

Milford Junior School

Glenthorne Avenue, Yeovil, Somerset, BA21 4PG

Inspection dates 18–19 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although there have been improvements in teaching over the past year they have not yet had sufficient time to accelerate progress so that it is consistently good across the school.
- Reading is not always taught systematically which means that pupils who are behind do not catch up quickly enough.
- On occasions teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- There have been inconsistencies over time in the way senior leaders monitor the performance of teachers and in the actions taken to help them improve their work.
- Governors have not challenged senior leaders strongly enough about why some pupils do not make better progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has quickly gained the confidence of the staff and parents and is committed to raising attainment and tackling inconsistencies in teaching.
- The teaching of writing is good.
- Pupils are well behaved, very courteous, feel safe in school and have good attitudes to their learning.
- The systems for tracking pupils' progress, introduced over the last year, are increasingly helping the school to tackle any underachievement.
- The middle leaders are being instrumental in helping the school move forwards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons, of which two were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the team made a number of other short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and the school's staff, including senior and middle leaders. In addition, a meeting was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 31 responses to the on-line questionnaire Parent View as well as consulting informally with parents and carers.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including the school's own data on pupils' attainment and progress, planning and monitoring documentation, the monitoring of teaching and performance management documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors heard pupils read, talked to them in lessons and evaluated samples of their work.

Inspection team

Sandra Woodman, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Robert Arnold	Additional inspector
Carol Jones	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Milford Junior School is larger than the average-sized primary school. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher took up post at the beginning of this term.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and come from the local area.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported through school action is well above average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is below the national average.
- The school is a member of the Yeovil Federation of Schools.
- The school meets the current government floor standards for English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that learning activities are tailored to meet pupils' individual needs more effectively in order to accelerate their rates of progress
 - ensuring high expectations of good and better pupil achievement are the norm in every class
 - ensuring that reading is taught systematically and consistently across the school so that lower attaining pupils can catch up more quickly.
- Raise the quality of leadership and management by:
 - revising the policy and procedures for performance management so that they are in line with the new Teachers' Standards, meet statutory requirements and systematically develop good quality teaching
 - developing the role of senior leaders so that they monitor and support the performance of teachers more effectively
 - developing the monitoring role of governors so that they can support and challenge senior leaders more effectively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. There are signs of improvement, especially in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in English and mathematics which are above the national averages. Over the last year the legacy of inconsistent rates of progress has been addressed and progress is accelerating.
- When pupils enter the school their attainment is broadly average, although a significant number has not acquired sufficient early skills in reading. As they move through the school most pupils make the expected progress, although over the past year more pupils are doing better. This is because teachers are beginning to use the information from assessments more astutely to introduce appropriate levels of challenge.
- Most groups of pupils are progressing more quickly than two years ago. Changes to the way writing is taught and the deployment of staff to reduce the size of teaching groups in mathematics are leading to faster progress, particularly for middle and higher attaining pupils. However, some inconsistencies remain, especially for lower attaining pupils in reading.
- The majority of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs are making at least the expected progress from their starting points. Their achievement is improving because of the well-targeted interventions and support pupils receive from both teachers and teaching assistants.
- In most lessons pupils work hard, persevere with their tasks and make good progress in their learning. However, sometimes teachers still give their pupils tasks that are too easy and this limits the opportunities for extending pupils' thinking and understanding.
- Despite the introduction of recent initiatives that have raised the profile and enjoyment of reading, lower attaining pupils still struggle as they lack the necessary knowledge of letters and sounds that will help them become proficient readers.
- Improvements to the way writing is taught are having a marked effect on pupils' learning. The focus on identifying and closing the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills ensures that pupils are progressing more rapidly.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although during the inspection the majority of teaching observed was good, teaching requires improvement. This is because recent changes and improvements have not had enough time to make sure that good teaching is consolidated and ensure that pupils' progress is accelerated over a sustained period of time.
- Typically, where teaching requires improvement it is because expectations of what some pupils can achieve are not high enough and reading skills are not developed systematically or consistently enough to help lower-attaining pupils improve. Consequently, some pupils are not consistently extended in their thinking or supported in developing their reading skills and this slows their progress.
- In lessons where pupils make good progress the learning activities are pitched at the correct level so that pupils are motivated and really have to think about their work. Writing skills are well taught as teachers and teaching assistants show very clearly how pupils can improve their work. For example, in a good lesson about the use of adjectives, the stimulating use of information and communication technology and relevant range of resources enabled all pupils to be highly engaged and adventurous in their word choices.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they often use this to plan interesting learning activities. In good lessons all groups of pupils work at a strong pace, know what is expected of them and are involved in evaluating their own learning. Any misconceptions are quickly identified and addressed by teachers.

- Some activities are not planned with enough precision to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge and move the learning on more quickly. Nevertheless, the change to the way mathematics teaching is organised, where pupils are taught in ability groups in their age range, is starting to bear fruit.
- Information from assessments has not always been used well enough to track how well pupils are attaining and plan positively to tackle any underachievement. Teachers are now beginning to do this more effectively and, although it is a fairly recent development, it is starting to have an impact on improving rates of progress.
- Marking is good in writing as it identifies to pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve further.
- The support for pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs is carefully planned. The pupils receive focused help that is enabling them to make better progress. The changes in the deployment of staff mean that they have good support in lessons.
- Generally, but not exclusively, teaching assistants are well utilised and support the learning effectively. Homework activities are planned to link with class work and extend pupils' own interests.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well both in lessons, in the playground and around the school. Their behaviour is characterised by cheerfulness and good manners. They have good attitudes to their learning and apply themselves well in lessons.
- There are very few concerns expressed by parents, staff or pupils about behaviour and safety.
- The very positive relationships that have been established in the school have created a harmonious atmosphere. Adults model good humour and respectfulness extremely well so that pupils say they feel valued as individuals. Pupils are able to contribute to the life of the school in roles such as school councillors and play leaders.
- Attendance shows improvement and is in line with the national average.
- Pupils have a clear awareness of the different sorts of bullying, including cyber bullying and prejudiced-based bullying. They are clear that there is no bullying in school, but say that any minor incidents are dealt with promptly and effectively by the adults.
- Behaviour is managed well. Behaviour logs for the few pupils who need support with their conduct show good improvements over time. The exclusion rate is low.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school because the adults care for them well. They are given the information and skills to help to keep themselves safe, such as the internet safety training they receive in lessons.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The new headteacher has ambition and drive, has the overwhelming support of staff and morale is high. She has a clear understanding of what is needed to move the school forward, including the need to improve the teaching of reading. Already she has set about implementing further changes to the way information about pupils' attainment and progress is tracked and analysed to give a clearer picture of achievement across the school.
- Until recently, senior leaders and managers have not been methodical in the way they support teachers in their work and develop their skills. There was neither systematic evaluation of the overall quality of teaching nor any clear link to performance management. However, over the last year focused professional development activities, particularly in relation to the teaching of writing, have improved the work of teachers and ensured that the rates of progress have accelerated for the large majority of pupils.
- Following the last inspection, the strengthening of the role of middle leaders has had a good

impact on standards. All staff are held to account by their team leaders. By increasing the focus on tracking pupils' progress, any underachievement is now being tackled more quickly and there are more opportunities to share good practice and monitor developments for consistency. Consequently, the school can demonstrate its capacity to improve.

- The provision for pupils with disabilities or those with special educational needs is managed well and effective links with outside agencies such as speech and language therapists have supported pupils' needs successfully.
- The school has the confidence and support of its parent community.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and well organised. The array of topics across different subject areas, including the wide variety extra-curricular activities, offers pupils many exciting opportunities to be inquisitive and creative learners. The academic curriculum is being adapted to meet the needs of all learners better and it provides a range of experiences that contribute well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- All statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are met.
- The local authority has provided some effective support for the school's leaders to improve systems for tracking progress and the quality of the teaching of writing.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - governors have not been sufficiently involved in monitoring activities to enable them to challenge senior leaders effectively about why progress is yet not good for all pupils
 - the quality of information they received over time has not helped them to gain an accurate view of the school's performance
 - the recent appointment of a business manager is proving effective in ensuring that the school uses its funds, including the pupil premium funding, to support pupils' learning to best effect.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	123723
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	406187

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	399
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shaun Kitto
Headteacher	Sarah Elliott
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 November 2010
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