

Milford Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123724
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314692
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Hancock

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	292
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Partington
Headteacher	Wendy Chant
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003
School address	Glenthorne Avenue Yeovil BA21 4PG
Telephone number	01935 475426
Fax number	01935 411474

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Milford Infant School is a larger than average sized school, with a speech and language resource base. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds, with a small proportion from minority ethnic families. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the proportion with statements of special educational needs are above average. A small number of pupils who attend the school are in the care of the local authority. There have been significant changes in staffing over the last few years but this is now stabilised. The school has achieved the Dyslexia Friendly status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. Strengths in pastoral care and working well in partnership with others contribute much to pupils' good personal development and well-being. Parents are very positive about the school and many wrote complimentary comments such as, 'I find the teachers and staff extremely helpful and supportive. They have made the transition from pre-school to infant school an easy one. They always find the time to talk whenever I have any concerns. This is a happy and friendly school'. The outcomes of the good care can be seen in happy pupils who enjoy lessons, feel safe, get on well together and behave satisfactorily. They enjoy exercise, including 'wake and shake', and have a good understanding of adopting healthy lifestyles. Attendance has improved and is now above the national average.

Academic achievement is satisfactory overall. Children enter school with broadly average standards but many are below those expected for their age in the crucial areas of language, literacy and personal and social development. They settle quickly and make good progress in personal and social development because all staff work successfully to meet individual needs and ensure that all children feel safe and happy. Children make satisfactory progress in other areas of learning in the Foundation Stage but the limited outdoor facilities and resources restrict children's opportunities for free choice independent play. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils make satisfactory progress, including those in the speech and language resource base, but the higher-attaining pupils do not always do as well as they could.

The many changes in staffing over the last few years have hindered the rate of improvement, which is uneven since the last inspection, but nonetheless satisfactory. Staffing is now more stable. The curriculum is satisfactory but new approaches have resulted in a more interesting and stimulating curriculum that has captured pupils' imagination, particularly boys', and increased their achievement and enjoyment of learning. Other new initiatives introduced to develop pupils' higher order skills are in the early stages of development so have not yet made a real impact on raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with the result that pupils make steady progress. Assessment information, however, is not used consistently well when planning lessons. Consequently, work does not always fully challenge higher-attaining pupils to do their best. The hard work and commitment of the headteacher and senior staff are strong features of the school's satisfactory leadership and management. The school is committed to improvement and knows where it needs to go and what areas require improvement. With a more settled staff and the gradual success of its recent actions to improve the curriculum, boys' writing and assessment procedures, the school demonstrates satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry to the Reception classes is broadly in line with that expected, except in language and literacy skills and particularly in personal, social and emotional development, which are below average. In this safe and nurturing environment, children settle in quickly. They are encouraged to become independent so are able to access and tidy away resources themselves. Great emphasis is placed on promoting children's personal, social and emotional development. Consequently, children make good progress in these aspects of their learning.

Children make satisfactory progress overall in the Foundation Stage, where work is appropriately matched to individual needs and teaching is satisfactory. As a result, many children achieve the expected levels when they start Year 1 but a significant number are working below the national average, especially in communication, language and literacy. Although the Reception classrooms are stimulating environments and the school grounds are generally used well to support learning, the outside the area immediately adjacent to the classrooms has limited resources and is not used as well as it might be. This restricts opportunities for independent outside play to develop children's creative development. Groups of younger children are supported well by teaching assistants who take an active part in children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- make better use of outdoor facilities and improve its resources to enable more opportunities for free choice independent play in the Foundation Stage
- use assessment information more accurately when planning work so that all pupils are consistently challenged to do their best, particularly higher attainers.

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 the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Satisfactory progress is generally made in Years 1 and 2 and many pupils make good progress in reading and writing. As a result, standards are broadly average in all subjects by the time pupils leave the school. High emphasis is placed on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills throughout the school, including in the speech and language resource base, with some success. The most recent results in 2007 illustrate the increased effectiveness of the school's work to improve boys' achievement in writing. Although most pupils' achievements are in line with expectations, higher-attaining pupils are not always given work well matched to their ability, and they are capable of achieving more. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those in the speech and language resource base and those with emotional and behaviour problems, make similar progress to that of their classmates because their needs are identified early and their targets are appropriate for their particular needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance has improved recently and is above average. Their happiness is evident in the way they show respect to each other and to the adults who work with them. They speak highly of the enrichment activities available, including the numerous visits to places of interest. Two children commented on 'the brilliant puzzles at the French club' and other children were eager to retell their experiences when visiting the science museum and a local castle. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Behaviour in lessons and outside the classroom is satisfactory and pupils speak positively of how any incidents of inappropriate behaviour are tackled. They feel safe and are confident they can go to an adult with any worries. Pupils are conscious of the need to keep healthy and speak of 'yummy but healthy lunches'. They appreciate the benefits of the daily 'wake and shake' sessions and how their regular physical education lessons help develop strong muscles and keep them fit. Members of the school council are evident around the school and wear their badges proudly. They were

pleased to be involved in choosing the decoration in the pupils' toilets. Relationships across the school are good. In many classes, pupils work well on collaborative activities but there are few opportunities for pupils to work independently, which inhibits the development of skills for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Lessons are generally interesting and most pupils are keen to take part, especially when there is a practical, dramatic or topical content that makes learning more 'real' and exciting. The school's drive to improve pupils' speaking skills is evident in many lessons, although some teachers are more confident than others in the use of discussion amongst pupils to generate ideas. Sometimes there are limited opportunities for pupils to make comments. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning, and some lower-attaining pupils do even better. However, teaching does not provide a consistent challenge for the most able and they do not achieve as well as they should. Teaching assistants are fully involved in teaching activities and provide effective support to small groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets all statutory requirements and is satisfactory overall but has many good and commendable features. The recent review of provision has produced a more creative and innovative curriculum that matches the needs and interests of pupils far more closely, capturing the imagination and enjoyment of many. A range of new initiatives to use and apply their knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics are beginning to develop pupils' higher order skills but these have not yet had time to impact on raising standards. Pupils in the speech and language base have a relevant curriculum matched to their specific needs and the staff receive good support and advice from outside agencies to support pupils' learning. A satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to attend clubs enriches the curriculum. External visits and visitors provide interest and further breadth, which the pupils greatly appreciate.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Teachers place a high priority on pupils' safety and well-being. They have a good knowledge of pupils' social and emotional needs and provide them with good pastoral support and guidance. Child protection procedures are fully in place and risk assessments are carried out conscientiously. There are substantial links with external agencies to support all pupils and their families well, including those in the care of the local authority. Parents greatly appreciate the workshop activities that help them support their children with work at home. Good support is given to pupils in the speech and language base, and other groups, including those with learning difficulties and behavioural problems. Teachers ensure that pupils are well supported within the class by a well-trained team of teaching assistants. This ensures they make at least satisfactory progress.

Provision for the academic support of pupils is not as robust as the provision for their pastoral care. Improvements to assessment have ensured that there is accurate information about pupils'

attainment from the time they enter school. Where assessment is used effectively and efficiently, pupils are able to make the progress that they should. However, assessment information is not used consistently. As a result, work is not always matched well enough to individual needs to enable them to do their best, particularly those capable of higher attainment. The use of marking is inconsistent and does not support pupils adequately in knowing how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The changes in staffing during the last few years have now largely settled down and enabled the school to get a firmer grip on improvement. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and senior leadership team, leads a committed and enthusiastic team well. Strengths in pastoral support and pupils' personal development have been sustained since the previous inspection and there has been a recent improvement in attendance. The headteacher and governors are not complacent and are seeking ways to improve standards and achievement. They have begun to reconsider the school's self-evaluation procedures to identify key areas for improvement. The monitoring of teaching and learning has become more rigorous to pinpoint precisely where and how improvements need to be made. This is beginning to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. A more creative curriculum is capturing pupils' interest and enjoyment of learning and has already had an impact on improving boys' achievement in writing. Assessment procedures have significantly improved. However, assessment information is not used consistently across the school and consequently targets and tasks are not always well matched to the needs of all pupils. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They are supportive of the school, have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses and are becoming more involved in monitoring its progress by attending regular training.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
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	2
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

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

16 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Milford Infant School, Yeovil BA21 4PG

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we came to your school. We enjoyed talking with you very much and thought you were very friendly.

- The school provides you with a satisfactory education and these are some things that we thought were good:
- you enjoy school and behave satisfactorily
- you have a good understanding of how important it is to eat healthy food and keep fit by regular exercise, including 'wake and shake'
- you like the clubs that you attend and visits outside school
- teachers and other adults look after you well
- your headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to make your school better.

There are a few things we think the school should do to make it better. These are:

- to improve the outside play area and resources for children in the Reception classes
- To make sure that you are all given work that is hard enough, especially for those of you who usually find your work easy.

Best wishes for the future,

Ian Hancock Lead Inspector

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Lead Inspector