

Inspection of an outstanding school: Millwood Primary Special School

School Street, Radcliffe, Bury, Greater Manchester M26 3BW

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2023

Outcome

Millwood Primary Special School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Millwood Primary Special School is a highly inclusive and inspiring place to be. Pupils are greeted by staff with open arms and in return respond with beaming smiles. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging and thrive.

Pupils, and children in the early years, feel very safe. They benefit from strong, caring relationships with staff who know them extremely well.

Leaders have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve in their learning and behaviour. The school's curriculum places no ceiling on pupils' success. It prepares children and pupils exceptionally well for their next steps in education and life in modern Britain.

Behaviour is exemplary. The school is calm and orderly for everyone. Staff are highly attuned to the feelings and anxieties of pupils and are successful at minimising them. Staff skilfully help pupils to learn to manage their behaviour and their emotions. If bullying should happen, adults deal with any issues immediately and sensitively.

Opening the world up to pupils is a top priority. Pupils benefit from a memorable range of activities to promote their wider personal development. This includes involvement in many local community projects and access to a wide range of clubs, such as football, singing and signing, junk modelling, transport club and wellie walking.

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

Leaders have designed a highly effective and ambitious curriculum. It reflects leaders' determination that every pupil should benefit from a rich and engaging learning experience. Leaders have expertly created clear learning pathways that exactly pinpoint the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils must learn in order to achieve future success. This well-thought-out and well-designed curriculum helps pupils' achievement to be exceptional.

Assessment is used expertly to ensure that all staff know exactly where pupils are in their learning. Learning goals in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans are seamlessly interwoven into all aspects of the curriculum and each pupil's personalised targets. Teachers are experts at using the information that they have about each pupil to break down learning into even smaller, manageable steps. Staff and therapists work together to help pupils achieve these small but important steps. Adults are highly attuned to how pupils are feeling and responding in lessons. They expertly use this knowledge to maximise moments of engagement or to give pupils a break from learning.

At the heart of the school's work is leaders' determination that all pupils will have a voice. The school's systematic approach to developing communication begins the day children arrive in early years. Adults carefully consider the best way to use the wide range of strategies available to help pupils communicate. They use visual signing and picture-based communication systems to help pupils build their attention, listening skills and engage in activities. They also encourage pupils to make choices, express their views and assert their rights.

Reading and enjoying books and stories has a high profile in school. Those pupils who are not at a developmental stage that enables them to learn phonics enjoy spoken and sensory stories. For example, stories about the beach or the planets can bring experiences and knowledge to life for pupils by stimulating their senses.

Many pupils successfully learn to read sentences, recognise words or symbols at a level that is appropriate to them. There is a resolve that all pupils that can, will read by the time they leave school at the end of key stage 2. This includes pupils that are non-verbal. This determination means that many pupils learn to read and also progress in their speech.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. The nature of many pupils' needs means that behaviour might occasionally disturb lessons. The skill with which adults support pupils when this is the case means that any disruption is kept to a minimum. Pupils enjoy a harmonious environment that supports their effective learning.

The school's relationships and health education programme provides an exceptional basis for pupils' personal development. This is at the heart of all that the school does. Pupils celebrate difference and show pride in themselves and all they do. There is an endless range of opportunities and experiences offered to pupils. For example, all pupils are involved in collecting 'Millwood Milestones'. This is a long list of activities and experiences that they will take part in while they are pupils at the school.

The outstanding school leadership team is supported by a highly effective and experienced governing body. Staff are well supported with their workload and well-being. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The strong safeguarding culture is integral to all that the school does. Leaders and staff are well trained and the procedures in place to identify and report concerns are well understood by staff. Staff are tenacious advocates for all pupils. They are vigilant in looking for indications that pupils could be at risk of harm, especially as most pupils are unable to communicate easily.

When safeguarding needs are identified, leaders engage very well with external agencies to get timely support for pupils and their families.

Safety runs visibly through the taught curriculum. Pupils learn about asking someone to 'stop' if they are not happy with a situation. They are given a strong voice in their own care and safeguarding. For example, pupils are very aware and vocal about their right to privacy when adults provide their intimate care.

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 school to be outstanding in February 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	105377
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10241894
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Debi Walker
Headteacher	Joanne Hurst
Website	www.millwoodprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils at Millwood Primary Special School have an EHC plan. The school caters predominantly for pupils with autism. Many have additional special educational needs, in particular severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no two-year-old or three-year-old children attending the early years.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2021.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, including early reading; mathematics; and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, and looked at samples of pupils' work. Where appropriate,

inspectors spoke to some pupils about their learning. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.

- Where appropriate, inspectors spoke with pupils about school life.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, who was also the designated safeguarding lead. They also spoke to the assistant headteachers and those responsible for coordinating special educational needs.
- Inspectors spoke to curriculum leads and members of the pastoral team.
- Inspectors held discussions with members of staff which focused on the well-being and safeguarding of pupils.
- An inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including speaking to the chair of governors remotely.
- An inspector also met with a representative of Bury Local Authority and an independent school improvement partner.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to school improvement, safeguarding and the checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including the free-text responses. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sheldon Logue

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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