

Thornton Cleveleys Millfield Science and Performing Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119714
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	298574
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Joe Clark

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	717
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Harry Pindred
Headteacher	Mr Sean Bullen
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2006
School address	Belvedere Road Thornton-Cleveleys Lancashire FY5 5DG
Telephone number	01253 865929
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Millfield School serves an area where social and economic conditions are average, but where there are pockets of significant deprivation. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is above average. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage with only a small number of minority ethnic students. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Attainment on entry to the school is just below average. The school has a high level of pupil mobility. In September 2005, it became a Science and Performing Arts College. Since September 2006, the school has had a new headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Millfield School provides a satisfactory standard of education. It has made good progress in the last twelve months and has good capacity for further improvement. Consequently, in accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The school has made significant improvement because the headteacher and other leaders have tackled the weaknesses identified in the previous report with great energy and determination. The leadership of the headteacher in setting the school on a new course has been outstanding. Students' progress is now satisfactory. The school's own analysis of prior attainment indicates that students enter the school with standards that are slightly below average. They are making satisfactory progress as they move through the school and are currently achieving standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 that, whilst below average, are improving. Standards in the performing arts are well above average and pupils achieve well in these subjects. Standards in science have also been consistently higher than in English and mathematics; in mathematics, standards are well below average although they are rising. Throughout the school, standards of literacy are weak, and students have insufficient opportunities to develop their literacy skills in other subjects. The support that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive is good and they make satisfactory progress in their academic work.

Students' better progress has not yet resulted in higher performance in the Year 9 tests and GCSE results, but the legacy of underachievement is being successfully tackled and the students are making better progress. The improvement in progress is at least in part due to better attendance. Attendance has improved in the last two terms as a result of new management systems now applied to improve it, although it is still below average.

Students' progress has improved because teaching and learning, which is satisfactory, is improving. Staff changes and the improvements brought about as a result of rigorous monitoring, intervention and support, have helped greatly to improve teaching and more good or outstanding lessons are now being taught. Nevertheless, there are insufficient opportunities for teachers to observe and share the best practice in order to raise their own performance to the same level. The curriculum is satisfactory.

Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning remain satisfactory, but are improving. Students make a good contribution to the local and school community. They have a good awareness of the benefits of healthy living by adopting good eating habits and taking regular exercise. In school, they feel safe and well cared for and receive good pastoral support and satisfactory academic guidance. Currently, the Year 11 students have broadly average basic skills in English and information and communication technology (ICT), but below average skills in mathematics. These, combined with sound social and personal skills, give students a satisfactory preparation for their future economic prosperity. Partnerships with other institutions are good. Assessment and tracking systems are satisfactory and improving and are helping students make progress at a faster rate. Parents are increasingly pleased with what the school currently offers. A Year 7 parent wrote, 'I feel that the school has given my son many opportunities to show his potential and I am very happy with the progress he has made during his first year.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards of literacy, providing students with more planned opportunities to apply their literacy skills in all subjects.
- Identify and share with all teachers the best practice that already exists in lessons so that the general level of teaching can be improved from satisfactory to good or better.
- Raise standards in mathematics.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students join the school with standards that are just below average. Current standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are below average and achievement is satisfactory. Until recently, with the exception of higher attaining students whose achievement was satisfactory, students made inadequate progress and results at the end of Key Stage 3 and 4 were well below average. Inspection evidence, including teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 and GCSE coursework marks already awarded in subjects such as science, ICT, French, design and technology and leisure and tourism, indicate that standards are rising and students' progress is improving. The proportion of Year 11 students predicted to achieve the expected standards in terms of five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, is significantly higher than this time last year and is not far short of average.

Specialist College Status has had a positive impact on improving standards and achievement in science, which are consistently higher than in English and mathematics, and also in the performing arts subjects, in which standards are well above average and pupils achieve well. Standards in English are below average, but improving. In mathematics, standards are improving slowly, but are still well below average in Year 9 and below average in Year 11. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most students enjoy coming to school. Behaviour is satisfactory and improving due to the new, coherent behaviour policy with its well understood expectations, strategies and procedures for students and staff. Younger students say that they are made welcome and appreciate the peer mentoring system, which helps them settle quickly into the school. Social, spiritual, moral and cultural development is satisfactory. Whilst moral and social development is stressed and students have regular and varied experiences of cultural ethnic and religious diversity, few teachers identify opportunities to explore spiritual awareness.

Students say that the occasional incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. All feel safe in school and know whom to approach should they need advice. They have a good understanding of the way in which diet and physical activity contribute to a healthy lifestyle and know about the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse. Students generously support a range of local and national charities and enjoy opportunities to represent their school, especially in sport and drama. Students make a positive contribution to the community. Specialist school status has

enabled the school to develop strong community links with local colleges and primary schools through the school's virtual learning environment (VLE). Low levels of literacy handicap the future economic well-being of some students. Attendance is improving, but remains below average in spite of a range of rigorous strategies to deal with it.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is improving at a good rate, but the school's extensive monitoring records indicate that the proportion of good teaching is not yet high enough across all subjects. In the most effective lessons observed, students were actively involved in discussion and practical activities. Teachers' questioning built quickly on what students knew and could do and provided good opportunities for them to learn through trial and error. These lessons were well structured and made good use of ICT; for example, in an outstanding mathematics lesson. Students behave well and work with enthusiasm when expectations are high and challenging work is set for completion within given time limits. Students' concentration lapses when the lesson content is not very stimulating and the pace is slow. The marking of students' written work is inconsistent across subjects; consequently, students do not always know exactly what it is they have to do to improve their work. The homework schedule encourages independent research well but it does not provide sufficient, regular opportunities for students to practise and consolidate their literacy and numerical skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It provides appropriate learning opportunities for all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It also provides challenges for higher attaining students; for example, in Year 9, students can gain early entry for qualifications in French and the performing arts. Planning to develop basic skills throughout the full range of subjects is weak, particularly those of literacy. The Key Stage 4 curriculum offers a good range of vocational courses to students whose needs are not met adequately by the traditional academic subjects. Good links with local businesses and colleges enrich students' learning experiences and personal development. The annual Enterprise Day raises students' awareness of important financial issues, helps develop their social skills through teamwork and group presentations and makes a good contribution to their future economic well-being. There is provision for a good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and drama. The school's virtual learning environment provides good opportunities for students and parents to access resources for lessons, homework activities, as well as retrieve coursework guidance and information for their GCSE subjects, from school and home.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care and support students receive are good. Child protection procedures and requirements are fully in place and carefully monitored. Learning mentors and teaching assistants provide effective support, particularly for the most vulnerable. Students with emotional and behavioural difficulties receive effective support. A new behavioural referral system provides consistency of expectations for behaviour in lessons. Internal exclusion procedures are effective in reducing

school exclusions and helping to reintegrate students into school after absence. Academic guidance is satisfactory and the information from assessment is used well to set academic targets. In some subjects, for example, science, these are carefully monitored and adjusted to set more challenging targets and to keep students informed of how well they are doing. However, this is not consistent practice across all subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. In a short period of time, with the effective support of governors, senior leaders and managers and the local authority, he has given a new direction and impetus to the school's work. This team has proved highly effective in turning around the underachievement of recent years and improvement since the previous inspection has been good. There is a clear vision, well articulated, of a school where students' achievement, academic and personal, is of overriding importance. Difficult issues have been tackled courageously, particularly to improve staffing and the standards of teaching. High expectations of what students can achieve have raised aspirations and re-energised staff. Robust monitoring systems have been introduced and principles of self-evaluation and accountability permeate all levels of management.

More effective middle management has resulted in improved teaching and learning and better attendance. There is still a way to go for teaching and learning to be good enough to enable students' achievement to be at least good, but the school has reversed a falling trend with pupils' improved progress. There remains an inconsistency in the implementation of some policies; for example, in the monitoring and improvement of teaching and learning.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors provide effective support and are developing better monitoring systems to ensure that they are well informed about the school's work but these have not yet had an impact on students' achievement, which remains satisfactory. Parents have confidence in the school and in the new headteacher.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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?	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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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?	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.

Annex A

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	2
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

17 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Thornton Cleveleys Millfield Science and Performing Arts College,
Thornton-Cleveleys, FY5 5DG

Thank you for taking time to talk to us when we visited your school recently and for the valuable contribution that many of you made to this inspection.

The last time your school was inspected you were not making as much progress in your work as you should have been, particularly in mathematics. Your new and outstanding headteacher is beginning to make a big difference to the way the school is run. To make this a good school in every way will take a lot longer than the two terms he has had so far but, even so, you are now already making better progress in your lessons and achieving higher standards in your work. This is because the quality of teaching you receive is improving. However, the school will not become a good school unless you do your bit and attend more regularly, as many of you are beginning to do, and work that bit harder.

We think your behaviour and attitudes to school and to work are satisfactory, but improving. You make a good contribution to the life of the local community and enjoy taking on new responsibilities, for example, as prefects.

We have asked the school to help you do even better by:

- making sure in every lesson teachers help you improve your English skills
- improving the quality of teaching by enabling all teachers to observe and learn from the good and outstanding lessons taught by many teachers
- improving your standards and progress in mathematics.

Thank you once again for all your help. Good luck for the future!

Yours sincerely

Joe Clark (Lead Inspector), Keith Brammer, Bimla Kumari and June Tracey