

Inspection of Milldown CofE Academy

Milldown Road, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 7SN

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 October 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Milldown Academy has a caring ethos. Adults teach pupils to be kind and respectful. Pupils are polite, courteous and well mannered. There is a calm and orderly atmosphere in school and on the playground. Pupils enjoy school, feel safe and attend regularly.

Staff have high expectations of behaviour and learning and pupils respond well to this. Routines are securely in place which staff apply consistently, for example 'eye tracking' and 'track the speaker'. Pupils behave sensibly in lessons and around the school. Incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils are confident that if it did happen, staff would sort it out quickly.

Pupils know how the school's values, 'inspire, believe, achieve', help guide them to make the right choices. For example, they learn to 'respect' differences and show 'empathy' towards others. Pupils value the pastoral support and advice offered. They welcome the 'worry box' which is available in every classroom.

Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities through the inspiring leadership programme. They take their roles seriously. Responsibilities include equality and diversity ambassadors, learning champions and pupil governors. Staff provide a wide variety of lunchtime and extra-curricular activities. These include sports, art, music, boogie bounce and forest school.

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

Leaders are ambitious to provide pupils with a broad and exciting curriculum from the time they start in Reception. The curriculum is well planned. It sets out the key knowledge that pupils need to know, understand and remember.

Reading is a priority. Leaders have an expectation that every pupil will be a fluent reader by the end of Year 2. Children in the early years get off to a flying start. Staff have a sharp focus on developing children's language and communication. Phonics is taught as soon as they start. Children confidently practise saying and writing the sounds they are learning. Staff keep a close eye on pupils who are not keeping up. They provide extra support to help them catch up.

Staff focus on getting pupils to read. High-quality books are everywhere, including in the outside library, which is available to pupils during social times. Staff provide sets of carefully selected books across a range of genres, cultures and diverse topics. These books enrich the curriculum and develop pupils' vocabulary. Daily reading sessions help pupils understand the meaning of what they read. For example, pupils in Year 5 were confidently using a passage on Stephen Hawking to develop their skills in retrieval. By the time pupils leave the school, they are confident and competent readers.

Story time is an important part of the day. Pupils enjoy a range of stories, developing a love of reading. Adults bring the texts alive through acting out familiar stories.

In most subjects, teachers use assessment well to identify gaps in pupils' learning. They revisit prior learning to help the most important knowledge stick in pupils' memory. Leaders rightly recognise that some subjects are not yet implemented as effectively as in the more developed subjects. Where this is the case, teachers do not build on what pupils already know and can do. Leaders have plans in place to strengthen this.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the help they need. Leaders support staff to adapt learning to meet the needs of pupils. Those with SEND learn the same subjects and content as their peers.

Staff provide high-quality pastoral care. Pupils value the chance to discuss any worries or concerns. Pupils understand the importance of behaving well. They follow the rules and routines. As a result, behaviour in lessons and throughout the school is typically calm.

Leaders provide a range of experiences beyond the academic curriculum. Hopes and Aspirations Week gives pupils the opportunity to learn about a range of professions. Leaders ensure that pupils are ready for the next stage of their education.

Pupils learn the importance of respect and tolerance towards others. They are proud of their motto, 'Don't just join the world, go out and change it'. Most parents would recommend the school to others.

School leaders and trust staff work closely with subject leaders. They provide training and guidance to ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge and expertise to support pupils' learning.

Trustees and governors know what is working well and what needs to improve. They hold leaders to account for the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained to notice and report any signs of concern. Leaders respond swiftly to support pupils and families in need of help and do not hesitate to escalate concerns when required. Staff carry out the required checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils. Leaders provide a curriculum that teaches pupils to understand age-appropriate risks, including road safety and healthy relationships. Pupils know that adults will listen to them if they have any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the curriculum is not implemented as effectively as in the more developed subjects. As a result, teachers do not consider what pupils know and can do well enough to build their knowledge over time. Leaders need to ensure that their plans to strengthen all subjects are implemented effectively.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	146153
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10241596
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Rosemary Tong
Headteacher	James Law
Website	www.milldown.dsat.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust, a multi-academy trust. It joined the trust in July 2018.
- Since the last full inspection of the predecessor school, there have been significant changes in staff.
- The school uses one alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other school staff and two members of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke with the chief executive officer, the director of education from the trust and two trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and art. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with

subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The lead inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult. Story time was visited in Reception Year and Year 1.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation, including the safeguarding checks carried out on staff working at the school. They considered how well the designated safeguarding leader acts on concerns about pupils' welfare and safety. Inspectors talked to pupils, staff, governors and trustees about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- Inspectors held a telephone conversation with a representative from the alternative provision the school uses.
- The lead inspector considered key documentation, including school improvement plans and governors' minutes.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. An inspector met with the headteacher to discuss and scrutinise how they respond to behaviour incidents and pupils' attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text replies and responses to the staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors spoke with parents at the beginning and the end of the school day.

Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Claire Fortey	Ofsted Inspector
Carl Thornton	Ofsted Inspector

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