

Inspection of an outstanding school: Millstead School

Iliad Street, Liverpool, Merseyside L5 3LU

Inspection dates:

30 and 31 January 2024

Outcome

Millstead School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Millstead School is life changing for its pupils. All pupils who attend the school face significant challenges with learning. The school provides an inspirational learning environment for them. Pupils thrive and excel in their education. They are very happy at school. There is an unwavering determination from all staff that pupils should benefit from a vast set of learning experiences. Well-trained staff expertly cater for pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Well-crafted relationships between staff and pupils are one of the pillars of this school community. Staff know pupils' specific needs in detail. They understand what will and will not work for each pupil. Pupils receive highly personalised support for both their behaviour and academic studies. Their achievement is remarkable from their individual starting points.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They respond well to the clear boundaries that the school puts in place. This helps them to understand the rules and routines. Where needed, pupils receive effective guidance and support to help them to understand their emotions. Staff aid pupils to manage their feelings with increased confidence. Pupils show tremendous determination to succeed.

Pupils' wider development is considered with care and precision. Throughout their time in school, pupils have opportunities to support their local community, such as through fundraising activities. They can also work with businesses in the community or attend a local football match.

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

The school has focused sharply on strengthening an extraordinary curriculum even further. The ambitious curriculum begins with helping pupils to improve their communication skills. The school rightly places emphasis on helping pupils to communicate with staff and others around them. From the early years, children learn to

use different forms of communication confidently. Staff are highly skilled in teaching pupils to use these approaches.

Staff themselves use a variety of methods to help pupils with their communication skills. This includes, where appropriate, using pictures or symbols. Staff also make effective use of carefully created pupil communication books. Pupils' learning extends out from the focus on communication into many other subjects. The school successfully ensures that in these other curriculum areas, pupils learn new knowledge and skills.

Learning is linked inextricably to pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. Staff use the curriculum to identify the knowledge and skills that pupils need to know. Using the school's assessment systems with expertise, staff identify the specific next steps in pupils' learning. Teachers use a vast range of approaches to help pupils learn the school's intended curriculum. They are skilled in doing so. This ensures that pupils learn exceptionally well.

A passion for literature and a culture for reading are apparent throughout the school. Staff seize every opportunity to develop pupils' vocabulary and understanding of language. They share high-quality texts with pupils daily. Pupils get opportunities to listen to rhymes, songs and stories through many curriculum subjects. Staff use carefully selected strategies to ensure that pupils can enjoy books and stories. Some pupils access daily phonics. Well-trained staff deliver the phonics curriculum skilfully. Pupils learn phonics in a systematic way, with plenty of opportunities for them to repeat their learning. This helps pupils to remember their phonics, which in turn supports their early reading.

The school places significant emphasis on pupils' attendance. Everyone in the school knows that pupils need to attend school as often as possible. Attendance is a high priority. The school ensures that it looks for any patterns in pupils' attendance. It takes appropriate and effective action to ensure that pupils attend school as often as possible. As a result, pupils' attendance is high, and the number of pupils missing school persistently is reducing.

Pupils' personal development is another pillar of Millstead School. There is a relentless focus on preparing pupils for life beyond the school. They learn different ways to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. Pupils learn different mindfulness techniques to help them manage their concerns. Pupils with profound multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) get the chance to attend 'Therapeutic Thursday' lunch club. Pupils also learn essential social skills. This prepares them well to visit, with their parents and carers, the supermarket, restaurants or the cinema.

Governors provide outstanding challenge and support to the school. They know the school well. They are resolute in their goal for pupils to receive a world-class education. Alongside the school, they are not complacent. They persistently seek ways to improve.

Governors and the school listen to the views of staff. Consequently, staff feel valued and supported. This includes with their workload. Staff value how the school has streamlined assessment systems. This helps them to have a more manageable workload.

Overall, parents view the school as an exceptional place. It has transformed their child's educational experience. Many parents commented to inspectors about the nurturing nature of the staff. They value the progress that their child has made since joining the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 March 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	104751
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10268712
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	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul O'Brien
Headteacher	Michelle Beard
Website	www.millsteadschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	29 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils who attend this school have an EHC plan. The school caters for pupils with PMLD, severe learning difficulties and/or autism.
- The school operates over two sites, approximately seven miles apart.
- The number of pupils on roll has increased since the previous inspection.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, including elements of early reading, mathematics and physical development. Across the

deep dives, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked with pupils and staff and looked at examples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders to discuss pupils' rates of attendance and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders to discuss pupils' wider development.
- The lead inspector met with some governors, including the chair of governors. He also met with a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. They scrutinised leaders' records of behaviour.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school development plan and the school's self-evaluation document.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. In addition, the lead inspector met with a group of parents during the school day.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and pupils. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Stuart Perkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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