

# Inspection of Milton School

Storey Street, Swinton, Mexborough, South Yorkshire S64 8QG

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Inspection dates: 22 and 23 June, and 28 September 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Inadequate**

Personal development

**Inadequate**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Early years provision

**Inadequate**

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Milton School as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Safeguarding arrangements in Milton School are not effective. Systems for recording safeguarding and behaviour concerns are not well organised or used consistently. This means that leaders do not have the information they need to keep pupils safe.

The behaviour of a significant number of pupils is poor. At social times, some adults do not manage behaviour well. They do not challenge unacceptable behaviour effectively. Some pupils do not feel safe in school because of the behaviour of older pupils. Pupils witness physical and verbal aggression towards other pupils and adults regularly. Pupils are concerned about repeated incidents of bullying, ranging from name-calling to physical bullying.

Leaders have not ensured a well-planned academic curriculum. Pupils experience a jumbled and disconnected series of lessons across a range of subjects. This includes early reading and phonics. Pupils' achievement is weak as a result.

There have been significant recent changes to leadership at Milton School. The new headteacher has identified areas that needed improvement quickly and has started to make changes. For example, with support from the multi-academy trust, weaknesses in the curriculum have been identified and steps are being taken to improve the curriculum. However, prior to this, the actions taken by leaders, including those responsible for governance, have not been sufficiently effective to ensure that pupils receive an acceptable quality of education.

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

All pupils at Milton School have special educational needs and/or disabilities, supported through education, health and care (EHC) plans. Pupils' individual learning plans, which are designed to help them to meet the outcomes set out in their EHC plans, are poor in quality. This is, in part, due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in addition, the targets set by staff in school and the actions needed to meet them are not precisely defined. Leaders have not ensured that these match pupils' needs well.

In many subject areas, the curriculum is poorly planned. This includes the curriculum for children in the early years. Subject leaders and those responsible for early years have not identified the important knowledge that children should learn. Across the school, subject planning often focuses on what pupils need to be able to do at the end of the year. However, leaders have not identified the smaller parts of knowledge pupils need to learn in order to reach those end points. Leaders have not provided teachers with the information they need to help pupils to secure the knowledge needed for later learning. Subject leaders have not clearly identified the adaptations needed to help to meet pupils' EHC plan targets. Teachers do not make effective use of assessment to check pupils' understanding and inform teaching. They do not consider pupils' needs well enough when planning new learning.

Leaders have not ensured that staff are well trained to teach reading. The teaching of early reading and phonics lacks structure and consistency. Teachers, including those in the early years, use a variety of strategies and curriculums. This lack of consistency in approach hampers the development of pupils' reading skills. Pupils are not prepared well for their next stage of education, training or employment.

Pupils do not settle to their work quickly. This lack of focus and engagement in learning hinders pupils' achievement. Teachers' expectations for pupils' behaviour vary across the school. Incidents of poor behaviour increase as the school day progresses. Leaders have not ensured that staff apply behaviour management procedures consistently. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, do not monitor patterns of behaviour appropriately and therefore do not have suitable oversight of behaviour in the school.

Pupils' attendance has not improved sufficiently well following the COVID-19 pandemic. Persistent absence remains too high. Younger pupils are often late to school. Leaders hold systems for recording and tracking attendance in more than one management information system. This makes it difficult for leaders to identify, monitor and act on concerns.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is in the early stages of development. From the early years to Year 11, pupils follow a 'learning for life' curriculum to help prepare them for the next steps in education and for adulthood. There is a dedicated careers programme for pupils in Years 7 to 11. An external provider offers an accredited qualification to develop pupils' interview and job application skills. However, leaders have not provided staff with the training they need to deliver the PSHE curriculum well. Some staff still follow the plans from the previous curriculum. These plans are not well sequenced or ambitious. Pupils miss some key knowledge and understanding as a result.

Pupils learn a limited amount about different cultures, religions and backgrounds. They can recall the main festivals they have learned about. However, some pupils do not feel confident to be open about their beliefs in school. They do not think that their friends will understand. Incidents of racist language towards pupils and staff are common. Leaders do not deal with these incidents effectively.

Leaders ensure pupils have opportunities to learn about healthy lifestyles and develop an understanding of how to be responsible citizens. Pupils take part in community work, which includes supporting homeless charities. The school provides a range of opportunities to develop pupils' talents and interests. These include robotic, craft and music clubs.

Most staff enjoy working at Milton School and feel that leaders treat them fairly. Several staff feel that leaders do not support them well in managing behaviour. Staff say that they need greater help and structures to deal with pupils' difficult behaviours. Most staff are supportive of the very recent changes leaders have made in school.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The multi-academy trust has taken decisive action to address some significant staff safeguarding issues. In addition, trustees commissioned an external review of safeguarding in March 2022. This review identified the need to improve the recording of safeguarding concerns. However, despite some significant actions by the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, procedures for recording and monitoring safeguarding and child protection concerns remain inconsistent. Leaders do not have a full picture of what is happening in school for vulnerable pupils. Consequently, pupils are at risk of further harm.

Leaders, including governors and trustees, do not monitor safeguarding arrangements effectively. Governors and trustees do not challenge leaders robustly. For example, they do not have, and have not asked for, the information they need to monitor patterns of behaviour, attendance or bullying.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They understand how to raise concerns. Leaders ensure staff have the knowledge they need to respond to contextual safeguarding issues such as online safety and knife crime. Staff are knowledgeable about the 'Prevent' duty and how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. However, some staff report that they receive inconsistent guidance from leaders about when to report concerns. As a result, some staff do not consistently act upon concerns in a timely manner to keep pupils safe.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is an inconsistent approach to recording safeguarding concerns. Staff, including leaders, do not categorise concerns effectively. In addition, leaders give staff inconsistent messages on the timescales for logging concerns. This means that leaders do not have the information they need to monitor concerns well and to take the necessary actions to keep pupils safe. Leaders should ensure that, as a matter of urgency, all staff receive the training and ongoing guidance they need to log and categorise concerns in a timely and consistent manner.
- Leaders have not implemented a well-sequenced programme of phonics teaching. Staff do not have the knowledge they need to teach reading effectively. Pupils do not develop the reading skills they need to access later learning. Leaders should implement a well-planned early reading programme from the start of Reception, ensuring that all staff receive the training needed to deliver this effectively.
- In most curriculum subjects, pupils experience a poorly planned series of lessons. The curriculum does not enable pupils to build the subject knowledge they need for later learning. Leaders should ensure that there is a well-planned and well-sequenced programme of learning in each subject to ensure that pupils achieve well and are well prepared for their next steps in education.

- Pupils' behaviour is poor. Some staff do not respond to unacceptable behaviour appropriately. Some pupils feel unsafe in school because of the behaviour of others. Leaders should support all staff to implement a consistent approach to behaviour management which leads to a significant reduction in incidents of poor behaviour.
- Inconsistencies in the delivery of the PSHE curriculum have led to gaps in pupils' understanding of diversity and tolerance. Pupils do not build the knowledge that they need for life in modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that teachers deliver the ambitious new PSHE curriculum consistently across the school and that leaders monitor this regularly.
- Having considered the evidence, we strongly recommend that leaders and those responsible for governance do not seek to appoint early career teachers.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144196
<b>Local authority</b>	Rotherham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10227606
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	149
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Joan Haines
<b>Headteacher</b>	Carol Leighton
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.miltonschool.org.uk">www.miltonschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- When inspectors visited the school in June 2022, the substantive headteacher and an assistant headteacher were absent. The acting headteacher started in the week of the June inspection visit. The substantive headteacher, named in this report, was not present when inspectors visited the school.
- When inspectors visited the school on 28 September 2022 to gather additional evidence, a new headteacher had taken up post (from September 2022).
- Milton School converted to become an academy school in March 2018. It is part of the Interaction and Communication Academy Trust. When its predecessor school, Milton School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall. An additional key stage (early years) was added to the school in January 2016.
- The school makes provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorder. More recently, due to sufficiency issues in the local authority, the school has been required to meet the needs of a wider range of pupils, including those with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The board of trustees delegates some monitoring functions to a local governing board. Trustees disbanded the local governing board in May 2022. An academy improvement board (AIB) has been in place since May 2022.

## Information about this inspection

An inspection team first visited the school on 22 and 23 June 2022. Due to information received by Ofsted about the school after this visit, His Majesty's Inspectors returned to the school on 28 September 2022 to gather additional evidence in some areas.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the CEO of the multi-academy trust, the acting headteacher (June 2022), the substantive headteacher who took up post from September 2022, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff.
- Inspectors met with trustees and members of the school's AIB.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- Inspectors met with the coordinator for special educational needs and disabilities and reviewed pupils' EHC plans.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, art and PSHE. For each deep dive, 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.
- Inspectors met with the school's designated safeguarding leader. Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding records, relevant policies and other safeguarding documentation. The inspectors reviewed the processes leaders use to identify and help pupils who need support. In addition, the lead inspector scrutinised the school's records of recruitment checks carried out on adults who work at the school.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally, including pupils who receive support to improve their reading.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils, and Ofsted's online parents' survey, Ofsted Parent View.

## **Inspection team**

David Mills, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Belita Scott	His Majesty's Inspector
Alex Thorp	His Majesty's Inspector
Jean Watt	Ofsted Inspector



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