

# Milldown CE (VC) Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113755
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	338235
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 September 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christine Huard

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	199
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr J Hickish
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs S Ryall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	The Milldown Blandford Forum Dorset DT11 7SH
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils and spoke to parents in the playground. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's development plan, assessment and monitoring documentation. They also scrutinised the 100 questionnaires returned by parents as well as pupil and staff questionnaires.

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

- The success of actions to develop pupils' skills in writing across the school
- How curriculum planning has improved since the last inspection and the impact this is having on progress.
- How effectively assessment and tracking systems are used to set targets and identify the needs of individuals requiring additional support.
- How well the roles of subject leaders and the governors have been developed and how effectively they monitor the work of the school.

## Information about the school

Milldown is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the percentage of pupils with special educational needs, which is very high in some year groups. Nearly all these needs relate to learning difficulties, although some pupils have problems with their behaviour. Almost all the pupils are White British and very few are at an early stage of learning English. There is a higher percentage of pupils who move into school or leave during the year than is found in most schools. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are catered for in the Reception class. The school has the Healthy School award and Activemark. It has Bronze Eco status and holds the Investors In People award. It is working towards Rights Respecting School status.

**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

Milldown is a good school. It has made good improvements since the last inspection and is highly committed to making the best provision for pupils' academic and personal development. Parents and pupils appreciate the provision made. One parent wrote, 'The school succeeds in giving children a positive and rewarding experience of primary school, encouraging a rounded attitude to life in general.' The children behave well, feel valued and make a good contribution to the school. They feel safe because the school cares effectively for them. 'I love my school, everyone cares about you' one pupil wrote, and another: 'It's a great place to learn things and get new friends.' As a result, pupils really enjoy their lessons and achieve well.

Standards have steadily improved since 2007, which was the first year the school had a Year 6 group of pupils. Standards were then well below average. They show significant year-on-year improvement so that by this summer, standards were broadly average and pupils achieved well. This is due to the strong and determined leadership of the headteacher and the dedication of the staff and governors to drive the school forward. Through vigorous monitoring and self-evaluation, they have ensured that the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum have substantially advanced, and have demonstrated that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Children get a good start in the Reception class. Their confidence grows as they move up through the school. The school carefully explores how pupils' academic, social and emotional needs develop and understands what it needs to do to improve even more. The school has done well in improving pupils' writing, because of the way staff have worked on systematically developing basic skills and ensuring that pupils have opportunities to write in all subjects. Pupils develop confidence in mathematics and science because they are encouraged to apply the skills they learn in problem solving and experimentation. However, the tasks set for higher attaining pupils are not always challenging enough. Pupils receive good guidance as to how they can improve through systematic marking and target setting, but they are not always given opportunities to assess for themselves how well they have understood what they have been learning.

The school really encourages parents to become involved in their children's learning and to become involved in events such as the science and arts fairs. As one parent said, 'It was gratifying to be part of something that the whole school was involved in and could truly be proud of.'

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the tasks set in lessons consistently present sufficient challenge for

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higher attaining pupils

- Give pupils more opportunities to assess the level of their own learning by providing time at the end of each lesson to check against the 'steps to success' that they are given as success criteria.

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

Pupils' good behaviour, obvious interest and keenness to learn all help them to achieve well and reach broadly average standards in their work. The attainment of children entering the school varies greatly from year to year, although it is almost always below that expected, most notably in literacy and communication skills. Children get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development, and this prepares them well for learning as they move through the school. Pupils really enjoy activities in class. The youngest pupils in Reception collaborated well when identifying in which room of a house various appliances belong, and older pupils in Year 2 eagerly tackled the task of writing instructions for making a mask. Pupils in Year 5 relished the challenge and made good progress in using appropriate imagery when writing their own poems about Spring, having analysed Ted Hughes' poem about Autumn. Those in Year 6 wrestled enthusiastically with problem solving using their multiplication skills. Pupils' mathematical and scientific skills have shown significant improvement in the last two years and although writing has not moved on quite as quickly, the school has acted to address this and pupils are now making good progress in this area. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they are supported well, as do the very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. However, higher attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently by the tasks set in some classes.

The pupils quite rightly feel safe in school. They feel well cared for and know that there is always someone with whom they can talk through any problems. The work associated with the national awards helps to ensure that pupils are aware of the importance of a healthy diet, although lunchboxes do not always reflect this, as well as the need for plenty of exercise. Pupils are thoughtful and reflective. They explore the faiths and traditions of other cultures and willingly organise fundraising events to support local charities such as 'Julia's House', as well as national and international initiatives. The school council provides a good forum for pupils' ideas and this ensures that their views contribute to the school's development. Pupils' good basic skills and their attitudes and maturity all help to prepare them well for their future economic well-being.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<sup>1</sup> 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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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Pupils say that lessons are fun and this is confirmed by their enthusiasm and active participation. Teaching is good and the activities planned are interesting and engage pupils' attention. Teachers' questioning skills are particularly strong and used well to assess the level of their pupils' learning as well as to prompt them to deeper thinking. However, in some lessons, although higher attaining pupils are challenged very well through questioning, they are not always provided with tasks which challenge them sufficiently. Marking of pupils' work is of good quality and pupils say they find 'green for growth' (which indicates an area for development) and 'tickled pink' (signifying that success criteria are met) very helpful. Pupils' progress is carefully assessed and this information is used well to set targets for improvement. Pupils know their targets and these are effective in challenging them and giving them something to aim for. They have lots of opportunities to discuss and compare their thinking with partners. They do not, however, always have the chance to measure how effectively they have learned by checking through their 'steps to success' at the end of each lesson.

The curriculum has improved substantially since the last inspection and now has increased relevance and is effectively designed to meet the needs of all pupils well. There is a good balance of different subjects, and information and communication technology is used well to support all aspects. The current school focus on improving pupils' writing is well conceived and effective. There are good opportunities for pupils to write in subjects other than English and these are planned systematically across the school. For example, pupils in Year 4 wrote interesting and detailed factual reports about geographical features identified during their learning walk around Blandford. The

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pupils appreciate the wide range of visits and visitors that support their work well and enthusiastically recalled the science and art fairs held during the last year. The good variety of extra-curricular activities is supported very well by the pupils.

The school aims to develop the confidence, independence and enthusiasm of the pupils and this is reflected well in the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because the school takes particular care to identify their individual needs at an early stage, working closely with parents and a wide a range of outside agencies to enable them to make the best possible provision. One parent wrote, 'The school does everything possible to support my child. They always have time to listen to me and have big planning meetings to discuss with all concerned about how my child is getting on.' Transition arrangements into and out of the school are effective. Pupils receive good support for their personal development and are very well cared for. The school is working hard to improve attendance but a minority of parents take their children away on term-time holidays, which disrupts their learning.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Leadership and management are strong. The headteacher and her deputy work exceptionally well together and have successfully driven the school forward since the last inspection. Improvements have been made in all the main subjects of English, mathematics and science because monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress have been rigorous and swift actions taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The role of subject leaders has been effectively developed and they monitor their areas well through observation, examination of planning and of pupils' work, and through discussion with pupils about their progress. Self-evaluation is robust and priorities for development arise from this careful analysis. Appropriate staff development is provided and linked to performance targets where appropriate. The school effectively promotes equality of opportunity for all pupils to achieve as well as they can, by monitoring the progress of different groups of pupils and ensuring their needs are met. Senior leaders promote good levels of community cohesion, particularly in relation to pupils' involvement in the school and local community. Pupils' knowledge of the differing cultures and beliefs represented in the United Kingdom is well developed.

Governors support the school well. They have a good overview of the school's direction and the priorities which they help formulate. Regular visits, reports and meetings with

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staff mean they are able to be an effective 'critical friend'. They ensure that the school meets all the statutory regulations for safeguarding. Rigorous checks are made on all adults who work in the school, Health and safety checks and risk assessments are carried out conscientiously.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The attainment of children on entering Reception varies greatly from year to year, although communication, literacy and language skills are consistently below those expected for their age. Children make good progress and reach standards similar to those expected by the time they join Year 1. Children's personal, social and emotional development is good, and the sensitive encouragement and guidance they receive helps them to become happy and, for the most part, independent learners. Children behave well and learn to play happily with each other. Teaching is lively and stimulating and enables the children to learn effectively. The curriculum is exciting and provides activities across all the areas of learning. There is a good balance between those activities led by the teacher and those that children choose for themselves. A good range of activities is provided in the outside area and children enjoyed painting a giant picture using wide sweeping movements, so different from painting at an easel inside. The care and attention given to children's welfare are good. The provision is led and managed well. Staff monitor the progress of children carefully and observations are useful and informative and carefully linked to each area of learning. However, this information is not as useful as it could be as although next steps for learning are recorded in the overall class record, they are not identified in the children's individual



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record books.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

There was a strong response to the Ofsted questionnaire, with 100 questionnaires returned, representing half of the families attending the school. Parents and carers are very confident that their children are safe and well cared for. They also express confidence in the leadership and management of the school. Most are happy overall with the experiences their children are receiving. There are a few reservations, mainly over whether their children are making sufficient progress, but inspectors are confident that pupils are making good progress. Some parents expressed concern over the large class sizes, particularly in Year 5. Inspectors found that the school has acted appropriately to provide additional support for these pupils, particularly in English and mathematics, and thus pupils continue to make the good progress identified in the rest of the school.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Milldown 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 100 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 199 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	61	61	37	37	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	53	43	46	46	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	43	43	54	54	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	37	53	53	8	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	41	25	25	5	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	40	58	58	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	40	52	52	2	2	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)	42	42	53	53	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	41	52	52	5	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	36	50	50	5	5	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	34	58	58	4	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	32	32	61	61	3	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	39	51	51	3	3	1	1

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



25 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Milldown CE (VC) Primary School, Blandford Forum DT11 7SH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed seeing you work so hard in lessons and play so happily outside. You showed us how much you enjoy your school and how pleased you are with how well you are doing. You are right to be pleased, because it is a good school!

What we found out about your school,

- You really enjoy school and make good progress, reaching the standards you should in English, mathematics and science.
- You behave well, both in class and out in the playground.
- You get on well with the other pupils and always look after each other.
- You understand well how to stay safe and live healthy lives.
- The headteacher and governors are good at running the school and understand well how they could make it even better.
- Your teachers are doing a good job. They work hard to plan interesting lessons and always mark your work carefully.
- All staff take good care of you and keep you safe.
- Reception class children get a good start to their school life.

What we would like the school to do now.

- Ensure that those of you who find learning easier have tasks that really challenge you in every lesson.
- Make sure that you always have the chance to assess how well you are learning by measuring how well you have done against the 'steps to success' you are given.

Good luck for the future. We hope you continue to enjoy school as much as you do now.

Yours faithfully

Christine Huard

Lead Inspector

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