

Inspection of an outstanding school: Milestone Academy

Ash Road, New Ash Green, Longfield, Kent DA3 8JZ

Inspection dates:

17–18 December 2019

Outcome

Milestone Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy in this school and attendance is high because their individual needs are at the heart of all decision-making. At the main school site and at each of the satellite provisions, pupils enjoy a highly personal, effective curriculum that inspires and enables pupils to make strong progress in their learning.

Pupils are given a wealth of creative and well-planned opportunities to develop life skills and to keep safe. For example, a wide offer of planned community trips helps pupils to manage risks, such as crossing the road and visiting shops to buy food. Such activities prepare pupils well for independent living. Educational and well-being needs are catered for, at an exceptionally high level. Behaviour is consistently strong and pupils respond well to high expectations in lessons and in social time.

Leaders and the staff team are ambitious for every child to achieve well. Staff, parents and other stakeholders work closely together to develop pupils' ambition and give them a clear pathway for a successful future. Pupils develop confidence and thrive in all aspects of the curriculum. As a result, pupils are proud of what they achieve and enjoy the daily steps to a positive future. They believe in themselves because they experience success every day.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and staff have unwavering ambition for every pupil to succeed to the best of their ability. The principal encourages staff to be 'creative and innovative in meeting pupils' needs'. Decisions are made in the best interests of pupils. Pupils thrive in all aspects of their education and tell inspectors that they are happy, well cared for and that there is no bullying. Parents overwhelmingly value the school and the impact it has beyond their children, in supporting families.

The exceptional curriculum prepares pupils to be successful and ready for their next steps. Pupils know the value of their education. They are taught to be resilient and

curious. Pupils apply their phonics and other communication skills to approach new content and learning confidently. Ambitious teachers and support staff move pupils on at pace when they are ready.

From the early years, pupils make consistently strong progress in their English, communication and mathematics skills. In both primary, secondary and 16 to 19, strong learning pathways enable pupils to make strong progress. They master skills and knowledge before moving on in their learning journey.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is consistently excellent. Pupils understand how the curriculum is helping them to achieve and develop skills for a successful life. Staff have high expectations and provide exceptional levels of care for pupils' wider needs. Pupils know who to go to if they have any worries. Pupils get help quickly if they need it. The school is a happy and harmonious community.

Pupils demonstrate courteous, welcoming behaviours and attitudes across each of the school sites. For example, in the student café, pupils take obvious pride in practising their work by welcoming visitors and peers, taking orders, and preparing food for customers. Students are excited by this 'employment opportunity'. Consequently, pupils can identify how such activities prepare them for work and how to deal with customers.

There is a calm, purposeful environment and high expectations of social behaviour in all areas of the school. Pupils were proud to demonstrate their exemplary conduct on many occasions, letting inspectors through doors and warmly greeting other staff and visitors.

An effective curriculum is at the heart of the wide offer provided across the school. Staff have an unwavering moral commitment to prepare pupils fully to lead a rich, successful and happy life. A thread permeates throughout the curriculum to prepare pupils for ambitious life goals. One pupil stated excitedly, 'I want to live in my own home, have a job and be happy.' Pupils from key stage 4 have opportunities to engage in work placements. This has led to employment for pupils in a range of occupations, such as working in a local garage and in the superstore nearby.

The curriculum goes well beyond the academic, as it develops the whole child. Pupils enjoy regular community visits, always with an educational purpose, such as trips to the garden centre and visits to a local superstore. Pupils develop confidence in managing risks, money management, travel and speaking to strangers in shops. Pupils enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities, including Scouts and trust-wide sports and enrichment opportunities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Across all the school's sites, procedures and systems are known and followed consistently by all staff. Leaders work closely with other agencies in getting the right level of help, at the right time, for pupils and their families. Leaders challenge appropriately if they are not happy with the response from external agencies. Parents told inspectors that their

children are very safe and well cared for by staff. Most parents have no hesitation in recommending the school. Parents commented that 'the standards of care [were] exceptional' and 'the best [they] could hope for' reflecting the general views of many.

Background

When we have judged a special school to be outstanding we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Milestone School, to be outstanding on 15–16 November 2011.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	137883
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10111402
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	338
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	33
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees, Leigh Academies Trust
Chair of trust	Bob Findlay
Principal	Nigel Jones
Website	www.milestoneacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Section 8, 22 March 2016, school continued to be outstanding

Information about this school

- Milestone Academy is part of the Leigh Academies Trust.
- This is a large all-through specialist school for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It has expanded since the last inspection to meet the needs of local children.
- The school has a main site at Milestone Academy and three full-time satellite provisions, including a separate sixth form in the grounds of Wilmington Academy, Milestone at Leigh Academy and a specialist provision within the grounds of Dartford Primary Academy. All three satellites are located within the site of a fellow Leigh Academies Trust mainstream primary or secondary academy.

Information about this inspection

- We carried out a range of activities, in both the main school and in each of the three satellite provisions. These included: lesson visits; looking at examples of pupils' work; discussions with teachers and support staff; meetings with governors, the trust's chief executive officer, and parents; and analysis of a range of school documents and 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. We spoke to pupils and heard pupils read. We also considered the 63 responses to the online staff survey.
- During the inspection, we looked in detail at English and communication, reading, mathematics and personal, social and health education.
- The lead inspector reviewed the school's single central register, relevant policies and documentation related to safeguarding procedures.
- We spoke to representative groups of staff, pupils, parents and governors.
- The lead inspector met with senior members of Leigh Academies Trust.

Inspection team

Catherine Davies, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Anne Allen

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2020