

Millstead School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104751
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	336360
Inspection dates	26–27 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Linda Clare

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P O'Brien
Headteacher	Mrs M Beard
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Fourteen lessons were observed, involving eight teachers. Meetings were held with governors, staff, groups of pupils and partners from other organisations. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documents including data on pupils' progress, teachers' planning, curricular documents, pupils' files and the school's self-evaluation. Questionnaires were received from 19 parents and carers and the inspectors also read questionnaire responses from pupils and from the school's staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the consistency of observation, recording and tracking of pupils' progress
- pupils' attendance and behaviour
- whether the revision of the curriculum has ensured that the needs of every pupil are met
- how well the school's targets promote learning and personal development
- whether children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress.

Information about the school

Millstead School provides for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties and those with an autistic spectrum disorder. Over half the pupils have profound medical conditions. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Boys outnumber girls by two to one. Most pupils are of a White British heritage, with much smaller numbers from other ethnic backgrounds. Most pupils come from the Liverpool area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. A very small minority of pupils are looked after by a local authority.

The school has gained the Quality Mark, Investors in People and the Healthy Schools Award. It has also achieved Financial Management Systems in Schools standard.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Millstead is a good school in which pupils flourish. Their response to the school's promotion of healthy lifestyles is outstanding. An effective nurturing ethos permeates the school and is the key to the good progress that pupils make in their personal development. One parent commented, 'My child has made many friends and is encouraged to meet his potential in a very loving and safe environment.' The school is calm and well ordered and pupils gain confidence and a great deal of enjoyment from all that is offered. This helps them to make good and sometimes outstanding progress in their learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage is a delightful place to be; children settle happily and make good progress in activities that effectively meet their learning, medical and therapy needs.

Work and play-based activities are linked by a common theme and are particular strengths of the good and improving curriculum. Good teaching, positive reinforcement and carefully tailored programmes enable pupils to meet their targets. Lessons engage pupils in a range of stimulating activities, although the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped across the school. Pupils feel extremely safe in school. Their behaviour is good and they have total confidence that staff will help them solve any problems. The school values all as individuals. In relation to their capabilities pupils make good contribution to the school's development. Growing links with other schools and with the local community help make learning more relevant to everyday life. Community cohesion is successfully promoted at a local level, but there is less focus on extending this beyond the school's immediate community.

Central to the school's good progress are the drive and enthusiastic leadership of the headteacher. The school is generally accurate in its self-evaluation and good systems are in place to monitor its performance. Senior leaders compare the school's assessments with national progression guidance data, adding more detail to their knowledge of what needs to be accomplished for future improvement. Planning for improvement is thorough and has ensured, for example, that pupils' progress in reading and writing has accelerated. Altogether, these factors provide clear evidence that the school has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable pupils to improve their learning by broadening and developing:
 - the use and application of ICT across the school for all groups
 - specialised technology for those pupils with more complex needs in English.

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- Strengthen the school's contribution to community cohesion by ensuring that pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the different cultural, social and religious traditions in modern Britain and globally.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils receive a high level of individual support which gives them confidence to contribute to their lessons and to try new experiences. They respond well to routines and are motivated by practical activities. For example, in the 'Wake up, shake up' morning exercise session pupils gain a great deal of self-confidence and enjoyment from the well-known exercises and from being part of a bigger group. Pupils try hard to do their best. They show great enthusiasm when they master a skill and their pleasure can readily be seen in the classroom. More able pupils like to talk about what they have learned and are keen to show their understanding, illustrated by one pupil's explanation of the steps he had to take in creating a lighthouse from papier-mâché.

The good progress pupils make from their individual starting points is often achieved despite significant illness. Overall, they make good gains in communication skills which facilitate their good and better progress in literacy, numeracy and science as they move through the school. More able pupils and those with autism make greater progress in learning to communicate. Those with more complex needs communicate well through the use of symbols and signing but with limited use of some switch technology.

Performance data shows that progress in mathematics and science tends to be stronger than in English. Current tracking and observation indicate that progress in English has improved as a result of the recent school-wide focus on early reading and writing skills. Boys and girls make equally good progress regardless of their learning difficulties or ethnicity. The small number of pupils looked after by the local authority make gains at the same rate as others with similar starting points.

Parents and carers say that their children enjoy school and pupils agree. Attendance is broadly average. Pupils attend well when their health permits. They show positive attitudes and genuine care for each other. Many choose sporting activities to improve their health at lunchtime. They learn a great deal about keeping safe and are confident that bullying does not happen in school. Pupils are respectful of each other's needs and difficulties. As school council members, register monitors and wheelchair helpers they serve the school with great pride. Their understanding of the wider cultural and religious traditions in modern Britain and beyond is less well developed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is enthusiastic and demonstrates a good understanding of pupils' needs. A high level of sensitivity to pupils' feelings is evident. Pupils' communication skills are supported well, although opportunities are sometimes missed to develop their ICT skills. In the best lessons planning is precise, builds effectively on what pupils have learned and all pupils are actively engaged in challenging work towards individual targets. Classroom management is a strength of most lessons, less effective only where pupils are not encouraged sufficiently to change activities to maintain a good pace of learning. Recording of observation data is timely and use of assessment generally consistent. Together these produce a useful and evolving picture of each pupil's development and learning.

The themed curriculum effectively includes targeted literacy and numeracy support. It also enables all pupils to have the means to convey their needs and feelings in a variety of practical, multisensory and investigative play experiences which make learning fun. Creative arts and musical rhymes reinforce pupils' learning well. For example, pupils felt and explored bells, rattles, shakers and cymbals while being gently encouraged through songs and rhyme to illustrate opposite sound effects. Their loud and soft, fast and slow contributions stimulated their interest and clear enjoyment of the lesson. In another class a French-themed event helped to raise social skills and provided much excitement as pain au chocolat was served to pupils from other groups. Specialist rooms and input from visiting staff enhance sporting and creative provision well. However, too few pupils use technology regularly to strengthen their basic skills and reinforce learning across other curriculum areas.

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Transition arrangements for pupils as they enter and leave the school are managed well. The home–school book offers opportunity for feedback on a daily basis, although this is not always effective because not all books are completed regularly. Pastoral care, and specifically personal comfort and medical care for those with profound and multiple needs, is exceptional. Pupils are welcomed into school warmly each morning. However, the school environment is less vibrant and stimulating, particularly some of the outdoor areas. The school's transport systems work well so pupils arrive at school on time and ready to learn. These systems contribute to the well-organised measures to encourage good attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's high expectations and passion for driving the school forward promote equally positive responses from staff. The senior leadership team provides good direction, staff work well together and morale is good. All are encouraged to develop their professional skills. Good arrangements are in place for the regular monitoring of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress by senior managers. Planning has been effectively revised to ensure that the anticipated impact of pupils' learning is clearly recorded alongside actual outcomes for learning and personal development. The revised assessment and tracking systems are well monitored. Target setting provides good challenge and the school tracks its comparative progress against local and national data. Improvement planning is well focused on important priorities such as developing middle managers' skills. The need to improve staff's ICT skills and develop the use of technology to help pupils to learn is given high priority in current plans. Governors are supportive, maintain close contact and play a full and active part in the school's improvement. They monitor the school's progress well. The school has a good relationship with parents and carers. Safeguarding procedures, including risk assessments of pupils' individual needs, child protection and procedures to ensure safer recruitment are good. Leaders tackle equality of opportunity well and are proactive in ensuring that there is no discrimination in school. Partnerships with other schools, sporting clusters and the local community help to promote cohesion in the school and its immediate vicinity. This work does not as yet extend sufficiently to wider community links to prepare pupils better for life in a diverse society. Millstead provides good value for money.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception because of the good teaching and exceptional pastoral and physical care they receive. Staff create a stimulating environment and plan a good balance between activities led by adults and those which children can choose for themselves. Interaction with adults is continuous and promotes children's awareness of others, their self-esteem and for some their language development. Teaching is good. Lively presentations engage children's interests well. There is a strong focus on sensory experiences. For example, children practise circular movements and sprinkling techniques before making pizza for their jungle picnic. These skills helped them to spread ingredients evenly over the pizza bases. Provision for children's welfare is very good. Introduction to the Early Years Foundation Stage is carefully planned for children so they settle well. Every consideration is given to their far-ranging physical needs to ensure their safety and comfort. Staff members observe and record small steps in learning and development carefully in order to plan what children should do next. Detailed records are kept so that every child's specific needs are met. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed effectively. Good practices are established and an action plan indicates further development, for example in outdoor provision and to ensure that new staff members are fully trained in Early Years Foundation Stage practices.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very positive about Millstead School. Just less than one quarter of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Many recognised and valued the support and encouragement provided by the school. A very small number noted individual concerns, for example with regard to inconsistent use of the home–school book or occasionally where personal hygiene had been insufficiently checked in the past. Inspectors found that the school works closely with parents and carers and it is continually seeking ways of strengthening its work to care for and guide its pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Millstead School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 19 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 67 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	84	3	16	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	79	3	16	1	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	79	3	16	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	84	2	11	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	89	1	5	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	79	2	11	2	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	68	5	26	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	10	53	6	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	79	2	11	2	11	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	74	3	16	1	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	79	3	16	1	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	14	74	4	21	1	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	68	2	11	0	0	1	5

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



28 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Millstead School, Liverpool, L15 8LW

Thank you for talking to my colleague and me when we inspected your school recently. We really enjoyed our visit and now I am writing to tell you what we found out.

Millstead is a good school and we could see why so many of your parents and carers are pleased with how much it helps you. All the teachers and other adults care about every one of you and look after you well. Your personal development is a strength of the school and your behaviour is good. We were pleased to hear how happy you are at school and we could see that you enjoy your lessons a lot.

You are making good progress in your work. This is because you go to some interesting lessons and the teaching is good. It was lovely to see that everyone is so pleased when you finish your work. Your school is good because your headteacher and the other managers are good leaders and they are always trying to make the school better for you.

I have asked your teachers to make sure that you use more computers in your lessons to help you to do your very best. I have also asked them to make sure you learn more about how different groups of people in Britain live and more about people who live in other countries.

I hope that you will help your teachers by trying hard and that you keep enjoying all your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Linda Clare

Lead inspector

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