

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Milestone School

Longford Lane, Gloucester, Gloucestershire GL2 9EU

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 June 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Milestone School offers pupils a wide range of facilities. There are outdoor learning spaces, a swimming pool, trampolines and a café. Pupils have many opportunities. Through these, the school provides pupils with a secure environment to learn about the world and how to live in it.

Learning extends beyond the extensive school grounds. Pupils enjoy attending events such as exhibitions in the local area and residential to places such as Macaroni Woods. Pupils are proud of their school. School councillors enjoy telling visitors about how they improve the school, including their work towards becoming an eco-school.

The kitchen team supports pupils' enjoyment. The team cooks high-quality meals from scratch. Displays of fresh herbs, fruit, salads and vegetables help pupils understand where their food comes from. The lunch space is a calm, happy place, full of pupils appreciating their nourishing food.

Pupils say that, generally, the school is a safe place to be and that any bullying gets sorted out. However, a few pupils say that disruption to lessons sometimes upsets them. Some parents and carers also expressed concerns. While many are positive, a noticeable number of parents are unhappy with some aspects of the school's work.

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

This is an unsettled time for The Milestone School. Changes in staff have contributed to low staff morale and inconsistencies in some approaches across the school. New trust leaders have accurately identified the key issues. They are determined to make the improvements needed. There are robust plans to remedy the current weaknesses. Staff

work hard to ensure that, during this challenging time, pupils continue to be safe and have a caring environment.

There are inconsistencies in expectations in the different departments across the school. Despite leaders' attempts to consult with staff about changes that are happening, many staff do not feel that their views are heard. Trust leaders recognise the need for improvements in communication across the school.

The curriculum is designed through progressive pathways. These are well developed and ambitious for pupils. The pathways align with pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plans). Detailed small steps support staff to deliver precise, individualised learning activities.

The personal, social and health education curriculum helps to prepare pupils for life beyond school. Pupils learn about keeping themselves safe while in the community and when online. School assemblies help pupils to explore values such as respect.

Leaders rightly prioritise reading. Pupils benefit from a well-organised phonics curriculum. Phonics training provides staff with secure knowledge to deliver phonics sessions well. Teachers successfully choose reading books that match pupils' phonic knowledge. Individualised reading sessions ensure that pupils have the support they need to apply phonics and learn to read.

Leaders carefully plan for pupils' physical development. Pupils enjoy using the trampoline and soft classroom area to develop their coordination and balance.

Staff are patient and caring. They develop strong bonds with pupils and carefully adapt the curriculum to match pupils' individual needs. Teachers and learning partners ensure that pupils are secure in their learning. They are ambitious for every pupil and move learning on as soon as they can. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and most respond well to adults. Pupils manage the movement around school to their different lessons very well.

Subject leaders check the quality of the curriculum by looking at assessment information and pupils' work. However, they rarely visit lessons. This means that they do not see first-hand how staff deliver the curriculum. As a result, staff do not gain from specific and relevant training on some aspects of the curriculum.

The school's behaviour team promote high-quality relationships as being at the centre of behaviour management approaches. Staff appreciate the support and guidance the team provide. However, there are inconsistencies in how staff manage behaviour across the school. Leaders ensure that staff have specific training on how to support pupils with challenging behaviour, but some staff are unclear about what the agreed approaches are.

Parents appreciate the ongoing communication. Daily updates describe highlights of their child's day while at school. Some would like more detailed information so that they can continue to support their child at home.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. The safeguarding team works with steely determination. The team ensures that no stone is left unturned to help pupils to be safe. Weekly 'coffee break conversations' inform staff of new information about safeguarding.

Governors have a strong understanding of safeguarding processes. They diligently check that the agreed safeguarding procedures are in place. Recruitment processes are clear and carefully adhered to.

Pupils say that they trust the adults in school to keep them safe, and they are safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A lack of clarity about leadership roles means that staff do not get the support that they should. In some parts of the school, staff morale is low. The school needs to ensure that leaders' roles and responsibilities are clear and understood by all, so that staff have the support they need to do their jobs well.
- There are inconsistencies in how staff manage behaviour. Some staff are unsure about the agreed approaches they should take. Leaders need to ensure that staff are clear about the behaviour policy so that pupils' behaviour is managed consistently well across the school.
- With the exception of training in phonics, professional development for the curriculum does not meet the learning needs of staff. As a result, some staff are not equipped to implement the school's curriculum as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that appropriate professional development supports developments in the curriculum.
- Subject leaders do not systematically check how well staff implement the curriculum. Therefore, they are not able to pinpoint the precise training needs for staff, including improvements to subject knowledge. As a result, weaknesses are sometimes not identified and put right. The school must ensure that subject leaders identify and support weaknesses in their subject areas.
- Some parents are unhappy with aspects of the school, including the communication provided about their child's day. This includes parents of children who are non-verbal. Leaders need to ensure that parents receive the detailed information they need.

Background

When we have judged a 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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, The Milestone School, to be outstanding in September 2013.

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	147116
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10268529
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	324
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kerry Brimfield
Headteacher	Diane Taylor
Website	www.themilestoneschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- In 2019, The Milestone School became an academy and joined SAND multi-academy trust.
- The school caters for pupils with complex needs including autism, physical difficulties, and profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school includes a specialised unit called The Space. This is for a small number of pupils who require extra support to manage their behaviour.

Information about this inspection

- 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, deputy headteacher, the three heads of department and curriculum leaders. They also met with other leaders from the school and members of staff. Inspectors also spoke to pupils.

- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer and the director for school improvement for the trust. A remote meeting took place with the chair of the trustees and another trustee. There was also a meeting with three members of the local advisory board including the chair of the board. The lead inspector had a telephone discussion with an improvement adviser who works with the school.
- The responses to the online survey Ofsted Parent View and to a staff survey were considered.
- Inspectors met with parents and spoke to parents on the telephone during the inspection. The views of parents who contacted Ofsted during the inspection were also taken into account.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the safeguarding team and the safeguarding governor. A range of school documents were considered as well as the arrangements for recruiting staff. Inspectors also talked to staff about safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and physical development. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with curriculum leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Tonwen Empson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Hilary Goddard

Ofsted Inspector

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