

Milton School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106969
Local Authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	356064
Inspection dates	15–16 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Kath Halifax

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr John Doyle
Headteacher	Mrs Brenda Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2007
School address	Storey Street Swinton, Mexborough South Yorkshire S64 8QG
Telephone number	01709 570246
Fax number	01709 572009
Email address	mssoffice@rgfl.org

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out two additional inspectors. They observed 10 lessons taught by 10 different teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' records of achievement, work books, and information about their progress. The responses to 21 questionnaires from parents and carers were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school. They looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress made by pupils in Key Stage 3.
- The effectiveness of the school in promoting pupils' awareness and understanding of diversity and community cohesion.
- The effectiveness of the school in providing for pupils who have a gift or talent in sport or the expressive arts.

Information about the school

This average-sized school is designated for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Over a half of these pupils have autistic spectrum disorders, and one in ten has emotional and behavioural needs. All pupils have a statement to meet their special educational needs. A few pupils are from Travelling families. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. A very small proportion of pupils are looked after by the local authority.

At the start of the academic year, the school was awarded specialist status for its expertise and work with other schools in communication and interaction. In addition, it has achieved numerous national awards including the Sportsmark, Platinum Healthy School status, the Warwick Platinum Enterprise Award, and the Sustainable School 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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school that provides excellent value for money. This also applies to the outreach services that help other teachers to provide programmes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and those who experience problems communicating.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. This is the result of an innovative curriculum and outstanding teaching. Pupils make impressive progress in all subjects in all key stages. The rate of progress for all pupils is accelerated by weekly sessions focused on targets in individual education plans. This has led to exceptionally good results in national tests at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics. Pupils are particularly proud of their written work, but on occasions, their writing in integrated studies and science is not always of the same standard as in their literacy books. Nevertheless, by the end of Year 11, all pupils leave with nationally recognised awards in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology. Highly effective links with mainstream schools enable more-able pupils to work at a much higher level and gain GCSE in, for example, mathematics, science and physical education.

Through carefully thought-out daily routines and an extensive programme, pupils make excellent gains in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They receive impressive care, guidance and support. Exceptional links with parents and carers, and partnerships with numerous health professionals and other agencies contribute greatly to pupils' learning and well-being. The support for those who are most vulnerable due to their circumstance is exemplary, enabling pupils to cope with significant, and often traumatic, changes in their young lives. Pupils discover their strengths, and the aspirations of families are changed.

Pupils and staff thrive under the leadership of the inspirational headteacher and deputy headteacher. They have successfully created an amazing school that embraces all learners and have worked with great determination and imagination to improve the provision. Resolute not to stand still, since the last inspection the school has gained specialist status for communication and interaction. Advice in setting up of a unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders in a secondary school has enabled some pupils to stay in mainstream school and plans are well advanced for further community support when the new building is completed. Self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders know the school in fine detail. A wealth of information is collected and analysed on pupils' achievements and social development. Leaders are visionary; they know where they are going and how to get there. This gives them outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure pupils do their best writing in all subjects by:

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- checking letters are correctly formed
- ensuring that in all of their writing pupils use the same level of punctuation and grammar that they use in their literacy books
- providing more opportunities for pupils to write independently and at length in integrated studies.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils are avid learners; their desire to succeed is a contributory factor to their achievement. They tackle new challenges enthusiastically, listen attentively to adults and ask pertinent questions. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is low. Pupils delight in their time in school, overcoming many barriers, such as communication and social difficulties, to make the best of every opportunity. Their behaviour is excellent. As a result of very good behaviour plans, those with complex needs are more aware of consequences and respond exceptionally well to the expectations and role models provided by adults. Parents and carers are thrilled by the achievements of their child commenting, 'They have achieved things we would never have thought possible', giving examples such as talking, mixing with others, self-care, and in some cases attaining GCSE.

Pupils' attainment has improved year-on-year since the last inspection. A high number of pupils enter Key Stage 3 at varying times because they have struggled in their mainstream school. They settle quickly and, as a result of individual programmes, make equally excellent progress as those in other key stages. Pupils of all ages strive to give of their best at all times and have produced a remarkable amount of written work. However, sometimes when writing in integrated studies and in science, their letter formation is not as good as in their literacy books. Similarly, pupils who, for example, use full stops and capital letters in literacy, from time-to-time forget this when writing in other subjects. Pupils' greatest achievements are without doubt in speaking and listening and in their social development. All pupils achieve exceptionally well and are extremely well prepared for life after school through the challenging 'travel training' programme and business projects such as the cafe. In addition to academic qualifications, pupils gain vocational qualifications, for example in horticulture and childcare.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community such as the creation and maintenance of an allotment. They are generous fund-raisers making considerable donations to charity. The 'Common Purpose' programme equips them well to be 'junior leaders'. Pupils are keen to share their understanding of keeping safe and healthy with others, speaking confidently about the adverse effects of, for example, smoking, alcohol, drugs and caffeine. Attendance is above average with almost all absences due to illness. Pupils have a growing awareness and respect for cultural diversity, talking animatedly about celebrating the traditions of different faiths and their visit to a Mosque.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment 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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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

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

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is of a very high standard. Teachers have a very good understanding of how pupils with learning difficulties and autism learn, and of the subjects they teach. Close teamwork between teachers and support assistants allows learning to be accelerated by precisely-targeted adult support. Lessons are exciting and visual, with very well-chosen practical activities and resources to make learning meaningful. Activities are carefully matched to challenge and include every pupil in the lesson. Numerous opportunities are provided to further pupils' communication and social development. Numeracy and literacy skills are generally promoted across all subjects, but the use of worksheets limits pupils writing. In addition, pupils have too few opportunities to write at length in other subjects. Pupils' progress is recorded and tracked through a range of rigorous assessment procedures. This enables adults to take immediate action if needed. In addition, pupils reflect on their learning, regularly considering how well they have done and knowing their targets for the next stage of their learning. They are especially proud of their high quality contributions to their Annual Review.

Pupils make excellent progress because the curriculum is carefully tailored to individual needs. A range of programmes to boost the performance of pupils who learn more slowly is very effective in increasing their rate of learning as well as their confidence. Equally,

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very good provision is made for pupils who have a gift or talent. In addition to links with mainstream schools, pupils with sporting talents further these through school clubs and community links in, for example, street dance, basketball and horse riding. Similarly, talents in pottery, animation and other creative arts are fostered extremely well. The programme of numerous visits and visitors is enormously successful in encouraging first-hand learning and enjoyment, and in helping pupils solve problems, and face the many challenges to life outside school. The school has received an abundance of external awards for its curriculum and is one of the few schools to be recognised as a Leading School for Climate Change.

Adults know their pupils' circumstances and their families extremely well. This allows them to target support accurately, particularly for the pupils who are vulnerable due to their circumstance. Links with other agencies and health professionals are exceptionally efficient and effective. This is especially important as all pupils are known to at least one agency, with several having dealings with as many as 12. All adults play a crucial role in ensuring the welfare of all pupils, continuously working alongside parents and carers to improve attendance and in some cases, their home circumstances. The school makes an exceptional difference to the lives and future prospects of pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
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?

Leaders are clear and determined in their pursuit of excellence and have the skill and enthusiasm to maintain it. Their passion is infectious and reflected in the work of middle managers and subject leaders. Through very good professional training, leaders have ensured that staff keep abreast of new initiatives, and that classroom practice remains at the highest level. All aspects of the school's work are continuously reviewed and aspirational plans put into place. Robust systems contribute to high achievement and ensure the efficient day-to-day running of the school.

Governance is good. Members of the governing body provide practical support as well as holding the school to account. At the time of the inspection, arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils were good. Leaders work conscientiously to ensure appropriate measures are in place, but the paperwork does not always reflect the good practice. Nevertheless, pupils are made very aware of personal safety through the curriculum and pastoral care.

Equality of opportunity is at the hub of the school's work. Every pupil and member of staff is valued and treated as an individual. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in every aspect of school life and, where necessary, new ventures are set up such as an overnight

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residential visit for those most vulnerable due to their circumstances. The school is a unified community. It provides good opportunities for pupils to be aware of community cohesion. Pupils and staff enjoy cultural and creative experiences that reflect a diverse British society, though leaders have identified more needs to be done regarding global issues.

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	1
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

Though there was a low response to the parents' and carers' questionnaire, almost all were very positive. A quarter of those responding took time to write their findings in praise of the school. Parents and carers think highly of the school. They are especially happy with the dedication of staff, the progress their child is making and the positive effect the school has on family life. A very small number of parents and carers expressed individual concerns including a lack of communication. Inspectors endorse the strengths identified by the parents and carers. During the inspection, a sample of school-to-home diaries was examined and these were found to be of a high quality.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Milton 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 21 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 90 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	11	52	10	48	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	76	5	24	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	13	62	7	33	1	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	76	5	24	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	71	6	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	52	8	38	1	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	67	7	33	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)	14	67	7	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	81	4	19	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	71	6	29	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	76	5	24	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	81	4	19	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	81	4	19	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 all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



16 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Milton School, Mexborough, S64 8QG

My colleague and I would like to thank you for the help you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you, eating lunch with you, and looking at your work. We were especially impressed by your photographs, by your enterprise projects in the garden and cafe, and by the colourful displays of your work, and the animation project we saw.

We agree with your views, you attend a school that is providing you with an outstanding education. As well as working hard, you have huge fun in lessons, in sport, in clubs, and on the many visits out of school. The London trip looked particularly thrilling. You are extremely well behaved and work very hard. This means all of you make exceptional progress. This happens because you have first-rate leaders, teachers and support staff, and an exciting curriculum. As well as helping you to make outstanding progress, your school provides excellent support for other schools by helping their teachers provide programmes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and those who experience problems communicating.

There is just one area that would make it even better.

- Your teachers make sure you make excellent progress in writing in your literacy lessons. Now they need to check you always write to the same standard in your integrated studies work and in science.

We know you will do all you can to help your teachers and wish you every success in your future.

Yours sincerely

Katharine Halifax

Lead inspector

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