

Inspection report

Milverton House School

Independent school

DfES ref no: 937/6091

Inspection under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 11 – 14 April 2005

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Milverton House School is a family owned independent day school situated on the outskirts of Nuneaton, Warwickshire. It originally opened in 1981 as a private nursery. It gradually expanded and the main school moved to its present site in 1985 with the nursery and pre-school classes remaining at the original site. The present headteacher, who was appointed a year ago, has been teaching at the school for 16 years. The owner of Milverton House is the present principal. The school caters for boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 11 years. Most pupils have previously attended the nursery and pre-school departments but others are admitted following interviews with both parents and pupils. There are 143 boys and 98 girls on roll. There are 14 pupils below compulsory school age who are funded under the government's Nursery Grant Scheme. There are 10 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs all of whom have an individual education plan (IEP). There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Although pupils from a range of ethnic groups attend the school all are fluent in English and there is no extra provision for those who speak English as an additional language. The school's main aim is to provide '*a hard working, enthusiastic and caring community*'.

Summary of main findings

Milverton House School provides a good education for its pupils. It is efficiently organised under the effective guidance of the new headteacher who has a clear vision for its educational development. It is a very happy school where pupils are encouraged to develop a caring attitude to others. Pupils are lively but courteous and through careful nurturing they become well-mannered, self-confident and respectful young people who enjoy coming to school.

The quality of teaching is good. The carefully planned curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to pupils' needs. It is considerably enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, visitors and visits. The Foundation Stage curriculum is taught satisfactorily to pupils in the entry classes (reception) who are below compulsory school age. Pupils' work is assessed regularly by their class teachers and this contributes to the high standards that are reached by the time they leave school. On the rare occasions that teachers do not make full use of this information to plan work, some pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Most are successful in gaining places or scholarships at local independent secondary schools.

What the school does well:

- it takes great care of its pupils and provides very well for their welfare, health and safety;
- its provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and they behave very well;
- its curriculum provision and implementation are good;
- its quality of teaching is good; and
- it ensures very good relationships throughout the school and with parents.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:

- maintain an admission register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995; and
- ensure that there are appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill.

Next Steps

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- to further develop the existing assessment procedures so that they give an overview of both individuals and groups of pupils in order that their progress can be monitored closely and that any potential difficulties can be identified at an early stage; and
- to improve the provision for the physical development of pupils below compulsory school age in the entry classes.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good. There is a written curriculum policy supported by detailed policies and schemes of work for most subjects. However, there is no policy for French and no scheme of work for design and technology (DT)). The school prepares pupils thoroughly in the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Curricular provision for English, mathematics and science has appropriate emphasis. Other subjects of the curriculum are given sufficient attention and time. The curriculum is enriched by lessons in French and drama. The school's use of part-time teachers with specialist knowledge enables it to provide a curriculum that is particularly strong in music and information and communication technology (ICT).

Opportunities for pupils to write for specific purposes are provided in a wide range of subjects, for example recording findings in experiments in science, using persuasive writing to produce a brochure for prospective parents and completing extended descriptive writing in history. Pupils in Year 6 have produced individual '*Mr Men*' books for the youngest pupils, using their very good ICT skills. Consequently, pupils make good progress in their writing skills as they move through the school.

The school has some pupils below compulsory school age. These pupils are given an appropriate range of experiences, with due regard to national guidance for this age group. They make good progress in their language and mathematical development and at least satisfactory progress in all other areas of learning. However, provision for outdoor play is inadequate, as the pupils do not have opportunities to use mobile wheeled toys and other apparatus and activities for their physical development as recommended for this stage of education.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. A part-time specialist teacher plans extra support effectively and gives these pupils some individual attention each week. As a result of this support they make good progress with their class work.

Curricular planning is good. Long- and medium-term planning is detailed and provides a firm foundation for teaching and learning. For example, pupils' knowledge of how to conduct scientific investigations by the time they leave school is impressive. Provision for ICT is very good and promotes the pupils' progress very effectively. Art and music are planned thoughtfully with a good range of experiences being provided for all year groups. Although pupils throughout the school have opportunities to develop their DT skills, for example through the rainforest dioramas made by Year 6, this subject is not planned as thoroughly as others which limits their progress. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as dance clubs, roller blading, drama workshops and choir together with residential and local visits.

The school has a carefully planned programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE), which helps to develop pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence successfully. It fully supports the school's philosophy and values, pervading lessons and interactions between staff and pupils.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good. The quality of teachers' planning is thorough. All lessons have clearly stated objectives which are often shared with the pupils. This helps to ensure that lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and that pupils make good progress. The best teaching demands high standards and challenges pupils to solve problems, as in a Year 3 science lesson where pupils had to devise an experiment to show that plants need leaves to grow successfully. In some classes work is not always matched accurately enough to pupils with different levels of attainment. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and use a wide range of strategies including questioning to introduce new work and to assess and consolidate pupils' learning. The quality of teaching is further enhanced by the school's sensible use of specialist teachers, for example in ICT, and of teachers' specialist knowledge, for example in French.

The Foundation Stage curriculum is taught effectively to pupils who are below compulsory school age in the entry classes. Teachers provide interesting and suitable activities and make good use of a wide range of resources in most of the areas of learning.

Teachers know their pupils very well and relationships are warm and friendly. Classroom routines are firmly established and these, together with teachers' high expectations for good behaviour, contribute very effectively to the positive learning atmosphere that pervades the school.

Pupils who need extra help in some aspects of their learning are given additional support. A specialist teacher, with the full involvement of the pupils' parents, makes initial assessments and then writes IEPs for the pupils. These are shared with the class teachers and as a result such pupils make good progress.

Homework is set three times a week and is used effectively to consolidate and extend work within school. In addition, pupils take reading books home regularly. The older junior pupils are also expected to complete topics at home, such as the First Aid topic in Year 6. This helps pupils to develop the skills they require in the next stage of their education.

Resources are good throughout the school and used effectively to support and enrich lessons. Teachers make efficient use of the specialist teaching facilities such as the science laboratory and the art room. There is no grassed area but games lessons are taught successfully using a nearby sports field. The library is located in the music room and this makes access difficult for the pupils.

Teachers keep detailed records of pupils' progress and use this information to plan further work. Pupils are tested regularly using a wide range of standardised and internal tests. However, whilst individual teachers have a lot of information about

their pupils this is not used effectively to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils' and to set long term targets. The quality of marking is good overall. Some very good examples were seen, especially in English, where evaluative comments leave pupils in no doubt as to what they have to do next to improve their work.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils is very good. In the warm and relaxed family ethos pupils are nurtured and respected by staff. For this reason, pupils gain in self-confidence and self-esteem. Their social and moral development is very good. They enter school happily at the start of the day. They learn to think about and care for others. Older pupils (called Playground Pals), for example, look after the younger ones or anyone else who needs help at break times. The pupils undertake a significant amount of charitable work throughout the year for those less fortunate than themselves. The choir sings for elderly people at a nearby residential home.

Pupils work and play in harmony. Their attitudes to learning are very positive, they listen attentively to their teachers and try hard with their work. The head boy and girl, together with prefects, take their duties seriously and play an important part in the life of the school. In the supportive ethos, pupils feel confident to express their emerging views. They give articulate and thoughtful responses in class discussions and assemblies. Pupils' very good behaviour is apparent throughout the school.

Teachers are good role models for tolerance and fair play which helps pupils' moral development. Their social and moral development is promoted effectively through the PSHE programme and the day-to-day life of the school. Teachers use a wide range of opportunities, such as assemblies, to discuss any relevant issues regarding the pupils' personal development. The school's Code of Conduct and Golden Rules are reviewed by each class at the start of every term to reinforce the high expectations of pupils' social and moral behaviour.

Provision for the pupils' spiritual development is very good with assemblies making an important contribution. These are relaxed, informal, and often include dialogue between the staff and the pupils. The vicar makes a valuable contribution with interesting, thoughtful assemblies which encourage humility and tolerance. The older pupils contribute most, but younger pupils listen, learn and are fully included. Curricular subjects also contribute to pupils' spiritual awareness. During the inspection, for example, the atmosphere in a science lesson for pupils in Year 6 about electricity was vibrant as they successfully made circuits in 3-D structures. This made a significant contribution to their sense of awe and wonder.

The school promotes racial and cultural harmony successfully by celebrating festivals from other cultures and by the study of different faiths in RE lessons. The pupils enjoyed an "India Day" with a food tasting which included an introduction to different cultural traditions. Chinese New Year was celebrated with a Chinese meal

cooked on the school premises and pupils in Year 2 presented an assembly on the same theme for their parents. Pupils come from a diverse range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds and the life of the school is enriched by its wise use of the interesting and important contributions these pupils make. In an introductory lesson about Islam, for example, one Muslim pupil readily discussed her religion whilst the others listened attentively and respectfully.

The pupils visit museums, theatres and art galleries which promote their cultural development appropriately. Theatre groups visit the school regularly and the school takes part in the local Nuneaton Arts' Festival. Police and fire service officers visit the school to talk to pupils on a variety of subjects linked to citizenship and pupils' safety. These experiences help strengthen the pupils' understanding of their own culture and give them a sound knowledge of the services available to them.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is very good. The school takes its responsibilities seriously in this regard. All the policies required by the regulations are in place. They have been checked against Department for Education and Skills recommendations in all respects. Pupils report that they feel able to talk to any member of staff if they have any concerns and that any problems are dealt with by staff quickly. Any serious misdemeanours by pupils, although rare, are recorded.

Fire safety is good, with fire drills undertaken each half-term. Appropriate fire risk assessments have been completed. Evacuation procedures are in place throughout the school and are fully understood by staff and pupils. Staff are deployed appropriately throughout the day and pupils are supervised carefully, especially at break times, when at least two members of staff are on duty. Three adults hold current First Aid qualifications. The school has an appropriate written First Aid policy and suitable equipment. All pupils in Year 6 undertake a recognised First Aid course.

The admission register does not contain all of the information required by current regulations, for example, pupils' addresses. Attendance registers are completed as required. The school has produced an appropriate statement with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002. There is a detailed three-year action plan in place reflecting the school's intentions to improve its existing facilities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the requirements for registration.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *maintain an admission register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (paragraph 3(9)).*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has good procedures to check, through the appropriate channels, all staff who come into contact with the pupils. At present it is still waiting for some checks to be returned from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). No member of staff is allowed to be alone with pupils until clearance is received from the CRB. It has recently revised its staff appointment procedures to include all the appropriate checks prior to confirmation of appointments.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are suitable for their purpose. The school is housed in a purpose-built building and specialist accommodation includes a science laboratory, an art room, a computer suite and a drama and dance studio. Some classrooms are small and below the suggested size guidelines for pupils of compulsory school age. These small rooms are not suitable for any increase in the number of pupils using them. All classrooms are maintained to a high standard both in décor and fittings and are considerably enhanced by attractive and informative displays of pupils' work. The facilities for pupils who are ill are inadequate. The school is fully aware of this and is taking steps to rectify the situation.

Lunches are cooked on the premises and served in a large hall which is also used as a gymnasium and assembly room. In the questionnaires sent out prior to the inspection some parents expressed concern about the quality of the school meals. The school is aware of these concerns and has already arranged a parents' meeting to discuss a healthy eating programme. Outdoor play space is limited. There is no grassed area but the school has full use of a nearby sports field and athletics track.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the requirements for registration.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply in full with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *ensure that there are appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill as required by the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(1)).*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school provides a good range of information for parents and prospective parents. The prospectus is informative and provides all the required details. School policies and procedures are readily available for parents to see on request.

Regular newsletters and the information boards keep parents fully up-to-date with the life and work of the school. Further information, including curriculum details, is available on the school's website. Informative reports on individual pupils' progress are sent home twice a year in the infant classes and three times a year in the junior classes. Parents are welcome to discuss any concerns on an informal basis at any time and have the opportunity to discuss their children's progress at more formal parents' consultation evenings.

The majority of parents who returned the questionnaires and those spoken to during the inspection period expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school. The close partnership between parents and the school is one of its many strengths. There is an active Parents' Association which holds regular fund raising events and the school appreciates its help and support.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints policy and procedures meet all requirements. The prospectus contains the complaints policy and is available for parents and prospective parents.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Milverton House School
DfES Number:	937/6091
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 143 Girls: 98 Total: 241
Annual fees:	£4,167 - £4,284
Address of school:	Park Street Attleborough Nuneaton Warwickshire CV11 4NS
Telephone number:	024 7664 1722
Fax number:	024 7637 4708
Email address:	chris.badham@milvertonsch.co.uk
Headteacher:	Mrs S D Latham
Proprietor:	Mr C Badham
Reporting Inspector:	Mr D C Houghton
Date of inspection:	11 - 14 April 2005

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