of staff, including the appointment of new senior leaders and new teachers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons across all phases of the school, including the Nursery and Reception classes and the additionally resourced provision for speech and language. A number of visits to lessons were undertaken jointly with the headteacher. During observations, inspectors sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils to evaluate the quality of their current work. In addition, inspectors scrutinised in detail a sample of books containing work from English and mathematics and the wider curriculum. Inspectors also listened to a number of pupils read.
- Inspectors observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime and observed their behaviour and conduct around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, curriculum leaders, the early years leader, the special educational needs coordinator and a group of teachers. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils, a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies, assessment information, performance management documents and records of checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors looked at records of attendance, behaviour, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of the 92 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. In addition, the inspector took account of the 26 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 48 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Knowles	Ofsted Inspector

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