

Milford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125014
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315123
Inspection date	18 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Juliet Ward

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	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jill Bowman
Headteacher	Mrs Eileen Griffiths
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2004
School address	Church Road Milford Godalming GU8 5JA
Telephone number	01483 422087
Fax number	01483 419147

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspection focused on the following areas raised for improvement since the previous inspection in 2004.

- How the school is seeking to improve provision and pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT).
- The improvements to the curriculum.
- The qualities of leadership that ensure pupils' attainment continues to improve.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in the self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Milford School is located in Godalming, Surrey. It is a small school with 145 pupils on roll aged from 4 to 7 years. Few families apply for free school meals and a very small number of pupils have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally. Most of these pupils have specific or moderate learning difficulties, and two pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need to support their physical disabilities. The school has achieved the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Milford is the good school that staff and governors judge it to be, and it has several outstanding features. Pupils and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, and work closely with staff to give a strong feeling that this is 'our school'. Its happy atmosphere and sense of purpose are due to strong staff teamwork. As one parent wrote, 'My son loves going to Milford School and is thriving. The ethos of the school is very apparent to parents and children.'

The teaching throughout the school is at least good and some of it is outstanding. This gives pupils a very firm platform for success in the next stage of their education. For example, in an outstanding Year 2 lesson, pupils were inspired to use their excellent knowledge and understanding of different mini beasts to compose a piece of high quality descriptive writing. Children enter the Reception classes with skills better than expected of four-year-olds, although many have less well-developed skills in, for example, linking sounds and letters, reading and writing. These weaknesses are more than eliminated by the end of Year 2. Each intake has very different strengths from year to year, but Year 2 assessment results are consistently well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school sets itself very challenging targets to improve these further. Parents agree that their children make good progress, and one said, 'From a standing start my son has not only progressed hugely, but developed a great love of learning.'

All work tirelessly for the success of the pupils, whatever their abilities. Pupils make good progress because teachers plan lessons to tackle their carefully assessed needs. This, along with the high level of adult support for individual pupils, means that often the very best progress is made by pupils of low ability and those with learning difficulties. The provision for including all pupils is outstanding. One parent confirmed this when she wrote, 'I cannot praise Milford highly enough for providing specialist programmes tailored to my children's complex needs; both have flourished educationally and socially.'

Pupils arrive at school happy and smiling. They are eager to learn and work hard. Attendance is good and the vast majority arrive at school on time. One reason for the pupils' enjoyment is their exposure to a wide range of interesting experiences throughout the outstanding curriculum. Art, music and science all make significant contributions. Extensive use is made of visits to places of interest and visitors, such as to a zoo to observe the insects, and welcoming an African drummer to enhance music and African art in the school. Pupils are proud of their contribution to the school, and their economic well-being is developed well through activities such as running a vegetable garden and selling the produce to their parents! They help others through the harvest collection, by singing to the local elderly at the day care centre and raising funds for charity. There are good community links with the local churches and the ministers visit the school regularly. Pupils talked confidently about how to stay safe and they act responsibly in and around school. They enjoy acting as school and class councillors and support their friends when they are unhappy about something.

The school's deserved reputation for supporting pupils' social and emotional well-being is based on well-established links with other organisations such as family liaison staff and occupational therapists. Families are grateful for the support they receive. Regular and informed discussions between the headteacher and staff about each pupil's development result in sharply focused action. Pupils generally understand how much progress they have made, but are less sure about what they need to do to improve further. For example, most older pupils are not able to explain

what they can do to make sure they can solve problems more quickly, or more accurately using multiplication, or improve their spelling. The school is trialling some good systems to help pupils assess their own skills and progress in ICT, as part of the effective improvements in ICT, but this is not yet extended to other subjects.

The school is working towards achieving 'Healthy Schools' status. The school council has taken on the role of leading a survey on what pupils bring in their lunch boxes as part of the focus on healthy eating. Pupils have good opportunities for plenty of vigorous exercise. This includes lunchtime and after school activities organised by internal and external staff.

Pupils understand the high expectations of their behaviour because all adults lead by example and teach the children how they should respond to each other. A parent summed this up well as, 'Discipline is extremely fair and seems to make children think how they should treat other people, and how they wish to be treated themselves.' Pupils' attitudes to learning and their levels of concentration are exemplary. Religious education and the personal, social and health education programme are used well to encourage pupils to respect other's beliefs and backgrounds. The school recognises and celebrates different cultures. For example, the links made with an African school have enabled the pupils to discover more about the customs, art and music of the children, as well as raising pupils' awareness of life in more difficult circumstances.

The dedication, clear drive and vision of the headteacher have been a key reason why the school has gone from strength to strength. Together with efficient and supportive senior and middle managers she has led and managed changes very well. There has been significant improvement in the effectiveness of subject managers, particularly regarding the quality of their evaluation and monitoring since the last inspection. For example, the ICT managers have made great strides in improving provision. Parents praised the headteacher and her staff and commented on the strong, cohesive teamwork that is clear to all. Governors support the school well, as 'critical friends'. Parents are pleased to be involved with the school and feel they are consulted regularly about their children's progress. The headteacher has been keen to develop self-evaluation skills amongst staff and governors which has meant that plans for improvement have been even more sharply focused on raising achievement. Milford is a happy, successful and vibrant school, which has made good improvement since the last inspection. It has the capacity to become even better.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The youngest children get off to a flying start to their school life in the Foundation Stage. It was judged to be very good in the last inspection and is even better now. Children make very good progress during their time in the Foundation Stage. 'We have had two children at Milford and they have both enjoyed their time there. Our third child will be starting in September; we could not be happier and she cannot wait to start', a contented parent wrote. Sensitive arrangements help them settle in quickly. From the minute that they start, the children's personal development is of paramount importance. Very strong teamwork based around experienced, skilful leadership means all adults work closely to match activities very well to the children's current stage of development. Consequently, they are completely absorbed and gain much enjoyment from the rich and interesting environment and extensive links between indoor and outdoor learning activities. There is a very careful balance between activities led by the adults and those initiated by the children. Teachers work well to make significant improvements in children's literacy skills, which are at a lower level on entry than those of other areas of

learning. Most children exceed the goals expected of them by the end of Reception. This excellent start is built on very well throughout Key Stage 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further the pupils' independence by guiding them on how they can assess the progress they have made, and what they need to do to improve even more.

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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?	2
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

01 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Milford School, Godalming, GU8 5JA

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to your school. I really enjoyed visiting all of your classes, looking at your work and talking with you. I am sad not to have been able to spend much more time in each class. I am especially pleased some of you came to talk to me about your work, and showed me lots of it.

Your school is a good school with lots of really special features. All of the adults working with you care very much about you and want you to do well. Your headteacher leads and manages your school very well indeed. You make good progress during your time at Milford. Your teachers make lessons exciting, and the topic work you do is outstanding. Your behaviour is excellent and you listen well in lessons and try really hard: well done! Your parents said how much they like the school and lots of them and lots of you told me how well you get on together and how helpful the teachers are. It was good to see how kind you are and how willingly you help each other.

I have asked the teachers to teach you how to check for yourselves how well you are doing. I also think you are grown up enough to know what you need to do to improve your work even more.

Please thank your parents for kindly sending in the letters and responses to the questionnaire. These helped me to understand how well the school is doing.

Yours sincerely

Juliet Ward

Lead Inspector