

Inspection of Milton-on-Stour Church of England Primary School

Milton-on-Stour, Gillingham, Dorset SP8 5QD

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2023

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Milton-on-Stour Church of England School are welcoming and kind. They enjoy attending school. Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. Pupils are safe and staff care for them well. Pupils know that if they have any worries staff will help to sort these out.

Staff's expectations for pupils are high. Pupils understand this and value learning, both in the classroom and beyond. They speak enthusiastically about how they strengthen their knowledge through visits to places of interest, such as to the Jurassic Coast.

Pupils enjoy holding debates and express their views clearly on important topics or current affairs. This helps to develop their confidence. They recognise that people can have different views and it is important to listen to these. Pupils participate in local civic projects. For example, they plant bulbs to enhance the local community. This helps them to appreciate the value of citizenship.

At social times, pupils mix happily with one another. They understand the importance of treating everyone fairly. Pupils develop responsibilities through a range of roles. For example, older pupils are proud to be 'buddies' for younger children.

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

Pupils follow an ambitious curriculum which includes a broad range of subjects. In many subjects, leaders have considered carefully the important knowledge they want pupils to learn and the order in which they learn it. For example, in science, pupils understand how shadows are formed and then use this knowledge to predict shadow length at different times of the day. Pupils use high-quality vocabulary to explain their thinking. Staff make regular checks on what pupils know and remember. They adapt the curriculum based on what they know pupils can do.

However, in some subjects, the curriculum is not broken down into small enough steps. This makes it difficult for pupils to successfully build on what they already know. In addition, leaders do not check what pupils know and remember. Therefore, they do not have an accurate view of how well pupils have learned the essential subject content.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. Staff know their needs and adapt the curriculum to address these. Leaders work with external agencies to provide carefully planned support for pupils. This means that pupils with SEND learn successfully.

Children in the Reception Year make a strong start. The development of children's communication and language skills is an important element of the curriculum.

Children explain themselves clearly. For example, in mathematics, children explain confidently how they work out whether two sets of numbers are equal in value. Adults skilfully link different parts of the curriculum and build on and extend children's interests. This helps to deepen children's understanding in all areas of their learning. As a result, children are well prepared for Year 1.

The reading curriculum begins as soon as children start at school. Leaders ensure that books match the sounds that pupils know. This helps pupils to read with increasing fluency. Beyond phonics, leaders have designed the reading curriculum well. They have identified essential high-quality texts, which pupils read with confidence and understanding.

Leaders plan carefully the opportunities for pupils to develop more broadly. In consultation with the school community, leaders have identified important experiences for pupils to learn about life beyond their village. For example, pupils speak with enthusiasm about visiting a theatre.

Pupils learn about other cultures and faiths with interest. They have a mature understanding of the importance of tolerance and equality. This helps prepare them for life in modern Britain. Pupils explain knowledgeably why democracy is important to society and relish opportunities to debate important issues. Leaders have forged strong links with the local church. Pupils take part in collective worship and enjoy such opportunities for reflection.

Pupils enjoy representing their school. They are proud of the 'gold awards' they receive in recognition of their participation in sporting events. They know how to look after both their physical and mental health. Staff help pupils to understand how to stay safe, including when online. For example, pupils explain how to keep themselves safe when they ride a bike on the road.

Governors are knowledgeable about the context of the school and its priorities. They bring a range of experiences to their roles and challenge and support leaders effectively. Staff appreciate the consideration that school leaders and governors give to staff workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors meet their responsibilities regarding safeguarding. Robust recruitment procedures ensure that suitable staff and leaders are appointed to work at the school.

All staff have received appropriate training. They are vigilant and confident to identify and report any concerns they have. Leaders develop purposeful relationships with parents and outside agencies to secure the best possible support for pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers' use of assessment is not fully developed. As a result, gaps in pupils' knowledge of important curriculum content are not identified. Leaders should ensure that assessment identifies precisely how successfully pupils have learned the curriculum, so that this can be used to inform future planning.
- In some subjects, the curriculum does not break down the knowledge that pupils need to learn into small enough steps. Therefore, pupils find it difficult to develop their understanding, based on what they have learned before. Leaders need to ensure that all subjects are sequenced in a way that supports pupils to learn successfully over time.

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	113801
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10297910
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Roy Osborough
Headteacher	Rhiannon Tidby
Website	www.milton.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary-aided primary school. Its most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character took place in December 2022.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 headteacher, senior leaders and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, science and physical education. 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 also spoke with senior staff about the curriculum and with pupils about their learning in other subjects.

- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector scrutinised the single central record and spoke with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding lead. The inspection team held discussions with pupils and staff to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- The lead inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View and free-text responses. They also took into consideration responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Liz Geller, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Non Davies

Ofsted Inspector

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