

Millgate School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120362
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	313589
Inspection dates	15–16 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Frank Price

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Coopey
Headteacher	Anne Tulloch
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	18A Scott Street Leicester LE2 6DW
Telephone number	01162 704922
Fax number	01162 708753

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Millgate School educates pupils who have severe emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. A small number of pupils have exceptionally challenging behaviours. The school has developed three closely integrated provisions for residential, extended day and day places. At the time of the inspection there were long-term absences of the headteacher, and the head of care. The school has a four nights per week facility, which can accommodate up to 10 pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of Millgate School is satisfactory. The school currently faces a difficult time as key members of the senior management team are absent due to long-term illness. Nevertheless, the acting senior management team has worked extremely hard to guide the school through these challenges and has been successful in establishing stability. The acting headteacher has provided good leadership in the face of daunting challenges. Staff have rallied and shown determined teamwork to establish a stable and caring environment, where pupils are respected and are able to continue their learning. The governing body has provided good support and advice and governors have a clear grasp of the challenges the school faces.

Standards are exceptionally low for most pupils as they have gaps in their learning due to their often disrupted and fragmented education. Their achievement is satisfactory. As pupils get older and develop maturity, their behaviour improves and they make satisfactory progress in their learning. The satisfactory curriculum supports pupils' learning by concentrating on key skills, but vocational courses and qualifications to engage pupils' more effectively in learning are in the early stages of development. Pupils enjoy work experience placements, which appropriately prepare them for the world of work.

Pupils develop a good understanding of healthier lifestyles, through choosing healthy foods and sport and leisure activities. Their understanding of how to stay safe is more limited, as some pupils are not aware of the consequences of their actions on themselves or others. Those parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire were supportive of the school and recognise the improvements in their children. One parent noted, 'My son is doing very well and has progressed lots since starting at Millgate.'

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learning is sometimes disrupted by the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils, but teachers work extremely hard to establish positive relationships with pupils, to help them engage in lessons. However, a minority of pupils with very challenging behaviours do not respond to this or the school's support systems and continue to provide behavioural challenges. Despite the best endeavours of the school, staff struggle to meet their needs. The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are good and enable most pupils to improve their behaviour. The school has strong links with a range of agencies to help reduce pupils' barriers to learning. Pupils benefit from this and make satisfactory progress in their personal development. Much work goes into making pupils receptive to school through the residential facility, breakfast club and extended day activities. However, some pupils attend irregularly and do not gain full benefit from what the school offers. This, together with the high level of fixed-term exclusions used by the school, impacts negatively upon their overall progress.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The residential provision for pupils is good. Some minor procedural issues were raised at the time of the last inspection in January 2008 and the acting head of care has drawn up an appropriate action plan to address these issues. Pupils' independence skills are promoted effectively and the residential provision makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development by bringing stability to their lives and helping to improve behaviour and attendance.

There is a good range of after school activities such as sports and cookery that pupils can participate in and pupils enjoy these opportunities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Clarify the range of needs the school admits, to ensure all pupils' needs can be met effectively.
- Improve pupils' attendance and reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions to enable all pupils to achieve as well as they should.
- Extend the range of vocational courses and qualifications to increase the enjoyment and achievement of pupils. 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

Pupils generally achieve their predicted levels and make satisfactory progress over time. A small number of pupils make good progress and several, by the end of year 11, achieve GCSE grades or Entry level qualifications in a range of subjects. Pupils perform better in non-literacy based subjects such as mathematics, design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT), which have more practical approaches. In one physical education lesson for example, pupils improved their performance in athletics, and in a design and technology lesson pupils enjoyed designing, making and sewing a baseball cap for their own personal use. Most pupils also achieve bronze level awards in the Youth Award Scheme in a range of modules. Nearly all pupils go on to further education colleges or preparation for employment courses when they leave school. The high number of fixed-term exclusions affects the progress of a few pupils, as does the poor attendance of a small number of pupils. The impact of the behaviour of those pupils who have extremely complex emotional and challenging behaviour affects their own learning and on occasions restricts other pupils' learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory. Pupils report that they are safe at school, although they recognise that there are instances of disruptive behaviour. A few pupils are unable to follow the school rules and this results in a high number of temporary exclusions. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning, taking pride in their work and say they enjoy school. However, for a small number of pupils attendance is poor. Pupils have confidence in staff, which encourages them to resolve issues that trouble them. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school through the school council and to the wider community through supporting charitable causes. Pupils also have regular visits to the local community, for lessons in swimming, football and basketball, and through the extended day, to the local shops. As a result, most pupils learn to behave in different situations and gain in confidence and self-esteem. Work experience opportunities help prepare pupils for the future soundly. Pupils learn the importance of leading healthy lifestyles by making suitable choices about food, drink and, by making good use of the many opportunities provided within the grounds, in being physically active.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Staff work hard to establish trusting and supportive relationships with pupils and this is effective in managing the majority of pupils' behaviour. Staff use a wide range of clearly understood strategies and apply rewards and sanctions appropriately to modify pupils' behaviour. However, despite these approaches, the actions of a few pupils with more complex emotional and behavioural needs, impacts not only on their own learning, but also that of other pupils as well from time-to-time. Some pupils are unsettled by the absence of key staff and this affects their behaviour and learning. Teachers work hard to find a variety of ways of engaging pupils in lessons, which are well paced. Planning to meet the range of individual needs is variable across the school and not all teachers encourage pupils to assess their own work consistently. Learning is most effective when practical activities are used and pupils' concentration and enjoyment improves noticeably. ICT is often used well to enhance teaching and engage pupils well in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills in numeracy, literacy and ICT. High priority is given to promoting their personal development through the personal, social and health education programme. This provides pupils with a good understanding about key risks such as substance misuse and sexual relationships. It also helps to promote pupils' emotional and social development soundly. The school operates a good extended curriculum to enrich pupils' experiences and approximately half the school participate in activities such as sport and cookery. Although a few vocational courses have been introduced, there is not a wide enough range of courses and accredited qualifications to fully engage the more disaffected pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The provision for securing the safety and well-being of pupils is rigorous. Behaviour mentors and care staff work well in conjunction with teachers so that there is a consistent approach in and out of lessons. For many pupils this has a positive impact on their behaviour and enables them to improve. The school provides a wide range of experiences that develop pupils' confidence such as residential visits, and this, together with very good use of the boarding provision, has enabled most pupils to develop their independent skills and manage their behaviour in a variety of different settings. The school makes very good use of specialists within the local authority (LA) with relevant knowledge, for example in autism and attention deficit disorder, and has close links with many agencies that help provide effective support for the specific needs of pupils. The school recognises that the needs of a small number of pupils with complex emotional difficulties are not always met effectively.

Pupils receive good individualised support to further concentrate on basic skills and promote their academic guidance. Staff know pupils well and issues in their background which affect them, and this enables them to provide good levels of pastoral care. There are good links between the care staff and teaching staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting senior management team have worked hard to establish stability in the school at a time of uncertainty, caused by unavoidable long-term absences to key strategic members of staff. The acting headteacher has provided good practical and determined leadership and management to instil confidence into the rest of the staff. She has received regular and helpful support and advice from the LA. The governing body is aware of the challenges the school faces and has also provided valuable support. For example, appointments to cover absences have been made from within the school to minimise the impact upon pupils and to achieve stability. Inevitably some of the planned developments for the school have been rescheduled, but the school has rightly focused on the most important priorities.

The acting senior management team have carried out good internal monitoring and given helpful feedback to teachers to further develop their practice. The school recognises the need to improve pupils' attendance and to address the needs more effectively of those pupils with the most complex difficulties. The school has an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses and how to address these most effectively. Despite the challenges the school faces, given the collaborative and supportive help from the LA and governors, it has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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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
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?	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	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 enjoyed my visit to your school and meeting and talking with you. All the staff, including teaching and care staff, look after you well. Most of you make sound progress in improving your behaviour and academic progress. By the time you leave school, many of you have gained some form of qualification. However, for some pupils, attendance, exclusions and behaviour stops you from achieving as well as you might. Staff know you well, they take time to listen to you and try to give you the help you need, often on an individual basis. They work closely with your families or other people, which in turn helps you to be better prepared to face school. The residential provision is good and helps you to be more independent and prepares you well for school at the start of the day. You are taught soundly and teachers know how to get the best out of you. The courses and activities prepare you for the future, but there could be a wider range of courses for you to follow.

The school has been through a difficult time with a number of important staff being absent. The acting headteacher has done a good job in steering the school through this turbulent time and is looking at how to make things better.

To improve the things further, I have asked the school to make the following changes.

- Look carefully at the range of needs the school admits, to ensure it can meet all of your needs.
- Reduce the high level of temporary exclusions and work to improve your attendance.
- Widen the range of vocational courses and qualifications you can follow.

You can help to improve the school by ensuring you attend lessons regularly, follow the instructions of staff carefully and continue to work hard.

I wish you well in the future.



17 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millgate School, Leicester LE2 6DW

I enjoyed my visit to your school and meeting and talking with you. All the staff, including teaching and care staff, look after you well. Most of you make sound progress in improving your behaviour and academic progress. By the time you leave school, many of you have gained some form of qualification. However, for some pupils, attendance, exclusions and behaviour stops you from achieving as well as you might. Staff know you well, they take time to listen to you and try to give you the help you need, often on an individual basis. They work closely with your families or other people, which in turn helps you to be better prepared to face school. The residential provision is good and helps you to be more independent and prepares you well for school at the start of the day. You are taught soundly and teachers know how to get the best out of you. The courses and activities prepare you for the future, but there could be a wider range of courses for you to follow.

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I wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Frank Price
Lead inspector