

Inspection of Millbrook Combined School

Mill End Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP12 4BA

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Millbrook are proud to attend this caring, inclusive school. They feel safe, and have secure, positive relationships with each other and staff. Pupils really enjoy learning new things alongside their friends. They are cared for by a dedicated team of staff, who know them well and treat them fairly.

Leaders have high expectations that pupils will be respectful and kind to each other. Pupils learn to accept each other's differences. This is demonstrated in pupils' behaviour when they work together in lessons and play cooperatively at breaktime. If pupils find school life challenging, there are trusted adults available, who provide the right help. Bullying is taken seriously and not tolerated. Although uncommon, staff manage incidents effectively.

Leaders also have ambitions for all pupils to succeed academically. However, this is inconsistent because pupils have gaps in their knowledge and are not fully prepared for the next stages of learning.

Parents are happy to send their children to this school. They comment on how well leaders and staff work to support each other and their children. Indeed, the staff value the 'family feel' of the school, as do the vast majority of parents.

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

Following a period of relatively high staff turnover and changes to the governing body, leaders have worked effectively to stabilise the school. They have used additional support well, for example with planning and developing the early years curriculum. Leaders have also made other important improvements, especially to the effectiveness of how well pupils learn to read.

Leaders have rightly prioritised developing the curriculum in English and mathematics from the early years onwards. They have recently strengthened how writing is taught, which is delivered consistently well by teachers. Some of these improvements are relatively recent, which means that the full impact of these changes on pupils' achievement are yet to be seen.

In a number of other subjects, however, the curriculum is not effective enough. Consequently, pupils do not learn as well as they should. For example, pupils remember the engaging experiments in science or the creativity in art and design, but have not learned securely the important knowledge that teachers and leaders meant them to. Teachers do not check what pupils know or do not know effectively enough before moving on to new learning, which affects pupils' progress through the curriculum in these subjects.

The school has a truly inclusive ethos, warmly embracing any new arrivals, including asylum seekers or refugees. Leaders ensure every pupil is made to feel they belong to their community, no matter how long they stay. Leaders are skilled in identifying

when a pupil might have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders support staff well in understanding and meeting the wide range of pupils' specific needs so they learn alongside their peers.

The phonics scheme that leaders introduced at the beginning of the summer term, last academic year, is taught well. Leaders' effective training, and ongoing coaching for staff, ensures rigour from early years into key stage 1. As a result, pupils feel a sense of accomplishment as they read with greater fluency and confidence. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to practise their knowledge and skills using books that carefully match the sounds they are learning. Teachers support older pupils to deepen their understanding of the books they enjoy reading, and to broaden their vocabulary.

Leaders' effective work to support pupils who do not attend school regularly enough means that attendance rates are slowly rising. However, arrangements to help pupils catch up with any learning they have missed, for example in English and in mathematics, are at an early stage. Consequently, these pupils are not achieving as well as they should.

Pupils behave well and show positive attitudes. Children in the early years quickly grasp the routines and how to learn cooperatively with others. Pupils play happily with their peers at breaktimes and are caring towards others. Leaders have ensured that there is a respectful and optimistic ethos to help pupils focus on their learning.

Pupils have a keen sense of tolerance and fairness, understanding why this is important in society. The well-considered curriculum supports pupils to discuss and learn about different religions, cultures and family circumstances. Pupils develop a genuine respect and empathy for others. Pastoral support is a strength of the school as it helps pupils understand and manage their feelings better.

Leaders are considerate of staff's workload and well-being, without compromising their determination to make further improvements to the school. Governors support and challenge leaders in equal measure. Although many governors are new to their roles, they are reflective and knowledgeable, helping leaders to achieve ambitious goals. Leaders recognise there is still work to be done to strengthen the quality of education, and have the right actions in place to achieve this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture of safeguarding is strong. Staff are well trained to recognise potential signs of harm in children. They report any concerns promptly, and leaders ensure they are followed up. Leaders get to know pupils and their families well. They understand the community and whether there are local risks. The school works effectively with other professionals to reduce harm to children and get them the help they need. Information about child protection is overseen thoroughly to ensure no

concerns are missed. Checks on adults appointed are carried out carefully and safeguarding work is monitored by governors.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not delivered as leaders intend and is not yet fully effective. For example, teaching is not sufficiently well designed to help pupils remember essential knowledge long term, and understanding is not always checked well enough. As a result, too many pupils are not learning as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all teachers receive the support to ensure pupils know more and remember more across the whole school curriculum.
- Arrangements to help pupils who have been absent to catch up on missed learning are not effective. Pupils, therefore, do not benefit as they should from their education and are not catching up quickly enough. Leaders need to make sure that additional support is well planned, closely connected to the curriculum and taught 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	131815
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10256278
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	707
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Montague
Headteacher	Debra Mansfield-Clark
Website	www.millbrookcombinedschool.org.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	29 and 30 March 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school with three classes in each year group. The school has increased in size since the last inspection.
- The school manages a breakfast and after-school childcare provision.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- Nursery provision at the school is for two- and three-year-old children.
- In recent years, the school has experienced significant changes in staffing and continuity of leadership, for example due to multiple instances of maternity leave. Similarly, there has been a high turnover of governors.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the continuing impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, members of the school’s leadership team, curriculum leaders and teaching and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with two governors, one in person and one virtually. He also had a telephone call with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, physical education, science, religious education and art and design. Deep dives included visiting a range of lessons and looking at pupils’ work. It also involved talking about how teaching in these subjects builds pupils’ knowledge over time. The lead inspector also heard pupils read to a known adult.
- Inspectors checked a wide range of child protection documents, including the single central record. They also assessed the school’s culture of safeguarding throughout the inspection.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school’s self-evaluation, the school development plan and relevant school policies.
- Inspectors took account of parents’ responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, along with their written comments. Inspectors also talked with parents on the morning of the first day of inspection.
- Inspectors gathered pupils’ views about their learning, what behaviour is like at the school and whether they felt safe. Inspectors also talked to pupils about their views on personal development and the wider school curriculum.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff to gather their views on how leaders support them and took account of their responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Gareth Flemington, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Claire Britnell	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Dyer	Ofsted Inspector
Rachel Roberts	Ofsted Inspector

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