



Milefield Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106617
Local Authority Barnsley
Inspection number 287563
Inspection dates 1–2 November 2006
Reporting inspector Jane Hughes

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Milefield Lane
School category	Community		Grimethorpe, Barnsley
Age range of pupils	3–11		South Yorkshire S72 7BH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01226 710329
Number on roll (school)	173	Fax number	01226 781823
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Cllr Alex Vodden
		Headteacher	Mr Robert Rymer
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	1–2 November 2006	287563

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size school located in an area with significant disadvantage. It has experienced a high rate of staff turnover and some long-term absence of key staff during the past three and a half years. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is far larger than average. A larger than average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A few are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The school is in an Excellence in Cities area. The Children's Centre sited within the school building opened in 2005. The Early Years Unit currently has 32 Nursery children who attend part-time. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Bronze Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'The school is going from strength to strength!' enthused one parent. Milefield is emerging from a prolonged period of staffing instability. This turbulence has inhibited the pace of change since the headteacher's arrival three years ago. New staff, along with returning experienced colleagues, are enabling the leadership to press ahead with correctly identified priorities, the most important being to raise standards. Effective teachers, administrators and governors ensure that the school gives good value for money. Milefield provides a good quality of education. Although accurate in grading some aspects of its work, the school's overall evaluation of its effectiveness is modest. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher, along with other managers, provide good leadership and management. The headteacher has brought to fruition a number of successful initiatives. Parents, pupils and staff agree that behaviour is vastly improved and the ethos of the school is increasingly positive. Pupils say that they like it here. In view of the many improvements and the good progress made since its last inspection, the school demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

Although standards are just below average by the time pupils leave Year 6, achievement is good. Children enter the school with very low skills across all areas of learning. Their speaking and listening skills are particularly poor. They achieve well in the Foundation Stage because provision is good and adults constantly challenge them to express themselves and to try new experiences. Even so, children are still very immature and have a low attention span on beginning Year 1; this slows their pace of learning. Standards by the end of Year 2 are low, although the 2006 assessment results improved on the 2005 scores. Current targets and inspection evidence show that this improvement continues. Year 6 pupils have made up much of the ground lost through their slow start and the history of staffing disruptions. Standards are much closer to the national average, but could be higher. There are good systems for assessing pupils' levels of attainment. However, the school does not make full use of the data it collects from assessments to target individual pupils more closely so they can make even faster progress and reach higher standards.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are proud to say they are part of the Milefield 'family'. They relish taking responsibility for aspects of their own school community and grasp every opportunity to air their views and influence school life. Attendance is satisfactory, although below average for a minority. Despite consistent efforts from school to promote good attendance with pupils and parents, not all children attend school regularly. Fractured attendance patterns have an adverse effect on some pupils' achievement and the standards they reach.

The good quality of teaching and learning enables pupils to achieve well. Teachers work hard to stimulate pupils' curiosity through interesting and increasingly practical activities. The good curriculum is enriched by a programme of creative experiences that bring vital colour to pupils' lives and help them to understand life beyond their immediate environment. The new library is a valuable resource that entices more pupils to read for pleasure. The curriculum for Years 1 and 2 has improved since the last inspection. It now includes more practical activities that make learning more meaningful.

The school rightly prides itself on the good quality of care and support it offers pupils. Behaviour is well managed and adults' expectations of pupils are consistently high. Good liaison with parents through the Children's Centre fosters increased home-school understanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' levels of attendance so they are in line with national averages.
- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science so more pupils attain the higher levels.
- Make better use of assessment information for each pupil to inform future provision and raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although standards are just below average by Year 6, pupils achieve well given their starting points. Children in the Foundation Stage grow in confidence and begin to talk to adults and their peers more readily. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is still well below average because barriers such as poor attention and weak speaking and listening skills hold them back. However, standards in 2006 improved with more pupils attaining the higher levels. This is because one major focus for all staff is to encourage pupils to listen better and to speak at greater length in lessons about their experiences and so improve these skills. Improvements to planning for Year 1 pupils is promoting better achievement by ensuring appropriately targeted work to meet pupils' needs. Pupils respond well to consistently strong teaching as they move through Key Stage 2. As predicted, Year 6 test results dipped this year, reflecting the far larger proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities in the year group. Even so, given their very low starting points pupils made good progress overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their learning and behave well in lessons and around school. They say, 'Our school just keeps improving.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and there is a keen sense of community. Pupils exhibit caring acceptance of others who are different or who have difficulties and disabilities. Peer 'Befrienders' help children to mix positively. The active school council has growing influence. Councillors take responsibility for aspects of school life, such as the infant play equipment. The school works closely with other local schools and raises impressive funds for charities. Pupils are conscious of the strong safety messages given by staff and visiting speakers, such as those who spoke about road safety. They can identify elements of good health and praise the school's efforts to promote healthy eating. Most pupils attend regularly, although there are a few persistent irregular attenders. These pupils gain less value from their education and are less well prepared for their future well-being. There are good systems to monitor and follow up absence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have a clear understanding of how pupils learn. In the Foundation Stage, they make the activities brief but fun, an important feature for children who find concentrating for more than a few minutes difficult. Teachers offer clear explanations so pupils should know exactly what to do in each activity. Even so, pupils' poor listening skills slow the pace of their learning, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, and teachers frequently have to repeat explanations. Adults' expectations are consistently high in terms of pupils' attitudes, behaviour and the progress they make. Classrooms buzz with activity. New guided reading sessions are particularly effective. Teachers use skilful teaching assistants well to support pupils who need additional support. All adults ensure that pupils practise careful listening, particularly during lesson introductions. From Nursery upwards, adults encourage pupils to talk about their work and their experiences beyond school in order to improve their speaking and listening skills in particular.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The well balanced curriculum meets the needs of all. For example, pupils in Key Stage 1 now benefit from a more practically based curriculum for part of each day. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are well supported. They take a full part in all that the school offers. Enrichment activities such as the creative arts week bring learning alive. They extend pupils' speaking and listening skills through new activities that extend their vocabulary and experiences. Older pupils enjoy the modern foreign language club. Specialised workshops extend pupils' particular talents while after-school clubs offer physical activities. The school is rightly proud of the achievements of its first aid training group, which has received national recognition. There are good opportunities for pupils in terms of personal, social and health education and citizenship. The school also promotes a good understanding of racial equality. Foundation Stage children follow a well planned programme of 'bite size' activities. Use of the first class outdoor provision is regular but adults decide when children will learn outside, which limits somewhat opportunities for independent choice. The sharing of resources with the Children's Centre helps both settings.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is welcoming and pupils feel safe and valued, a view echoed by parents. Health and safety and child protection procedures are in place. Effective links with outside agencies ensure that vulnerable pupils are well supported. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also supported by skilful teaching assistants.

Behaviour is well managed. Pupils are very confident in the newly established systems for rewards and sanctions. They are proud of special mentions for good work and treasured their 'golden pencil' rewards. A counsellor supports pupils with emotional problems and pupils say that this is really helpful. There are growing links with parents. Good liaison through the Children's Centre is a positive element in fostering home-school links. Improvements have been made to the way pupils' learning is checked, and academic guidance is satisfactory. Assessment and tracking procedures are well established but the data generated is not analysed rigorously to support pupils' learning and raise attainment further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has ensured that staff throughout the school are united in their desire to provide the best possible academic and social experiences for pupils. One parent commented, 'The school is excellent. it involves parents and is committed to the children and to raising aspirations.' Every child matters here. Initiatives over the past three years have brought about a desire to improve standards and behaviour, and encourage more focused learners. The determined leadership knows there is still much to do and shows the vision to succeed. Governance of the school is satisfactory, although governors do not hold the school sufficiently to account for the standards attained and the progress made by pupils.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your welcome when we visited your school. You were very polite, friendly and well behaved. It was a pleasure to see you working in lessons and to chat with you around the school.

You told us that you enjoy being 'Milefield pupils' and that school gets better and better. We agree that there are many things to be proud of in your good school. You all work hard and achieve well during your time in school. You try your best in lessons, even when many of you find it difficult to listen carefully to everything adults say to you. Everyone is very friendly at Milefield. Your headteacher and all the adults make sure you all take good care of each other and get along well, whatever your differences. These are important skills for the future. We think the 'Befrienders' idea at playtime is working very well. Your parents also say that all the adults take good care of you and help with any problems.

One of the reasons for our visit was to see how your school could improve. We have asked your headteacher and all the adults to help you do even better in your English, mathematics and science work. Your teachers already collect a lot of useful information about how well you are doing. We would like them to use this information better so that you learn faster and reach higher levels in your work. You can be particularly helpful with the last thing we have asked your school to improve. Some of you do not come to school every day and so you miss lots of important work. Try to remind everyone at home that you need to come to school every single day. Mr Reid and I are sure you will remember that because it's so important.

Carry on working hard and enjoying school!