

Millfield Science & Performing Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119714
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339512
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Ruth James HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	560
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Harry Pindred
Headteacher	Mr Sean Bullen
Date of previous school inspection	3 June 2007
School address	Belvedere Road Thornton-Cleveleys Lancashire FY5 5DG
Telephone number	01253 865929
Fax number	01253 857586
Email address	admin@millfield.lancs.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 31 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at policies, data and analyses, records of the school's monitoring, governors' minutes and questionnaires completed by parents, students and staff.

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

- standards and learning and progress in mathematics
- opportunities for students to develop literacy skills and standards in English
- the quality of teaching and learning, especially in mathematics and specialist arts subjects
- the achievement of students
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement, including the leadership and management of teaching and learning
- the school's capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Millfield School serves an area where social and economic conditions are average, but where there are pockets of deprivation. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is above average. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage with only a very small number of minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above average. The number of students who join and leave the school other than at the normal time is above average. Since September 2005, the school has been a Science and Performing Arts College. The school has the Healthy School's Award.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Millfield is a satisfactory school with a number of good features. It is improving well, a fact that was commented upon by several parents. Since the last inspection, students' attainment has improved significantly, particularly in the case of boys, and students now leave school with broadly average standards having made satisfactory progress.

Outcomes in English and mathematics, although improving, remain below average, but they are better in English than in mathematics. Achievement in the school's specialist subject of science is very good and all science courses have high pass rates. Outcomes for examination courses in performing arts subjects are more variable and some targets have not been met, but a new drama teacher and dance teacher have been appointed to address this issue.

The strong focus on raising aspirations and attainment is evident in displays around school. Millfield is a caring school and staff know the students very well. Students feel safe. Relationships in lessons are positive which helps to create a good climate for learning. Students enjoy practical activities and opportunities to work with each other. They make at least satisfactory progress in lessons but there are not yet enough good lessons to ensure that rapid progress is made in all subjects, and so teaching is satisfactory overall. Whole-school strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning are having an impact but there is still some way to go. For example, strategies to improve literacy across the curriculum are not consistently embedded. Assessment practices are also variable and assessment in lessons is not always sharp enough. The curriculum is now good. Developments such as the introduction of several vocational courses have improved the range of opportunities at Key Stage 4. Specialist status has led to good facilities in the performing arts including a drama studio and a television studio, and there is good participation in extra-curricular activities, including performances and shows.

Strong and effective leadership has been instrumental in bringing about the improvements in recent years, and the capacity to improve further is good. Leaders and managers recognise that, although there have been improvements in provision, standards, especially in mathematics, need to be improved further. Steps have been taken to improve the quality of mathematics provision and changes in staffing mean that more of the mathematics teaching is now good, and occasionally, lessons are outstanding. Monitoring of the quality of provision is now rigorous and self-evaluation is largely accurate in identifying strengths and weaknesses. Governance is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise standards further, especially in terms of the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A*to C including English and mathematics by:
 - raising standards in mathematics
 - improving the quality of teaching further by ensuring that in lessons the work set meets the full range of abilities and there is sufficient support, pace and challenge for all students
 - improving assessment strategies so that:
 - in lessons, teachers become more adept at assessing students' small steps of progress and adapting their teaching accordingly
 - subject tracking systems are sufficiently refined to accurately record progress at regular intervals, to identify underachievement early, and to plan interventions.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students arrive in the school with slightly below average prior attainment, and they are now making satisfactory progress overall. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is broadly in line with national averages. The improvement in boys' attainment has been particularly strong since the last inspection, as a result of the school's targeted strategies. Girls' results also improved over the same period, but not as much. Science, a specialist subject, is a particular strength of the school, with high pass rates for all courses. This shows how much students are capable of achieving. Although learning and progress are satisfactory overall at both key stages, there are differences in the quality of learning both between subjects and within departments. Students display very good attitudes to learning and enjoy the majority of their lessons, particularly when they are actively involved in tasks. However, inspectors found too much variability in the extent to which they had a clear understanding of the subject material being covered. In just under half the lessons observed by inspectors learning was satisfactory. In the better lessons students worked productively on appropriately challenging activities and achieved well. In satisfactory lessons the work set was not sufficiently well matched to student needs or the pace of learning was slow, and students did not achieve as much. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in lessons, as a result of appropriate teaching and support.

Students say they feel safe and well cared for at school. Behaviour, both in lessons and around school, is good and occasionally outstanding. Students are polite and friendly. Students understand how to lead healthy lifestyles and many make sensible food choices. There is good participation in extra-curricular sporting and dance opportunities. The contribution students make to the school and local community, including local primary schools, is good. As a result of the concerted efforts of the school, attendance has improved well since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The number of persistent absentees has reduced substantially. The good range of vocational courses

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and appropriate advice and guidance prepare students for the next stage of their lives, but standards in mathematics and English are not yet high enough so that overall their skills in this area are satisfactory. Students' spiritual, moral and social development is good, but their understanding of cultures other than their own is less well developed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Good teaching was observed in over half the lessons during the inspection and no inadequate teaching was seen. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Planning includes specific reference to the development of literacy skills, although this is not always a strong feature of the actual teaching. In many lessons students are involved in varied activities, including paired and small group tasks, and enjoy their work. This is reflected in parents' views on teaching. However, inspectors found that teachers do not always place enough emphasis on what learning has actually taken place. In the better lessons, teachers are skilled at ensuring that learning has taken place before they move on. They carry out regular and discerning checks on the understanding of all students in the class and use assessment methods

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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effectively both inside and outside the classroom. This is not yet happening consistently across the school. In satisfactory lessons weaknesses include a slow pace and work not sufficiently well matched to the range of abilities. Although teachers have comprehensive information about the students in their classes, they do not always use this well when planning their lessons. For example, more able students are not always provided with enough challenge. The quality of teaching is variable both within and between departments. Inspectors observed teaching which ranged from outstanding to satisfactory in English, specialist arts subjects and mathematics. Teaching assistants provide valuable support to individuals. Teachers are beginning to make more use of peer and self-assessment in lessons but this is underdeveloped and sometimes detracts from the learning of the subject matter.

The curriculum is good, and includes a range of vocational courses which better meet the needs of many students. Specialist status makes a good contribution to provision. A good choice of courses is available in science and this, together with good teaching, contributes to the very good outcomes in science. Specialist performing arts facilities contribute well to students' enjoyment of these subjects. Students experiences in school shows and concerts provide many opportunities for developing confidence and self-esteem, and so contribute to raising their aspirations. In an outstanding media lesson in the well-equipped television studio, a large Year 9 class worked exceptionally well in roles such as camera-people, presenters, interviewers, director, and floor manager to produce a short television programme. The students' excitement was evident and their excellent behaviour and competent and professional approach clearly showed how much they valued this marvellous experience.

Teachers know their students well and students feel well cared for. The pastoral system based on mixed-age tutor groups eases transition in Year 7 and students settle in quickly. There are effective systems in place to identify any problems students may experience and good links with appropriate external agencies.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

Since his arrival three years ago the headteacher has initiated significant changes in the ethos of the school and has succeeded in raising expectations and fostering a sense of collective purpose amongst the staff. Many parents and students made favourable comments about his impact in terms of school improvement. He and senior leaders have

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demonstrated considerable drive and determination to bring about the strong improvements in outcomes since the last inspection. Strategies to improve attendance, behaviour and the curriculum have all been successful. Monitoring of the quality of teaching is now more rigorous so that teaching is improving and learning is accelerating, leading to better achievement. The school has been particularly successful in raising boys' attainment but leaders acknowledge that there is more to do to meet all the challenging targets that have been set. The capacity to improve further is good. Middle leaders are held to account for the performance of their areas. Key weaknesses, such as the quality of provision in mathematics, have been tackled vigorously. The strengths of the science department are beginning to be better used to support other areas, in terms of management and teaching and learning.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. The school itself is a harmonious community. There are many local links and the school is held in positive regard in the area but less has been done to develop students' awareness of the lives and cultures of people living in other parts of Britain or further afield. Leaders are aware of the need to develop this aspect of the school's work. Safeguarding procedures meet government requirements. Governance is good. Governors are skilled and capable and know all aspects of the school's work well. They provide appropriate support and challenge to the headteacher and staff. Value for money is satisfactory.

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The results of the parent questionnaire analysis show that the vast majority of parents

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are pleased with the school. Several parents commented on how much the school has improved in recent years. Parents feel well informed about their children's progress and are happy with the quality of teaching. Responses showed positive views of leadership and management. Many parents added positive comments about the school. Examples include:

'My son is making fantastic progress. The new headteacher has made this school amazing!'

'I feel the staff at Millfield are always very approachable and there is always somebody available to talk to if a problem arises.'

'My child loves coming to school. The school is led by a fantastic team. I am very pleased with my child's progress.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Millfield Science & Performing Arts College 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 143 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 560 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	123	46	138	51	6	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	138	51	119	44	10	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	132	50	126	47	2	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	118	45	130	49	7	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	113	42	145	54	4	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	89	34	150	57	12	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	94	36	151	57	10	4	2	1
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)	108	41	136	52	6	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	110	42	139	53	5	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	127	47	121	45	12	4	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	88	34	149	57	10	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	152	57	107	40	3	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	150	57	101	38	8	3	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.



Inspection of Millfield Science & Performing Arts College, Thornton-Cleveleys, FY5 5DG

Many thanks for the welcome you gave us when we visited the school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. We looked at the results of the questionnaires that some of you completed, and also those your parents completed.

Your school has improved since the last inspection. We were impressed with your good behaviour in lessons and around school. Attendance is much better now, so fewer students are missing important parts of their education. You are offered a good range of subjects, courses and activities. This clearly helps you enjoy school. The school cares for you well and you told us that you feel safe.

Millfield provides you with a satisfactory education and several aspects are good. Exam results have improved and the standards you achieve are broadly average by the time they leave. You are making satisfactory progress. The school's specialist status in science and performing arts provides good opportunities for you. Results in science are very good because of the good range of science courses and good teaching you receive. Performing arts facilities are good and encourage you to participate. I was very impressed with the television programme that a Year 9 class made in the television studio during the inspection.

Although many lessons are good, we found that teaching is satisfactory overall. Your teachers take care to plan lessons that include different interesting activities. We found that in some lessons you could be making faster progress and achieving more. You told us that your teachers are friendly and supportive.

Your headteacher, together with senior leaders and staff, has already brought about good improvements, and they are all determined to make Millfield an even better school in the future. We have asked them to work to ensure that standards are raised further, by improving lessons so that more are as good as the best which should ensure that you make faster progress. We particularly want to see you getting better results in mathematics. You can help by working hard to meet all your targets.

We wish you every success in the future.

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