

Milton Abbot School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113258
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	289563
Inspection date	15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	David Townsend HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Rodgers
Headteacher	Peter Jones
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2001
School address	Milton Abbot Tavistock PL19 0PS
Telephone number	01822 870273
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Milton Abbot School is a smaller than average primary school which serves two villages and a large, surrounding area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities. The majority of pupils are from White British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school. As one parent said, it offers a 'caring, family atmosphere in which children thrive, personally and academically'. The staff work hard as a team to promote the headteacher's vision of a community school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their appreciation of the outstanding way in which the school cares, guides and supports their children and this was reflected in their very positive comments in parents' questionnaire replies. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They behave well, relate well to each other and adults and have a good appreciation of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, upon which they act. Their social, moral and spiritual development is good, as is their cultural awareness, which has improved because they now regularly explore world faiths, traditions and arts through the enriched curriculum on offer.

In the Foundation Stage, effective teaching and a highly stimulating new environment provide children with a very positive start to school. All children meet and many exceed the goals expected of them for their age by the time they start in Year 1. In Years 1 to 6, good teaching, underpinned by a stimulating curriculum and effective assessment procedures, helps all pupils to achieve well. By the time pupils leave school, they reach above average standards. Previous underachievement, particularly in writing and amongst younger pupils, has been robustly addressed and successfully eliminated. Some learners are encouraged to assess their own work. This practice is proving very effective in some classes. Pupils are benefiting from discussions about what constitutes high quality work and from evaluating their own progress towards these shared expectations. However, this practice is not widespread. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has made significant improvements to the learning environment and ensured all staff develop and use a high level of expertise for the benefit of pupils. Governors have been very effective in supporting and challenging the school to improve provision still further. The school's self-evaluation is now much sharper and the correct priorities for improvement have been identified and successfully pursued. The innovative ways in which achievement in writing in Years 1 and 2 has recently been improved clearly indicate the school's good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen the focus on achievement by encouraging all pupils to assess their own work regularly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Standards are above average by the time pupils leave school. They get off to a very good start in the Foundation Stage, where the outstanding provision ensures children make very good progress in all areas of the curriculum. They all reach and many exceed the goals set for children of this age and start Year 1 with a very positive attitude to school, raised self-confidence and a real enjoyment of learning.

The staff have worked hard to address past underachievement in Year 2. In 2006, results were broadly average overall, with reading standards well above average. Attainment in writing was relatively weaker, especially for boys. Inspection findings indicate pupils are now enjoying and achieving well in reading, writing and mathematics. This is as a result of the more focused teaching they receive and the specific learning targets set for each individual.

In Years 3 to 6, progress has been good. In the 2006 tests, standards were above average, especially in mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils, especially boys, achieving the higher levels in these subjects was well above average. The same would have occurred in English, except that the more able pupils' writing let them down.

The school has taken appropriate corrective action to improve provision for writing and to target the progress of each boy and girl individually. Pupils' progress in lessons and an analysis of their work indicate that achievement in literacy is now good and that the school's expectations of more able pupils in Year 2 have been raised. Pupils in all age groups have been set and are meeting the more challenging targets teachers have set for them. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress, because of the careful support offered to them by the teaching team and the effectiveness of specific programmes designed to help them acquire key skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They generally behave well and show care and courtesy to others. They are happy to come to school and attendance is above average. Discussions with pupils indicate that they enjoy lessons and very much appreciate the range of extra-curricular clubs on offer and curriculum enrichment activities provided by the school.

Pupils know the benefits of healthy living and act on this awareness. They are active, participate fully in the wide array of sports open to them and many readily take up the healthy food options on the school's 'Fresh Start' menu. They have a good awareness of personal safety and trust the adults in the school to help them. Pupils enjoy school. Bullying is very rare and pupils know whom they would turn to if they had a problem. They make a good contribution to the community. For instance, they take responsibility within the school as school council members or peer mediators, and by collecting for charity. Peer mediators have been trained to help pupils work through problems together. The skills pupils will need in later life are developing well as they make good progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT).

Pupils' social, moral and spiritual development is good. Inspection evidence indicates that the school has successfully improved pupils' cultural awareness. Older pupils enjoyed sharing stories from around the globe and exploring African art, and younger pupils loved investigating Caribbean recipes in class.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from a judicious mix of exploratory learning through play and well structured teaching. Across the school, lessons for mixed age classes are well planned, based on prior assessments. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well as a team to ensure pupils have learning experiences which are well matched to their age and ability. In the most successful lessons, teachers work at pace to instruct, question and explain skilfully, ensuring good levels of participation. They offer practical, enjoyable activities, often based on real-life experiences, which stimulate enjoyment for pupils and make the learning relevant. The strategies teachers now use to help

pupils compose their ideas for writing, once an area of concern, are proving very effective. In one outstanding lesson, pupils defined together the features of high quality work and used these to evaluate their progress. This increased pupils' feeling of involvement in their own learning and it raised their expectations and sense of urgency to succeed. However, this practice is not consistently used in each class and so some pupils move towards becoming more independent learners too slowly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good across the school, with outstanding features. It is well planned to match the needs and interests of all pupils, including those having learning difficulties and disabilities. Art, sport and music are particular strengths. Pupils progress well in these subjects and enjoy developing their skills in drawing, painting, team games, singing and playing.

A clear focus on developing basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT plays a much more central role in the curriculum than it did at the time of the last inspection. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards in lessons and a teaching assistant offers pupils skilled guidance in developing their computer skills in the ICT suite. The school has been innovative in improving boys' writing. Pupils regularly write at length in other subjects, drawing on first-hand experiences such as visits in the locality or to a city museum. Drama has been used to help pupils see the links between speaking and writing. For instance, they recognise the importance of refining language in a script in order to communicate well in a presentation to an audience.

Learning for all classes is enriched through the many visitors to school and by special events. The school has enabled pupils to become actively involved in village life in order to deepen their learning. For example, they joined a local history group in a week long archaeological dig.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils flourish within the school's family atmosphere because of the school's high quality of care, support and guidance. They are valued and nurtured as individuals by a highly dedicated team of teachers and teaching assistants. The staff make very careful checks and assessments of the progress made by all pupils, to ensure they are achieving as well as possible. The procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and regularly reviewed. The systems put in place to keep pupils safe are very good and all statutory checks are in place. Consequently, pupils work in a very safe and caring environment. Assemblies are used very sensitively to focus on issues relating to personal relationships and to each individual's qualities. Parents are very confident that their children's personal as well as academic development is well nurtured. Those learners who need it are given fast and effective support through small group and individual activities that boost their confidence and improve key skills. Vulnerable pupils are very regularly discussed to ensure they have all the help they need and the school liaises very well with parents to guide them in helping their children with their learning. Pupils know what their targets are in their work and are very confident that they will get help to reach them both from the skilled teaching team and from their peers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good.

The headteacher has promoted his vision of caring and nurturing each individual child well. The school's leaders have taken significant steps to evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses more thoroughly, ably supported and challenged by a governing body committed to securing improvement. This analysis has been used to drive improvements forward. For example, responsibility for monitoring and supporting pupils' progress is now shared across the school. The careful assessments made of pupils' learning are also used to help teachers in their classroom management for mixed age classes. Improved teaching strategies and curricular provision for teaching writing have also emanated from the analysis of pupils' recent achievement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	1
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	2
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	2
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	2

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?	1

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.

Annex A

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	2
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

I very much enjoyed visiting your school and meeting you recently.

I agree with you and your parents that your school is a good one.

Here are some of the things I think are best about your school

- You make good progress and Year 6 pupils do well in the national tests (SATs).
- You behave well, get on very well together, help each other and are very willing to take on responsibilities such as the peer mediator role.
- Most of you lead healthy, active lives by taking part in sports and games very enthusiastically and by eating sensibly.
- The Reception children get a very good start to school and learn quickly.
- You are very well cared for by the staff and feel you can talk to them if you have a problem.
- You are taught well. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to support each of you in developing your knowledge, understanding and skills.

In order that the school improves at an even faster rate, your teachers need to:

- ask you all to think about how well you have moved forward in your learning and produced high quality work in lessons.