



Milldown Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 113755
Local Authority Dorset
Inspection number 289715
Inspection dates 7–8 November 2006
Reporting inspector Colin Lee

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	The Milldown
School category	Community		Blandford Forum
Age range of pupils	4–11		DT11 7SH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01258 452456
Number on roll (school)	227	Fax number	01258 452 456
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Joseph Hickish
		Headteacher	S A Ryall
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2006		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school changed status from a First to a Primary school in September 2005 and is awaiting a move to new premises in 2008. It now has the full age range of primary pupils but is slightly smaller than the average primary school. The majority of pupils have White British backgrounds. Of the small number from minority ethnic backgrounds, seven are at an early stage of English language acquisition and have either Nepalese or Filipino as a first language. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Similarly, the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and has several good features. There is good quality provision for the Foundation Stage and the personal development and well-being of all pupils are good. Pupils' enjoyment of all that they do at school is reflected in the happy, family atmosphere that has been retained while the school has increased in size. Parents and carers are pleased with what the school provides and the comment, 'My child enjoys every moment that she is at school' has been repeated frequently in conversations with inspectors and in the many letters received.

Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall but those in Reception and the Year 4 and 5 classes achieve well. Children start with broadly average attainment when they enter Reception and progress satisfactorily to average standards in reading, mathematics and science when they reach Year 6. Writing is the one area of weakness and, with the exception of Years 4 and 5, standards are below average. The strategies being introduced to improve achievement are starting to have a positive effect. However, too few opportunities are being planned for pupils to practise writing skills across the curriculum. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress. Generally, pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve well.

The school's good pastoral care contributes significantly to pupils' personal development. The provision for a small group of pupils with significant weaknesses in emotional development and social skills is outstanding. However, care, guidance and support as a whole are satisfactory overall. This is because teachers vary in the quality of the educational guidance they provide through marking and target setting.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The curriculum has gradually been extended to cover the full primary age range and is satisfactory overall. However, mathematics apart, the planning of learning activities that match the varying needs of pupils of different abilities is not fully effective. This is because too few teachers base their lesson planning on regular checking of what pupils learned in previous lessons. Senior leaders have successfully managed the reorganisation of the school and have clear awareness of priority areas for improvement, especially of where standards and achievement need raising. Checks to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching do not lead to the consistent sharing of good practice.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in writing through extension of opportunities for the development of writing skills across all subjects.
- Ensure that pupils' work is always matched to their needs.
- Improve the checks made on teaching and learning so that best practice is shared fully.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils achieve satisfactorily, with some groups achieving well because of the good quality of the support they receive.

Attainment is average when children start in Reception. They make good progress and attain the national standards expected by the end of the Reception year in all areas of learning. There has been a recent trend of increasing weaknesses in aspects of personal and social and language development when the children start school, but the school is overcoming this successfully

Achievement in Years 1 and 2 showed steady improvement from 2003 to 2005, with performance in national tests for Year 2 rising to above national averages. Overall standards dipped in 2006, most especially in writing, which was due to nearly half the class having learning difficulties or disabilities. Current Year 2 pupils are achieving satisfactorily overall, but could make better progress in writing. Here, as in most year groups, standards are below average. Pupils achieve well in the Year 4 and 5 classes as a result of good teaching. Those in Year 6 are making satisfactory progress towards their challenging targets

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school's emphasis on social and emotional education when children start school results in them behaving well, listening carefully and going sensibly about their activities. This good behaviour and positive attitude to learning continues throughout the school. Attendance is improving and with a recent reduction in absences is now satisfactory.

Pupils are knowledgeable and confident about healthy lifestyles. They feel safe and protected in school. The presence of well-trained peer mentors in the playground helps all pupils to sort out minor difficulties quickly. Pupils of all ages volunteer for this important responsibility. Their success is helped by the high quality of the relationships that have developed between pupils. The school council represents an important voice for all pupils. They have recently conducted a wide-ranging audit of their classmates' views on many aspects of school life. They are clear about their role in initiating appropriate action. Pupils contribute well to the school and local communities. The fact that all year groups have defined responsibilities within the school is preparing them well for their future lives as good citizens. In other respects, pupils' sound basic skills of reading and numeracy mean they are satisfactorily prepared for future education and eventual economic well-being. Good spiritual, moral and social and sound cultural education is reflected in the responsible and considerate behaviour of the pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There is some inconsistency in teaching. It is satisfactory overall but best in Reception and Years 4 and 5. Pupils' achievement accelerates in these years. Teachers plan work thoroughly but they vary in the extent to which they successfully match activities to the needs of pupils of different abilities. This has improved in mathematics but is not consistent enough in writing or science. There are also inconsistencies in the extent to which teachers plan lessons that take into account assessment of what pupils have learned in the past. In their planning, teachers identify clearly the skills and knowledge to be learned in a lesson. These are usually explained to the pupils at the start but the practice of reviewing with the pupils how successful their learning has been is not consistent. Pupils know what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and teachers manage behaviour well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

In its transition from a First to a Primary school, leaders have maintained a good curriculum in the Foundation Stage but it has taken some time to develop a full curriculum for the oldest pupils. This has now been completed and stronger links between subjects and carefully planned visits to enrich learning are resulting in a more motivational experience for these pupils. Teachers' planning takes good account of the needs of individuals in some year groups, but this isn't consistent throughout the school. There is an appropriate balance of time spent on each subject, which is an improvement since the last inspection.

The good range of well-attended clubs, including a variety of sporting activities, adds to pupils' enjoyment of school. Provision for information and communication technology has been improved satisfactorily and this is having a positive impact on the development of pupils' basic skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support given to pupils is satisfactory. The good relationships within the school and the close attention to pupils' personal development and well-being result in good pastoral care. The most vulnerable pupils are excellently supported within a nurture group which has been established for those with significant social and emotional needs. The school has sound procedures to ensure pupils' protection and safe-keeping.

Some teachers use assessment and marking very well to give individual pupils clear guidance for the next steps in their learning. This good practice is not consistent

throughout the school, which means that not all pupils are aware of how to improve their achievement or measure their own success.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has been the driving force that has led to satisfactory improvements in the school's performance since the last inspection. There are improved procedures for the evaluation of data about pupils' attainment and achievement. This means that the data is now used constructively to monitor each pupil's progress over time, to identify those achieving less than expected and to provide support designed to improve their achievement. Monitoring and evaluation in general have improved satisfactorily since the last inspection, leading to the raising of standards in reading and mathematics. The improved checking of the quality of teaching has highlighted both good and ineffective practice. This has led to satisfactory improvement, though not all of the advances have been consistent because identified strengths, such as where there is a good match between pupils' work and their abilities, have not been shared widely enough. Nevertheless, the school has the necessary capacity for future improvement.

Governors ask critical questions to ensure appropriate decisions are made. They use varying strategies, from informal association with a class to formal liaison with subject co-ordinators, to provide effective monitoring of school performance and development.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

We very much enjoyed visiting your school and we want to thank you for making us very welcome and showing us your work.

- What we liked about your school
- Your school provides you with a satisfactory education.
- You reach average standards and because you are taught soundly, you make satisfactory progress.
- Your school is led soundly.
- Your parents and carers are right in thinking that you are at a school where everyone is cared for and considered important.
- Those of you who find the work harder than other pupils get helpful support and are making good progress.
- You work hard and behave well.
- We saw how well you get on with each other and liked the way you help anyone who needs it. The peer mediators are doing a very good job, as is the School Council.
- You told us how much you enjoy being at the school and we saw that when you were in lessons and outside at playtimes.
- What we have asked the school to do now
- You could do better writing, both in your literacy lessons and in other subjects.
- We want teachers and helpers to check more often how well you are learning and make sure your work is neither too hard nor too easy.
- Your headteacher is going to check how well the good things seen in different classes are spread to all parts of the school.