

Millais School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126066
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	340911
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Patricia Metham

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	1496
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs E Barnes
Headteacher	Leon Clive Nettley
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Over two thirds of the time was spent looking at learning, with 53 lessons observed and 51 teachers seen. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation that included key policies, the school's development plan, minutes of governors' meetings, reports from the School Improvement Partner. In addition, they scrutinised departmental handbooks and data about students' attainment and progress, as well as 729 responses to the inspection questionnaires from parents and carers and 115 from students.

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

- how successfully the school has responded to recommendations in the previous report
- how effectively management of the curriculum and of the enrichment programme promotes equality of opportunity and achievement for all students
- the governing body's strategic vision for the school and the effectiveness with which governors hold the school to account
- the impact of the language specialism and training school on teaching, learning and curriculum development.

Information about the school

Millais achieved specialist status as a language school in 1996 and as a training school in 2007. It also holds the International School Award. While Millais has students across the ability range, there is a larger than average proportion of able students. The school is oversubscribed. Most students are of White British heritage but the school's ethnic diversity has increased over recent years. Fewer than 4% have English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is relatively low, made up predominantly of those with moderate learning difficulties or social and emotional issues. The school's curriculum, especially its vocational provision, is extended through links with a local college and local schools.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Cheerful confidence and a shared sense of purpose underpin the success of this outstanding school. As the parent of a Year 10 student observed: 'Students and staff seem to care about the school. I feel that the children are respecting the staff and the staff are respecting the students. This is an excellent base for achieving very good results.' Governors, leaders, managers and staff share an ambitious vision for the school's development as a centre of excellence within the wider community and as a leader in the development of teaching skills and curriculum provision. Incisive, enterprising and persuasive leadership by the headteacher drives a constant and constructive cycle of review and innovation. His cohesive and highly effective senior leadership team is strongly supported by management at all levels. Accurate self-evaluation that shapes planning and the extremely positive impact of recent strategies on students' achievement and personal development indicate that capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

Students' attainment is impressively high. In 2009, 81% gained five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, against a national average of 50%. Attainment in the school's specialist subjects was particularly high, with 74% of students gaining A* to C in a modern foreign language against a national average of 28%. Progress made by all students was at least good, and that made by the more able was outstanding. The impact of recent strategies to give more targeted support to students who need individual help, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language has not been systematically audited. There is, however, persuasive evidence that the relatively small difference in rates of progress across the ability range is being reduced. Achievement overall has been outstanding for the past three years.

Students pointed to the skill and commitment of teachers as the key to their success. Amongst the strengths observed were secure and enthusiastic subject knowledge, excellent questioning skills, a highly productive rapport with students, lively pace and the confident use of appropriate technology. Students identified discussion, pair work and individual research and presentation as being especially effective in developing their skills as learners. A Year 11 student spoke for many in saying, 'We're not only encouraged to be independent but taught how to be independent.' Excellent examples were observed of the timely and constructive use of varied assessment methods in lessons to evaluate and extend students' understanding. The marking of written work most often combined encouragement with detailed guidance on how to improve. There was, however, some unevenness in the skill and consistency with which this was done. Steps are being taken to tackle this.

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The curriculum has the breadth and flexibility to meet the needs of all students extremely effectively. A wide choice of vocational courses is offered, such as the Engineering Diploma, some through collaboration with other schools and colleges locally. Outstanding care and guidance ensure that students follow courses that meet their individual abilities and aspirations and that they are strongly supported through the process. Students' success as learners is complemented by their steady development of the attitudes and skills that will serve them well beyond school. They are courteously articulate, treat each other and adults with consideration and respond to challenge with confidence. They enjoy their own and other people's successes. As one student explained, 'Millais has taught me to be happy in my own skin and proud of all my achievements.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reinforce the progress made by students of all abilities by:
 - embedding best practice in assessment to support learning consistently across all subjects
 - evaluating the impact of recently introduced provision to support students who need individual help, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Very high attainment and outstanding achievement are matched by students' development as thoughtful, confident and enterprising future citizens. They have positive attitudes to their education, taking full advantage of opportunities to become independent learners. They are adept at collaborative and practical problem-solving and able to present a coherent and personal line of argument persuasively. They feel safe at school, confident that any difficulties will be quickly resolved by staff or by other students. They accept responsibility with enthusiasm and panache, for example as prefects or peer mentors, and respond with great maturity when invited to evaluate teaching or to contribute to the school's development planning. Students display a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, although they do not always make healthy choices themselves. Participation in the extensive programme of sports and activities is strong. Great strength in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, and the skills they develop through work-related learning and 'enrichment' activities, equip students extremely well for life after school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, strongly promoted by the school's ethos, teaching and curriculum.

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.

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

How effective is the provision?

Most of the teaching seen was at least good and much was outstanding, displaying highly developed professional skills and infectious enthusiasm. Teachers made what was to be learnt very clear and presented a sequence of increasingly challenging activities, punctuated by opportunities for reflection and consolidation. Inspectors saw excellent examples of teachers using open questions to prompt independent thinking and to establish students' levels of understanding. As students were keen to point out, the most effective teaching was collaborative, encouraging them to investigate, challenge and extend the ideas and subject content presented in lessons. The marking of written work most often, but not always, balanced encouragement with specific guidance on how to improve, which students clearly appreciated.

Very successful partnerships with a local college and a variety of schools, with businesses and with agencies, such as the police, add further breadth to an inclusive curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, four pathways provide options well tailored to students' different needs and ambitions and vocational opportunities are being extended. The school's specialism is very strongly presented through a wide choice of modern languages, including Japanese and Mandarin Chinese. The Certificate of Personal Effectiveness taken in Year 11 gives valuable focus to students' preparation for life beyond school. Response to the ending of national testing for Key Stage 3 has been extremely positive. In English, for example, the Year 9 curriculum focuses on developing students' breadth of reading and refining their critical skills. This culminates in a project that serves as the basis for a GCSE unit. The curriculum support strategy provides effective and much appreciated coaching after school for students across both key

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stages, geared to their individual needs. An extremely wide range of well-supported and challenging activities complements the main curriculum, including team and individual sports, performing arts, visits and subject-linked trips and expeditions.

As parents and students make clear, the quality and scope of care, guidance and support are outstanding. Students’ individual needs on entry to the school are very carefully assessed and, when appropriate, responded to by learning support assistants working in each department or through specialist provision in the Personalised Learning Centre. Well coordinated management ensures that pastoral care and academic guidance complement each other very effectively. The school’s inclusion team works constructively with external agencies when appropriate. Students are, rightly, confident that the guidance they are given on how to prepare for further education, training or employment is well informed and effectively tailored to their individual needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

High expectations and exceptionally well-managed lines of accountability ensure that standards continue to rise impressively. The impact of teaching on learning is rigorously monitored, with areas for improvement promptly addressed through excellent professional development. This is a major aspect of the training school programme for which Millais was awarded the Gold Standard South East Region Quality Mark for Leadership in Continuing Professional Development. Robust safeguarding procedures are in place and whole-staff training is a regular part of the school’s programme. Individual case studies demonstrate the thoroughness of care for vulnerable students. Recent initiatives to strengthen provision across the ability range are most successfully promoting equality of opportunity within an inclusive curriculum. Governors have a detailed understanding of the school’s workings, updated through monthly meetings. They are well equipped for their role as critical friends. Financial planning and controls are excellent, systematically implementing priorities set out in the school’s development plan.

Millais is a cohesive community with a firmly embedded culture of respect for the individual. Instances of racial tension or bullying are very rare. They are carefully logged and prompt action taken. Students develop a thoughtful understanding of their local community, and their links with schools around the world add immediacy and detail to the exploration of international issues in lessons. Less well developed is their awareness

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of the opportunities and responsibilities presented to them as citizens of a multicultural Britain. Engagement with parents and carers whose children need significant support is very constructive and the newly extended role of the Parent Teacher Association is proving effective. Communication with parents is not, however, consistently prompt and comprehensive. The school recognises this as a priority for improvement.

Management of the school’s two specialist areas is outstanding. Millais makes a highly significant contribution to training, teaching and curriculum in local schools and draws most productively on a range of partnerships to extend opportunities for its own students.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	1

Views of parents and carers

The views of most of the very large number of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire were positive; 94% were happy with their daughters’ experience at the school and believed that they were making good progress in a school that was led and managed effectively. Almost all were confident that their daughters were kept safe. Inspection evidence supports these perceptions.

A small number of parents and a few girls expressed concerns about the management of disruptive behaviour; however, behaviour observed during the inspection, both in lessons and around the school, was generally excellent.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Millais 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 729 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1481 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	194	27	469	64	50	7	6	1
The school keeps my child safe	275	38	436	60	11	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	235	32	418	57	64	9	2	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	269	37	412	57	35	5	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	226	31	450	62	29	4	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	135	19	435	60	120	16	5	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	118	16	486	67	84	12	4	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)	177	24	433	59	43	6	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	203	28	447	61	50	7	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	171	23	425	58	60	8	8	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	132	18	410	56	92	13	7	1
The school is led and managed effectively	245	34	440	60	12	2	2	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	293	40	395	54	29	4	2	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.



14 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Millais School, Horsham, RH13 5HR

My colleagues and I greatly appreciated the friendliness and openness with which you responded to our questions and helped us build up an accurate and balanced picture of your school during our recent inspection visit. We agree with you, your headteacher and your teachers that yours is an outstanding school.

Amongst your school's most conspicuous strengths are:

- the very high standards you attain and the excellent progress you make, helped by outstanding teaching and an impressively broad and flexible curriculum
- the support you give each other and the contribution you are able to make within your local community, often as an element of your school's language specialism
- your development as articulate, effective and independent learners, able to work together as well as individually to solve problems and explore topics
- the care, guidance and support you are given
- the vision, skills and commitment of your school's leaders and managers.

To ensure that Millais continues to go from strength to strength, we have asked your headteacher to help every one of you to make the best possible progress by:

- making sure that methods of assessment shown to support your learning most effectively are practised consistently in each curriculum area
- taking careful note of what works well in helping those of you who need additional support.

You can make a difference by not missing days at school if you can help it and by setting yourselves targets that really stretch you and will ensure that you fulfil your potential.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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