

Milton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123984
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	314773
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Roy Bowers HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	265
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	59
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jerrold Lathem
Headteacher	Jean Meredith
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Leek Road Milton Stoke-on-Trent ST2 7AF
Telephone number	01782 234780
Fax number	01782 234781

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly larger than average and serves pupils from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Children enter with standards that are broadly in line with what is normally expected for their age. The vast majority of pupils are from White British heritage. A very small number of pupils do not speak English as a first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. There is a 'before and after school club' which operates in the Youth and Adult Centre within the grounds of the school. This is not managed by the school's governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their good attendance levels. In most lessons pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils say that they like the staff and feel safe, secure and valued. Parents speak highly of the school and say that their children are happy and well supported.

All groups of pupils, including those who find learning difficult, make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Standards in English and mathematics, although rising steadily in recent years, remain average. This is because, although there are some instances of good teaching, a significant amount is only satisfactory. Pupils make good progress when teachers carefully plan the small steps for learning, communicate them successfully to the pupils and focus the activities sharply on the planned outcomes. However, in many lessons, especially those focused on developing pupils' writing, this does not occur. Consequently, some pupils, especially the more able, are not challenged and standards in writing are too low. However, in many science lessons, pupils understand what they are required to learn and the activities are presented in an exciting manner. Where this occurs, pupils make good progress and reach standards in science which are above average.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. For most of the time, pupils are kind, tolerant and forgiving, and show respect for each other and the adults in the school. The few instances of unacceptable behaviour occur when teaching does not motivate pupils to learn, or the adults supervising them do not have high enough expectations. Pupils readily take on responsibilities offered to them, and the school council members feel that teachers listen to their views. Older pupils respond well to the opportunities provided to support the younger ones. These positive attitudes, together with their achievement in lessons, give pupils a satisfactory grounding for their future learning. The curriculum makes an effective contribution to pupils' understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle through a balanced diet and taking exercise. However, the curriculum is only satisfactory because it does not meet the needs of all pupils, especially in writing. The school has been awarded 'Healthy School Status' and 'Sportsmark' for its contributions to pupils' development in these areas. Pupils' academic guidance and support are satisfactory. Books are marked regularly and teachers often give helpful comments on how to improve. Targets for improvement have been introduced and many pupils can refer to them. However, few of these targets are challenging or relevant enough to have an impact on pupils' learning.

The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and knows what to do to improve. Over the past year, she has worked tirelessly to improve upon school self-evaluation and raise standards and achievement, and is beginning to implement a systematic and more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating school improvement. Many new initiatives have been implemented, but they have yet to be embedded and have not had an impact on raising standards. However, significant improvements to the Foundation Stage have already been made and, as a result, children's progress is accelerating. The leadership team is committed to improving standards and achievement, but some members of the leadership team have not yet developed well enough their skills of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The governors have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory and improving. Parents say they are pleased with the new induction procedures into the nursery. Children settle in happily, quickly gaining in confidence and taking part in many exciting activities. In a warm, caring environment, children make satisfactory progress and by the time they start in Year 1, most have the skills which are expected for children of that age. Teachers' planning correctly focuses on children's individual needs and adequately covers all areas of learning. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. However, sometimes the adults are not clear how certain activities will promote children's learning, and often the next steps for children's learning are not clearly identified. The school is aware that the outdoor environment does not effectively extend children's understanding in all areas of learning and has plans for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, especially of the more able pupils in writing.
- Ensure that teachers provide challenge for all pupils by planning the small steps needed to enable effective learning to take place, communicating them successfully to the pupils and focusing the activities on the planned outcomes.
- Develop the leadership and management skills of the senior leaders.
- Develop a systematic and more rigorous approach to school self-evaluation and improvement, and ensure that pupils' targets provide sufficient challenge.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be 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

The decline in standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in recent years has been halted and standards are now slowly beginning to rise. Currently, standards in English and mathematics are in line with the national averages at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and all groups of pupils make satisfactory progress. Standards in science are consistently above average and the more able pupils are challenged well. In the 2007 end of Key Stage 2 tests, nearly three quarters of pupils reached the higher Level 5 in science. The school data and observations during the inspection show that these high standards in science at the end of Key Stage 2 have been maintained. Standards in writing are considerably lower than in reading, mathematics and science, and too many pupils, especially the more able, do not achieve as well as they could.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils say that they are proud of their school and think that the teachers are kind and helpful. Most pupils work and play well together and show good attitudes to learning. Pupils know what actions to take if they are ever concerned or worried, and express confidence that the school will do all it can to help. Pupils make satisfactory contributions to the local community, often through the strong links with the local churches. Pupils of all ages listened patiently and confidently answered questions during an assembly taken by the local Methodist minister.

Older pupils make a good contribution to the school community. For example, selected Year 6 pupils look after younger ones at break times. Few opportunities are provided for pupils to experience a diversity of faiths and religions other than their own, which limits their understanding of cultures in the wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils say that they like their teachers and enjoy the work they are given. Good quality relationships between pupils and teachers are evident throughout the school. Because of this, in most classes there is a calm, orderly and positive climate for learning. In some classes, pupils' work is matched well to their differing abilities because teachers plan carefully and communicate to the pupils the small steps which will ensure effective learning. However, in too many lessons, especially in writing, the learning steps are not clear. Consequently, many pupils do not achieve as well as they could and work given to the more able is not sufficiently challenging. Some of the teaching assistants are highly skilled, are deployed well in lessons and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. However, this is not consistent and some pupils, especially those who find learning difficult, do not benefit as much as they could.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Although the curriculum meets statutory requirements, the progression of skills and knowledge is not clear, especially in writing. Consequently, work is not always matched to the needs of all pupils, especially the more able. The curriculum makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' personal development through offering a range of enrichment activities including residential visits, clubs, visits to places of interest and visitors coming into the school. Pupils' sports skills are developed well through good links with the local high school and the community police. Grandparents and pupils work well together in the school's 'Garden Club'. The school is aware that the curriculum does not offer pupils sufficient opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in a variety of subjects and contexts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

All legal requirements for safeguarding are met and fully understood by staff. Risk assessments and arrangements for safety and well-being are in place. The school has good strategies for maintaining above average attendance. The highly skilled learning mentor provides a good level of social and emotional support for all pupils if required, especially the most vulnerable. Pupils' books are marked regularly and helpful advice on how pupils can improve their work is often given. Although pupils' targets in English and mathematics are often on display on their desks, they do not sufficiently take account of pupils' levels of attainment and are not integrated into pupils' day-to-day learning. Consequently, they have no impact on pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

After an unsettled period due to staff absence, the headteacher has now successfully established a clear direction for improvement. She has high aspirations and is determined to continue developing and improving the quality of education provided by the school and raising standards and achievement. The senior leaders are involved in many aspects of school self-evaluation and improvement. However, their monitoring and evaluating skills are still developing and, consequently, their impact on school improvement is only satisfactory. Procedures for tracking the progress of pupils are in place, but many of the assessments of pupils' attainment are not accurate enough to help the school make checks on the progress of pupils as they move through the school. Although many new initiatives have been implemented, the headteacher is aware that the monitoring and evaluating of the impact of these on pupils' achievement are not sufficiently rigorous. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory, but the curriculum is not planned effectively enough to promote pupils' understanding of different ethnic and religious communities in the world. Significant improvement to the nursery over the past year shows that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

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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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 September 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Milton Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST2 7AF

Thank you for making our recent visit to your school such a pleasant experience. We enjoyed visiting your lessons, looking at your books and talking to you. We were pleased to find that you enjoy coming to school and work hard while you are there. In most of the lessons we observed, we were very impressed with your behaviour and attitudes. The teachers are kind and helpful, and want you all to do your best. We have judged the school to be satisfactory. You are making satisfactory progress, but many of you could do even better, especially with your writing. We have asked the teachers to challenge you a little more by ensuring that you understand clearly the next small steps in your learning and giving you work which helps you learn well. Many of you already know your targets, but the teachers must make sure that they are more carefully matched to your abilities. All the adults work hard for you, but some teachers have taken on more responsibilities. We have asked some of them to become even better at making sure that the school continues to improve and you all make even better progress. You can help all the teachers by continuing to work hard at school and making a special effort with your writing. We shall take away many good memories of your school and have very much enjoyed the time we have spent with you. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly.

Yours sincerely

Roy Bowers Her Majesty's Inspector