

Milford Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123723
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314691
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Anna Sketchley

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	411
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shaun Kitto
Headteacher	John Gordon
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Glenthorne Avenue Yeovil BA21 4PG
Telephone number	01935 474477
Fax number	01935 410681

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Milford Junior is larger than most junior schools. There is special provision for pupils with speech and language disorders but they are fully integrated into the school community. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups and none are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/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

Milford Junior is a satisfactory school. However, it is not complacent and the headteacher and the whole school community are dedicated to raising achievement further. The school is slowly recovering from a dip in attainment. Methods to help improve writing have been particularly successful and boys are achieving well. Standards are now broadly average and pupils are making satisfactory progress overall. Music is a particular strength of the school and standards are above those expected nationally.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils display a real regard for one another, are exceptionally well behaved and get on very well together. The excellent relationships that exist between pupils and all adults mean that pupils' attitude to their work and to school life in general is very good. Pupils feel well supported and know they are cared for. They enjoy school, attend regularly and take a full part in all that is offered to them. There is overwhelming support from parents for this very happy, calm, well ordered and safe school and many make appreciative comments such as 'Milford is a warm, welcoming school' and 'the school is a very caring, friendly and safe environment'.

Teaching is satisfactory with many good features and pupils say teachers make learning interesting and fun. The curriculum is enriched by well attended clubs and visits which contribute well to pupils' good personal development. Milford is a very inclusive school and pupils with a wide variety of learning difficulties and disabilities are all well supported within the classroom. Although all pupils have targets to guide them in their academic progress, systems for generating these are sometimes complicated and do not involve pupils enough in understanding what steps to take next to improve their work. The school has also recognised that it needs to use pupils' assessments more regularly because it is not identifying underachievement early enough. This results in some pupils not making as much progress as they could or as quickly as they might.

The headteacher is full of energy and passionate about improvement. Since the last inspection the school has responded to many new initiatives in an effort to raise levels of attainment and improve achievement and although some of these have been successful progress has been slow in some areas. The focus on too many new initiatives has diluted the impact on raising standards and the school recognises that this must be the priority if standards and progress are to improve. Plans for the coming year correctly identify a few important issues and prioritise what needs to be done to ensure a faster rate of progress for pupils. Parents are kept well informed of plans for improvement. In the words of one parent, 'It is refreshing to know that the school is actively looking for ways to improve.' The school also works especially well in partnership with other local schools and external agencies. This is securing a seamless education for pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of progress in English and mathematics by using assessments more frequently to track pupils' progress, identifying their needs and ensuring that these are met.
- Ensure a greater involvement for pupils in understanding how well they are learning and what they need to do next to improve.
- Ensure a focused approach to improvement at all levels of leadership and management in order to ensure more rapid progress of the school's priorities.

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

When pupils join the school in Year 3 standards are usually average in English and mathematics. However, pupils in the current Year 6 joined the school with standards below those expected for their age. Although they have made satisfactory progress standards are lower than usual this year and remain below average. The school sets challenging targets and despite the overall lower standards pupils in Year 6 are on course to meet them. Changes to teaching and to the curriculum have been successful in improving boys' writing and as a result, progress in English is showing signs of accelerating throughout the school. The school includes an above average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and although these pupils make the same level of progress as others they do not always reach the same standard by the time they leave. This affects the overall standard of attainment by the end of Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have a good idea of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and knowledge about healthy eating. They take very good advantage of all the activities that are on offer to them, demonstrating that they enjoy keeping fit by their high attendance at after school sports clubs. They develop a very caring attitude and a good sense of right and wrong which is why they behave so well. Pupils know how to keep safe and who to go to if they are in any difficulty. However, their understanding of the diversity of cultures found in modern Britain is limited. Pupils are keen to take responsibility and 'Kids Council' members show good levels of maturity when making recommendations to improve the environment, such as improvements to litter bins in the playground. Through raising money for charities, such as Children in Need and The Lord's Larder, they make a significant contribution to the local and wider community but they have limited roles of responsibility around the school. Pupils' basic skills in language and mathematics are preparing them satisfactorily for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Whole class teaching at the beginning of lessons is strong. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards well to motivate pupils. Their questioning skills are very good and the pace is brisk, ensuring that everyone takes part in the lesson and remains attentive. Teachers plan very thoroughly but some tasks, especially for the more able, are not challenging enough. More interesting activities, however, are having a positive impact on boys' learning and they are more eager to write. Occasionally what teachers intend pupils to learn in the lesson is not specific enough and this makes it difficult for the pupils to assess what they have achieved. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included well and supported in all lessons by skilled teaching assistants who enable them to make the same progress as all other pupils. Teachers' marking is good and contains useful comments to help pupils improve their work. However,

there are differences in assessment and target-setting procedures across the school and this affects pupils' understanding of how to improve from year to year.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets most pupils' learning needs satisfactorily. Extra-curricular activities, visitors and visits out of school, especially the residential opportunities, are good. It is also significantly enriched through opportunities to learn a foreign modern language, take part in a variety of sports and play a musical instrument. Parents commented very positively on this aspect of the school. In the words of one, 'Extra curricular activitiesand outstanding visits and visitors enrich the children's lives and broaden their horizons.' Changes to the curriculum to address weaknesses in problem solving in mathematics and the development of links between subjects to make learning more interesting are in the early stages of development. These have not yet begun to impact upon raising achievement. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in a variety of subjects to support pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are very well cared for and well known to all staff who provide a safe, secure, stimulating and welcoming environment in which to learn. One parent commented that 'when a potential bullying situation occurred, teachers dealt with it in a calm, professional and caring way'. Although attendance is satisfactory overall it is considerably lower in some year groups than others and the school is working effectively to deal with this problem.

Milford is an inclusive school that enables all pupils to take a full part in school life. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well through early identification of their difficulties and carefully monitored individual education plans. The school also works effectively with those who have social and emotional difficulties, helping them to interact with other pupils appropriately and settle well to tasks in lessons. All pupils know they have targets for the next stage of their learning but are not always sure where these have come from or what they need to do next to improve. Progress books have the potential to play a major part in target setting with pupils but currently they are not used consistently in this way across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the development plan identifies the correct priorities. It is a good tool for further action and improvement. Useful systems for tracking pupils' progress and monitoring provision in English and mathematics have begun to help leaders to recognise underachievement and to put strategies for improvement into place. The impact on raising achievement and standards, however, has been slow. This is because assessment information has not been used frequently enough throughout the year to judge pupils' progress, identify needs and monitor that they have been met. The school has good plans in place to address this issue in the new academic year. Governors support the work of the school well and are aware of its strengths and areas for development. However, they do not, as yet, provide sufficient challenge in order to help it improve more quickly. The current pace of improvement shows the school's satisfactory capacity for moving the school forward at present.

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Annex A

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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.

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	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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Milford Junior School, Yeovil, BA21 4PG

Thank you very much for the warm welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed spending time with you and talking to you. Your school provides you with a sound education.

These are some of the things we found.

- You work hard and make satisfactory progress by the time you move to secondary school.
- You enjoy school very much and appreciate all the extra activities the school provides for you.
- You are good at keeping healthy and safe.
- You are very polite and well behaved and get on very well together. Well done!
- You and your parents told us how well the school takes care of you and we agree.
- Your headteacher, teachers and governors are making sure that the school is improving every day.

We have suggested two things to make your learning even better.

- We have asked your teachers to track your progress very regularly to make sure that you make even quicker progress in English and mathematics.
- We have also asked them to make sure that you understand what to do next to improve your work.
- Your headteacher and all the teachers and governors are also going to make sure that improvements happen quickly so that they make a real difference to your progress.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Anna Sketchley Lead inspector