

Millom Infants' School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 112159 |
| Local Authority | Cumbria |
| Inspection number | 310801 |
| Inspection dates | 18–19 October 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Carole Cressey |

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

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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 75 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Tony Gilmore |
| Headteacher | Mrs Lesley Bain (Acting Head) |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 December 2003 |
| School address | Lapstone Road Millom Cumbria LA18 4LP |
| Telephone number | 01229 772679 |
| Fax number | 01229 770353 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small school serving an area with pockets of significant social deprivation. The children come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. At the time of the inspection, an acting headteacher had been in post for six weeks. A permanent headteacher has been appointed from the 1 January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Millom Infants' School provides a satisfactory education for its children. Leadership is satisfactory and self-evaluation is realistic and accurate. Teaching, learning, test results and the curriculum have been monitored and evaluated to identify aspects for improvement.

Children enter Reception with skills that are broadly typical for their ages and by the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average. Progress is satisfactory. Girls do especially well, but boys do not achieve as well as they should in reading and writing. Although teaching, the curriculum, and care are satisfactory they have not been challenging enough to enable all children to do as well as they could. The acting headteacher has quickly gained an accurate insight into the school's strengths and also what needs to be done to raise standards and achievement. As a result, the provision is beginning to improve. Teaching is satisfactory with elements of good and outstanding practice, but not enough lessons provide sufficient motivation and challenge. The best teaching captures children's interests, accelerates progress, and focuses learning tasks accurately on their individual needs.

Children's personal development is satisfactory. They enjoy school and say, 'Our new headteacher makes us work hard and we are getting more sensible every day'. Extra time has been given to the teaching of reading and writing skills and this is having a positive impact on improving standards. Improved resources, after-school clubs, visits, and visitors enrich learning. Topics and tasks are chosen to catch the imagination of boys as well as girls. However, this practice is inconsistent and some lessons do not capture the interests of all children. Although parents are delighted that behaviour has improved, there are still occasions where some boys become inattentive when teaching lacks challenge.

Care and guidance is satisfactory. However, the marking and assessment of children's work, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is not used well enough to identify and track progress carefully. Children have a sound understanding of how they can stay healthy, keep themselves and others safe and become responsible and confident members of their community. They are especially kind to children in their class who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, recognising that they need special attention, patience and care. The 'sunshine room' provides a quiet and secure haven for children who find learning especially difficult.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and gives satisfactory value for money. In a short time, the acting headteacher has gained the support of parents, children, staff and governors and has already improved significant aspects of the provision. As a result, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The effectiveness and management of the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. By the end of the Reception year, most children make satisfactory progress to reach the learning goals expected for their ages and abilities except in communication, language and literacy skills. Considerable emphasis is placed on helping children to learn to be kind and sociable individuals who can share, wait their turn and develop personal care and safety. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good quality and sensitive care.

Outdoor learning is especially effective in supporting and extending children's spontaneous play. Children are eager learners, for instance, as they dig for an imaginary cave in the garden

or climb over, through and under the large equipment as they 'go on a bear hunt'. Teaching is satisfactory, but not all activities have sufficiently clear outcomes for children to ensure they get the maximum learning from each experience. As a result, the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy are not woven into the many good activities as well as they could be.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement for boys in reading and writing.
- Improve teaching so all lessons challenge, motivate and interest children.
- Use assessment systems more rigorously to accurately identify children's level of attainment and enable them to make better progress.

A small proportion of 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

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. Progress is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. In the school's results for seven-year-olds in 2006, standards were average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2007 the girls achieved very well and the majority reached the expected standards for their ages. However, boys did not achieve as well as the girls in reading and writing and standards were especially low. Standards are beginning to rise because of higher expectations of what children, especially boys, can achieve. As a result, progress is accelerating and they are working at levels which are closer to those expected for their ages. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress towards their targets because of the effective support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Children enjoy school; their behaviour is satisfactory and they themselves say, 'Behaviour in school is getting better everyday.' They are happy to follow school rules that they say 'make school easier'. The impact of the school's 'rap' which begins, 'Go out in the playground and have some fun but don't be mean to anyone' is self-evident as children can be seen sharing equipment, taking turns, arranging a team game or chatting happily to their friends. However, there are too many lessons where boys especially do not take a full part and become easily distracted. Children say they are safe in school, confirmed by the inspection, and know that the staff will sort out any concerns for them. They have a sound understanding of healthy lifestyles and especially enjoy the cookery club and the sporting activities available. These promote good social skills of cooperation and self-confidence. Children develop a satisfactory awareness of their responsibilities for future learning and as members of their local and world community. Their parents are pleased that their children are learning about the importance of recycling.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and have some good and outstanding features. When teaching is good or better children are highly motivated, well behaved and successful learners. Hours before a science lesson started, for example, children were excited about doing an 'eggsperiment'. This outstanding lesson was full of interest, challenge and practical tasks as boys and girls eagerly conducted a fair test on eggs to discover which drinks were least harmful to their teeth. Relationships were warm and good humoured; positive comments encouraged children to be confident and, as a result, they made rapid strides in their knowledge and understanding. Teaching assistants are deployed well so that children are taught in small groups.

Where teaching is least successful and lessons lack rigour, pupils spend too much time listening to the teacher rather than being actively engaged in challenging tasks to reinforce and extend learning. In these lessons boys do not learn enough. They talk together, misbehave and look for excuses to leave the classroom. The information about what children know and can do gained from assessments and tests is not always used well enough to plan work that is sufficiently challenging for individuals and groups. Children's work is marked, but too little help is provided to enable the children to know exactly what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. Staff are working well with the new leadership team to provide a more challenging learning environment for children. Recent improvements include literacy and numeracy skills woven into other lessons, such as science, history and religious education to deepen understanding and add interest and relevance to learning. Extra time is being made available for quality reading sessions each day and all lessons now include opportunities for children to learn letter sounds systematically. More challenging reading materials to interest boys as well as girls have been purchased. Activities are carefully planned to enrich children's personal and social development. Children have more than the recommended time for physical activity engaging in rugby, football, jogging and dance. The construction and cookery club are firm favourites and are adding another dimension to children's ability to cooperate, use their imagination and learn first-hand how to make a healthy meal.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Procedures for safeguarding children's welfare, health and safety are in place and meet government requirements. The school is prompt in raising concerns about individual children and involving other agencies, such as the 'children's centre' to support vulnerable children. Individual education plans are in place for those children who require them. However, these are sometimes too general and targets are not sufficiently detailed to enable staff to accurately measure children's progress. The staff assess children's progress regularly. However, the information is not used enough to track children's progress to ensure they all make the progress they should. Children are given too little detail on how

well they are progressing. The nurture group provides a safe and secure environment for children who have emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting headteacher is having an immediate impact on improving the quality of children's learning. This is because of her accurate assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She has rapidly identified where the school needs to make improvements and taken decisive action to improve school self-evaluation, the use of information about children's progress, and the management of behaviour. Following her review, assessment systems, test results, the curriculum and teaching have been monitored and strengths and weaknesses identified. Information is being gathered on the attainment of children when they start in the Reception class and when they move into Year 1. This along with a range of tests and assessments are now being used effectively to pinpoint children's attainment and set them challenging but achievable targets at the end of Year 2. Governors are supportive of the school, but have had insufficient information about the school's strengths and weaknesses. With support from the staff, governors and the local authority, the school has begun to determine strategies to improve the provision and ensure all children reach these targets. Expectations are rising, boys are more motivated, standards of work are higher and the school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 3 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 |
| 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| 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

22 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Millom Infants' School, Cumbria, LA18 4LP

Thank you so much for being so friendly and welcoming when I visited your school a short while ago. I would like to tell you some of things I found. Your school gives you a satisfactory and improving quality of education.

I was so pleased to see how much you are enjoying all the exciting things your new headteacher is providing. I happen to know that she and your teachers are planning an extra special secret surprise at the end of this term. You all seem to know the importance of eating sensible food and taking lots of exercise. You especially enjoy the cookery club and the football and rugby. Do keep this up because it is so important to staying healthy and fit. I was also very pleased to see how kind you are to all of your classmates especially those who sometimes need lots of help around school and with their lessons.

I know that some of your lessons are good and the staff are keen to make all of them good. They know that your work is improving, and they are going to tell you how you can get even better. So listen carefully and pay attention when your teachers talk to you or write comments in your books. I do think the boys could do better especially in reading and writing. The staff are going to make sure that there are books and other things in school to interest boys and girls.

Your parents told me that you are all behaving so much better this term. I am pleased about that, but some boys could be even better behaved in lessons. If you all work that bit harder you could learn a lot more and help to make your school better still. So good luck!

I do hope you continue to enjoy school and that it will help you to become happy and successful adults.

Yours sincerely

Carole Cressey

Lead inspector