

Milestone School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 119061 |
| Local Authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 326936 |
| Inspection dates | 19–20 May 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Michael Farrell |

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.

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 2–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 223 |
| Sixth form | 33 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Theresa Davies |
| Headteacher | Margaret Fisher |
| Date of previous school inspection | 14 March 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Ash Road New Ash Green Longfield DA3 8JZ |
| Telephone number | 01474 709420 |
| Fax number | 01322 707170 |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
| Age group | 2–19 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Milestone School educates pupils with profound, severe, and complex learning difficulties. Most pupils are White British and about 10% are from other ethnic groups including Asian and African. Ten children are looked after by the local authority. Seventeen pupils do not speak English as their first language at home. Since the previous inspection, Milestone has achieved specialist school status for cognition and learning. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Milestone School is a good school. The great majority of parents hold the school in high esteem, and typical comments include: 'There is no better school for my child,' and, 'Since my child has attended Milestone, her overall ability and co-ordination has increased tenfold.' The school's leaders and managers draw on good school development planning and effective support from the governing body. They are particularly effective in setting a clear direction for the school, supported by extensive professional training opportunities, and in developing excellent community cohesion. Their stress on pupils' communication, personal development and well-being and high quality care, guidance and support has assured excellence in these areas in all phases of the school. The school has developed excellent partnerships with other agencies, local businesses and others. It has held specialist school status for cognition and learning since 2007 and is making good progress, for example, in developing services for other schools, and improving the professional skills and awareness of teachers in its partner schools.

Pupils behave exceptionally well because they are very successfully helped to communicate their concerns and they place great trust in staff. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent because this is exceptionally well supported. Pupils know all about how to live a healthy lifestyle and try to follow its precepts because staff explain and encourage this very well. Pupils feel very safe because of the secure ethos and excellent relationships between pupils and staff. They make an excellent contribution to the school community, for example by doing jobs to help in the classroom, and also contribute to local life and culture. Pupils love coming to school, greatly appreciating all it offers. Their attendance is good and improving. Their good economic development draws on the very strong contribution of work experience and links with the local college, and their good skills in literacy and numeracy. Risk assessment, care procedures, and systems to protect children are very strong, leading to the pupils' deeply held feelings of safety and security. Although the school effectively analyses data on pupils' progress and tracks progress through a range of systems, it does not yet fully use comparative data from other schools and areas in this process to ensure that pupils are doing as well as they can.

Learners throughout the school, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and students in the sixth form, make good progress because of good teaching. The good curriculum meets the wide range of pupils' needs and abilities effectively and provides interesting and relevant activities. Excellent curricular enrichment includes residential visits and extensive use of the community. In most lessons, behaviour is very well managed, relationships are excellent, planning is clear and activities are engaging. In the lessons that are only satisfactory, pace is slower and although learning support assistants make a valuable contribution overall, teachers do not always use them as fully as they should when talking to the whole class, and this can hold back progress for some learners.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management give the sixth form a clear sense of direction and encourage links with a wide range of partners and facilities to enhance provision. This leads to good teaching and learning where there is a very clear emphasis on activities relevant to real life and on developing students' independence. Students progress well, gaining in confidence and independence and achieving a suitable range of qualifications. The good curriculum supports

this, drawing on outside support such as links with the local college and places of work. Because there is a very clear focus on excellent care, guidance and support, including very effective multidisciplinary working, students' personal development is outstanding. Students' behaviour is excellent and they help each other wherever possible. The sixth form effectively analyses a range of data on students' progress but does not systematically make comparisons with other sixth forms to raise standards further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure children have experiences matching their needs and enhancing their communication and personal development. Children achieve well because of good, enthusiastic teaching and because there is close liaison with parents, other agencies and schools so the capabilities and needs of children are quickly established. Planning very specifically meets the children's diverse needs and abilities. Children's development of communication skills is particularly strong because of the emphasis and staff skill in developing speaking, listening and manual signing. Expert support for children and their families enhances provision and children's welfare and happiness are paramount. Consequently, children's personal development and well-being are outstanding and they are happy and feel secure. Staff are aware they do not currently provide enough opportunities for children to experience mainstream settings, where this is appropriate.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all lessons consistently move at a challenging pace, and make good use of teaching assistants.
- Ensure data on tracking pupils' progress and setting learning targets are rigorously compared with data from other schools and areas to ensure standards are as high as possible.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When they enter school, pupils' attainment is exceptionally low because of their learning difficulties. However, because of good teaching, pupils make good progress in all phases from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to and including the sixth form. This good progress is fostered right from the start by the support provided, which builds confidence and encourages pupils to try their very best whether they are learning to use money or enjoying a drama session. Pupils with different disabilities and disorders and other groups such as boys and girls and children looked after by the local authority all make good progress. Progress in speaking and listening and in manual signing is excellent because the school prioritises this, benefiting from excellent support from speech and language therapists and trainers. Pupils reach challenging individual learning targets that are manageable and well informed by their earlier progress. For pupils in Key Stage 4 and students in the sixth form, the range and levels of accreditation are well judged and challenging and the school is constantly looking out for further suitable qualifications.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Because of the emphasis on communication, pupils are increasingly able to put their views politely and confidently and sometimes with humour. They love coming to school and attendance

is good. Pupils work very hard because they enjoy excellent relationships with staff and want to do their best. Pupils enjoy the healthy foods provided for them. They feel very safe, are confident and know what is expected of them, and demonstrate a wide and deep knowledge of other faiths and cultures. Pupils have a developing understanding of democracy, not just locally but also nationally and through their school council. Personal and social skills are exceptionally well developed because pupils benefit from many visits and visitors, enhancing their politeness and consideration. Very good behaviour management and an exceptionally supportive ethos encourage their outstanding behaviour. Very occasional instances of challenging behaviour are managed skilfully, allowing pupils to articulate their feelings, so the behaviour quickly subsides. Numerous opportunities are seized to contribute to the community, such as pupils organising jobs for others in class and contributing to many local activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons observed by inspectors ranged from satisfactory to outstanding but were good overall throughout all phases of the school. Among common strengths of teaching and learning are very trusting relationships between pupils and staff, which contribute to pupils' outstanding personal development. Behaviour is very well managed in lessons and pupils respond exceedingly well to praise because they like staff and want to excel. Planning is very clear and well structured, activities are engaging, and staff know pupils very well. Although learning support assistants make a strong contribution generally and support pupils' progress and personal development well, in the satisfactory lessons they are not deployed fully when the teacher is speaking to the whole class group, and the pace is slower, slowing pupils' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is based on a good understanding of pupils' needs and abilities, effectively promoting good progress and learning and excellent personal development. Great store is placed on real life, practical, imaginative, first-hand experiences such as local farm visits. The good individual education plans are high quality working documents with manageable and realistic targets, and are regularly reviewed. Good links with other schools enable pupils in most year groups to gain experience of mainstream education where appropriate. Pupils showing particular talents are nurtured through links with the local academy. Effective opportunities enhancing pupils' understanding of the demands of the workplace include mini-enterprise schemes and work placements, and employers speak highly of pupils' contribution. Excellent enrichment activities include links with the Globe Theatre, residential experiences, visitors to the school and visits in the community. However, information and communication technology does not always support pupils' independent study as fully as it should and the school is keen to develop this.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Excellent care, guidance and support underpin pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being and their excellent communication development, and are reflected in the ethos of the school. Very strong, purposeful links with many experts, professionals and agencies greatly

enhance this area. Parents are extremely well supported and enabled to help their children at home, and are very appreciative of this. Manageable targets are very carefully explained to pupils, who therefore understand and remember them. Attendance of different groups is carefully analysed and monitored, leading to improvement. Safeguarding procedures, risk assessments and child protection procedures are taken very seriously and were securely in place at the time of the inspection. Academic guidance is based on effective analysis of data and pupils' progress is tracked through a range of systems. The school is aware that it has not yet made this process fully effective by embedding the use of comparative data from other schools and areas.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management of the school are supported by good, challenging targets for development based on a detailed and coherent school development plan to which staff at all levels can contribute. The school is well aware of its strengths and weaknesses and has high aspirations to improve further. Resources are generally used well and the school has effective structures for smooth administration. The governing body fulfils its duties well, striking a good balance between challenging and supporting the school. Training is very well managed and provided and contributes greatly to the school's successes. Particular strengths are the excellent teamwork of staff and their clear sense of direction, deeply ingrained at every level. Excellent community cohesion has long been a school priority and includes very strong elements of faith and international links with other schools that are carefully monitored. The school has improved elements of personal development since the previous inspection, and has attained specialist school status and managed many other innovations. The capacity for further improvement is good.

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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 | 16-19 |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|

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 | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being? | 1 | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 2 | |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 2 | |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 1 | |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 2 | |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 1 | |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 2 | |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 | 4 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 2 | 2 |

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? | 1 | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 | |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 1 | |
| The attendance of learners | 2 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 | |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 | |
| 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 learners' needs? | 2 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 | 1 |

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 | |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 | |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 2 | |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 1 | |
| 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 | 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

21 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Milestone School, Longfield, DA3 8JZ

It was delightful to meet you and talk with you when my colleagues and I inspected your school recently. Thank you for helping us by sharing your views with us.

There are many things your school does well. It is led and managed well. The teaching is good, helping you do well, and the school offers you a good range of activities. The nursery and the sixth form are both good. Even better is the excellent way you are cared for and helped to learn, and this helps to ensure that your personal development is extremely good.

There are two things the school could do even better so I have asked the staff to:

- make teaching even better by ensuring that lessons are always pacy and teaching assistants are fully used
- look more closely at how well pupils in other schools are doing to check you are doing the best you can.

I am sure you will go on working really hard and being very proud of your school.

With every good wish for your future,

Yours faithfully

Michael Farrell Lead inspector