

Milnthorpe Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112184
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337863
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Onyon

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Dianne Chaplow
Headteacher	Mrs C Singleton
Date of previous school inspection	0 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons during which they observed almost eight hours of learning. They observed the school's work and looked at records of pupils' progress. Other documentation, including school policies, minutes of the governing body meetings, safeguarding documents and the notes of the School Improvement Partner's visits, was also analysed. Meetings were held with the senior leadership team, governors, staff and groups of pupils. In all about 50% of inspectors' time was spent looking at the quality of pupils' learning. Questionnaires were received from 64 parents and carers. In addition, questionnaires were received from 38 pupils.

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

- the consistency of pupils' progress through the school
- the impact of recent changes to the quality of provision and children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception)
- how effectively the outcomes of assessment are used to plan activities that meet the needs of all pupils
- the impact on learning of the school's perceived strengths in providing for pupils' personal well-being
- how successfully leaders, at all levels, demonstrate ambition and seek improvement.

Information about the school

This school is a smaller than average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The school holds the Healthy Schools, Active School, Artsmark and silver Eco-Schools awards.

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

This is a good school. It has a superb ethos, the result of the exceptional care, guidance and support provided for the pupils by the committed, determined and well-focused headteacher and her staff. This has had an impact on the personal development of pupils, particularly in their maturity and consideration for others. All pupils are known well as individuals and, as a result, every child really does matter. Those facing barriers to their learning, particularly when joining the school from other schools, are supported effectively through a good, well-planned curriculum.

Since the last inspection there have been improvements in standards, achievement and aspects of provision. This track record of improvement illustrates well the ambition and drive that the senior leadership team provide. Through its rigorous self-evaluation the school is aware of its strengths and areas for development and plans carefully to address these issues. It has managed a number of staff changes well through a strong commitment to develop staff. This includes focused training and staff involvement in monitoring and evaluating progress towards agreed priorities. This illustrates well the good capacity that the school has to improve further.

Because of the school's small size, the ability and aptitude of pupils vary from one cohort to the next. Pupils achieve well, taking into account their starting points as they enter Reception. The attainment of Year 6 pupils in 2009 reflects an upward trend, over three years, and is above average. Strategies to improve pupils' progress in writing and mathematics have been effective and the school is determined to continue to raise standards even further. A central aim is to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and to develop in them lifelong interests in learning and achievement; it does this well.

The quality of teaching is good. It is not yet of a consistently high enough quality to ensure that pupils' achievement is outstanding, but in parts, such as in the quality of relationships between teachers and pupils, it is very strong. While recent developments ensure that learning targets are effectively shared with pupils, many pupils are not actively included in the process. They do not always understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils' behaviour is good, as is their attitude to work. In the Nursery and Reception classes the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Here, planning does not set clear learning intentions and resources do not always enable children to engage fully in learning. In the Nursery there is a lack of balance between child-selected tasks and those led by adults.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning by:
 - consistently providing feedback so that pupils know how well they are doing
 - involving pupils in setting learning goals, including them more in their learning, so they know precisely what they need to do to improve.
- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage from satisfactory to good by:
 - ensuring that teachers' planning sets out clear learning intentions, based on children's different learning needs, so that expectations are high enough
 - providing better resources for purposeful play, especially for outdoor play, so that children are fully engaged in learning
 - ensuring that, within the Nursery provision, the good opportunities for children to plan some of their own learning are balanced with adult-led tasks.

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

In lessons pupils behave well and show they are ready to learn. In the best lessons pupils display a good range of learning skills and there is a real enthusiasm. Pupils show that they can work together well, take initiative and respond well to challenges. Where teaching is less effective, pupils are more passive learners and complete tasks diligently but with little enthusiasm. Contributing factors to pupils' good achievement are the above average standards attained, from generally average starting points, and the overall good progress in learning as seen in pupils' work. Since the previous inspection attainment has improved across English, mathematics and science. In 2009 a quarter of pupils who took the end of Year 6 test in mathematics attained the higher level and outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities were better than those expected nationally. This group receive high-quality support from teaching assistants both in and out of the classroom. As a result, they make good progress not only in literacy and numeracy but also in their skills for learning and life.

Milnthorpe pupils are a credit to the school and themselves. Their behaviour is good and above average attendance illustrates their enjoyment of school. Pupils are caring and show a deep, mature understanding of the needs and feelings of their peers and those outside the school. This is demonstrated by charitable fundraising for a wide range of organisations. During the inspection pupils were thinking of ideas to contribute to helping the victims of the recent earthquake in Haiti. They relish the opportunities for responsibility and take these up by assuming a number of important roles. These include acting as members of the school council, working in the eco-team towards a sustainable future and, for older pupils, helping younger ones in various ways around school and particularly at playtimes. The willingness of pupils to act upon the advice and decisions of their peers is impressive. The school council holds an important role in involving all pupils in the life of the school, encouraging their ideas and leading to improvements such as establishing the outdoor classroom and the raised allotments. Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of what contributes to a healthy lifestyle. They thoroughly enjoy participating in the wide range of activities, including music, drama

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and sport. Through such activities, music and drama in particular, they are well known in their community. All in all, the many good attributes pupils demonstrate in their personal development show they are well equipped to go on to the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Very effective systems ensure that the personal needs of pupils are identified and supported extremely well. Close monitoring of progress and well-being ensures that all pupils are supported to a very high standard. Pupils facing barriers to their learning are also very well supported, for example through the excellent work of the teaching assistants in helping pupils to overcome personal and emotional issues. Academic mentoring provided to targeted pupils, whose progress may be slipping behind that of their peers, is of high quality. Links with services to help vulnerable pupils are very good. Transition arrangements between all key stages are effective, particularly for those pupils leaving or joining at a time other than the start of the school year. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage

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

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in their education.

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use resources to stimulate learning well. For example, in a literacy lesson in the Year 5 and 6 classroom the teacher's organisation and the structure of the lesson enabled pupils to reflect well on their thoughts about characters in their story. This caught the attention of all pupils well and helped them to construct thoughtful sentences and to focus on their writing. In the best lessons teachers encourage pupils to act as resources for each other, for example through talking in pairs to discuss each other's developing thinking. Feedback for pupils, so that they can understand how well they are doing, is not provided consistently and pupils are not always involved in setting learning goals so that they know precisely what they need to do to improve their work.

The curriculum is good and focuses well on the development of basic skills, especially numeracy and literacy. Displays around school illustrate good links between subjects. The effective teaching of Spanish provides pupils with enjoyable opportunities to learn a modern foreign language. Music and drama are promoted well through visitors, with the fruits of that work evident in pupils' performances. The curriculum is monitored well at different levels throughout the school with areas for development clearly recognised through action plans. Good-quality extra-curricular activities enhance the main curriculum with a good range of well-attended activities. The curriculum meets the needs of learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities well.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership provided by the headteacher is central to the school's success. Because all stakeholders share a clear vision, ambition is clearly communicated and the drive for improvement is good. A clear action plan is beginning to bring about improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The headteacher takes an active part in teaching and provides the inspiration for the direction in which the school continues to develop. For example, she is continuously seen around the school; she 'meets and greets' parents and carers daily; she challenges pupils' feelings, such as about what is fair and right, and encourages their choice to reject unfairness and discrimination, reflecting the school's good promotion of equal opportunities. Many parents and carers have been encouraged to engage regularly in supporting their children's learning. The headteacher has built a team of teachers, support staff and senior leaders who share her values,

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which makes the school a cohesive entity. The headteacher receives good support from her deputy headteacher who provides an excellent role model for teaching and learning. Governors possess a wide range of skills and experience and are enthusiastic advocates for the school. They work effectively in committees and offer a good level of challenge and support.

The leadership of the school ensures that all procedures relating to safeguarding pupils are good and ensures their health and safety through very high-quality care and a rigorous analysis of risk. Leaders and staff have worked hard to build strong and effective links with neighbouring schools, particularly the partner high school, and with services for children in the local authority. The school promotes community cohesion well. Leaders ensure that pupils make a good contribution to the wider local and global community through its teaching of respect for all people and its active promotion of charity and aid work.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Frequent changes in staffing have affected provision in recent years. The position is now more stable with the appointment of a leader. She is already beginning to address weaker areas of provision through an effective action plan. As a result, leadership and management are satisfactory. A successful initiative has led to improvements in procedures to introduce children to school. Arrangements are good and enable the children to settle quickly and happily. Parents and carers appreciate these good induction arrangements. Learning journals and home–school diaries effectively support a

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partnership; an entry illustrating the views of many claims, 'My child loves going to school every day.'

Skills on entry to the school are typical for the age of the children and by the end of Reception most children reach average standards and their progress is satisfactory. Good-quality care and welfare helps children enjoy their learning. All welfare requirements are met and children feel safe. Relationships are good, as seen when children were making 'binoculars' to observe birds and record the number of birds seen. Where activities are short on resources, especially for outdoor learning, the children move quickly from one activity to another and learning is less effective.

Overall, teaching is satisfactory with good teaching in the Reception class. Assessment information is not always used well. Planning does not always set out clear learning intentions, taking account of children's different needs and abilities. As a result, activities are not always stimulating enough to promote good-quality learning. In the Reception class, there is a good balance between adult-led tasks and children choosing their own learning activities. A teacher-led activity on numeracy provided a good focus for the children on sorting familiar objects to identify similarities and differences. In the Nursery, where the children have good opportunities to plan their own learning, there is a less balanced focus on extending learning through adult-led tasks.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The responses were overwhelmingly positive and extremely supportive of the school. A very small number of parents and carers expressed some concerns related to the progress of their children, children's enjoyment of school and the extent to which the school takes account of suggestions and meeting the needs of individuals. Nonetheless, the vast majority of parents' and carers' comments were extremely positive, including those about how the school keeps children safe, their happiness with their child's school experience, the effectiveness of leadership and management, the good teaching and how well parents and carers are informed about the progress of their child. Evidence gathered by inspectors supports the very perceptive views that the school provides a good quality of education and provides excellent care, guidance and support.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Milnthorpe Primary 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 64 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 157 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	70	17	27	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	53	83	10	16	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	43	67	20	31	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	66	19	30	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	47	73	16	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	63	22	34	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	56	27	42	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)	31	48	29	45	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	63	21	33	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	67	17	27	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	61	22	34	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	49	77	12	19	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	78	13	20	0	0	0	0

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Milnthorpe Primary School, Milnthorpe, LA7 7QF

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school for its recent inspection. We appreciated your politeness and enjoyed talking with you. We were impressed that you demonstrated many mature attitudes in your personal development. Your knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe and adopt healthy lifestyles are good. You make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. Well done! We have judged your behaviour to be good. In addition to these positive attributes, you also make good progress in your learning, reaching standards above those expected by Year 6.

Your school is led and managed well. All adults play their part in the smooth running of the school and wanting the best for you. Your headteacher, the teachers and teaching assistants give good help and support and the governors keep a close eye on the school. Through the hard work of the adults the school provides you with outstanding levels of support, guidance and care, and good teaching. The subjects you learn are interesting too and it is good to hear about your involvement in the school council, your eco work and your fundraising for so many good causes. We know you enjoy these activities, along with your after-school clubs.

So what does the school need to do to get even better? We have asked your leaders to build on the school's existing strengths and to provide you consistently with feedback so that you know how well you are doing. We have asked them to involve you in setting your learning goals so that you know precisely what to do to improve. In addition, we have asked the school to provide better resources for the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially for outdoor play, and to plan a good balance of tasks to meet the different learning needs of all the children.

You attend a good school that provides outstanding care.

Every good wish for the future!

Yours sincerely

Mr Michael Onyon

Lead inspector

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