

# Millstead School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 104751         |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Liverpool      |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 287023         |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 6–7 June 2007  |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Gina White HMI |

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>                     | Special   |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community special                                   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 2–11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed   |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |   |
| School                                    | 67  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                                  |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mr P O'Brien  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mrs Shirley Jones                                   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 18 November 2002                                    |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Old Mill Lane<br>Liverpool<br>Merseyside<br>L15 8LW |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 0151 7220974  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 0151 7225852  |

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|--------------------------|---------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Millstead is a special primary school for pupils who have severe and/or profound and multiple learning difficulties and disabilities (PMLD). Some pupils have additional needs including autistic spectrum disorder, very challenging emotional and behavioural needs and a few have complex medical needs requiring one to one health care support. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or are undergoing assessment for one. The school's wide catchment includes all areas of the city of Liverpool and many pupils are from areas of disadvantage. Over half of pupils receive free school meals. Around 22% of pupils are from a wide range of Black and ethnic minority backgrounds. There are a small number of asylum seekers in the school and five pupils are at early stages of learning English. Just over 7% of pupils join the school at different points throughout the school year.

## Key for inspection grades

|         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  |
| Grade 2 | Good         |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   |

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Millstead is a satisfactory school which has a number of strengths. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good and as a result pupils feel secure and well supported by staff. The calm and friendly atmosphere created, and the consistent and well established routines for their care and health needs, help pupils to settle well and enjoy school. Consequently pupils' personal development and well-being, and the care and support of learners are good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school and are friendly and helpful to each other. The curriculum is satisfactory and improvements this year have increased opportunities to promote pupils' health and personal development. They know which foods are good for them and which ones to cut down on to stay healthy. Pupils take regular exercise and enjoy working with sports coaches to improve their fitness. As a result, many pupils can confidently use apparatus and those with more limited mobility enjoy 'wheelchair dancing'.

Pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory. Pupils who are vulnerable and children in care make good progress as a result of the timely and well coordinated support they receive at school and the specialist services involved in their care. Most pupils, including those in the Foundation Stage, make satisfactory progress in their work. The nature of the pupils' disabilities means the standards they reach are well below national expectations.

The new headteacher is committed to bringing about improvements and a good start has been made in the last nine months. Together with staff she has embarked on a programme to improve pupils' literacy skills, to enliven teaching and engage pupils more fully in learning. For example teachers are beginning to use active and creative approaches to engage pupils in their lessons and to move them on in their learning and academic development. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some that is good and outstanding.

Refurbishment to classrooms and play facilities has added much to pupils' enjoyment of school. School council members are happy the play areas include the sports activities and dressing up clothes that they like very much and say that this is making school a more exciting place to be. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the difference it has made to their child; 'My child has come on in leaps and bounds since he started and is happy at school' is typical of the response to the inspection survey.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Assessment and moderation practices have been strengthened since the last inspection. The school has a developing knowledge of how it is performing, enabling it to be accurate in its assessment of some areas of the school's work. Goals and targets to enable leaders to evaluate the progress the school is making overall are under developed. Systems to assess, monitor and track pupils' academic achievement are not fully in place in all subjects. Consequently, the effectiveness with which middle leaders check the quality of teaching and learning is uneven. Governance is unsatisfactory because governors do not discharge their responsibilities fully in respect of complying with aspects of safeguarding.

Issues from the last inspection have been tackled adequately. The school works well in partnership with others, has a satisfactory capacity to improve, and is strongly determined to make the necessary improvements.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Develop goals and targets to enable school leaders to evaluate the progress the school is making more robustly.
- Build on developments to support middle leaders in checking that learning is evaluated consistently in all subjects throughout the school.
- Ensure governors meet their responsibilities in full.

A small proportion of the schools, whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Pupils enter the school with delayed development and are significantly below the average expected for their age. Most pupils' attainment improves in small steps as they move up the school. The most able pupils are beginning to reach the first National Curriculum Level by the time they leave the school at age 11.

Early assessments are made as children enter the school to identify what they can and cannot do. Learning programmes and appropriate targets are focused on each pupil's needs. Moderated assessments based on performance or P scales are made and their personal and social development and learning in literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology (ICT) is reviewed regularly. The school's latest assessments show that most pupils, including those from Black and minority ethnic groups, make steady progress in the Foundation Stage and the whole school. Consequently, inspection findings agree with the school's judgement that achievement is satisfactory.

A small number of children who are in the care of the local authority and those with medical needs make good progress in meeting their challenging targets as a result of the well coordinated support that they receive from social care, health and therapy professionals. Most pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make slow progress but their achievement is good overall given their deteriorating conditions and periods of hospitalisation.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is good; pupils know school rules and try to help and be kind to each other. Pupils say they feel safe at school and know who to tell if they are upset. They play safely at lunchtimes and a small number of pupils are learning to control their actions and are more settled in school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good; they take part in daily collective worship and some pupils join in with staff and know and say prayers and sing. Pupils use opportunities well to develop social skills: they say or sign hello, take turns when using equipment and are learning how to do things for themselves and become independent. Attendance has fluctuated over the years and has fallen further in recent months. Nonetheless, most children enjoy school and are keen to attend. Action to support the small number of pupils who are frequently absent is underway.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some strengths. In all classes teachers know their pupils well, relationships are strong and teachers make good use of resources which supports learning. This is evident in Reception and Years 1 and 2, where good planning ensures that pupils delight in wearing numbered hats and join in with rhyming games to remember the sequence of numbers. Teachers are beginning to use their recent training to make their lessons more interactive, imaginative and creative to engage pupils in learning and to better meet their needs. In the best lessons activities and tasks are lively and well pitched to pupils' interests as well as their needs and key learning points are reinforced in a variety of ways. In a Year 3 and 4 science lesson pupils role played at being seeds, actively unfolding 'roots' and growing 'shoots' in response to regular 'watering'. Further activities reinforced key words so that by the end of the lesson more pupils knew them and understood why they needed to water the real seeds they had planted. Pupils are challenged exceptionally well in physical education; they learn how to use equipment correctly and confidently and consequently try new things to improve their fitness levels. However, not all lessons are as well structured or challenge pupils as effectively. Where teaching and learning is weaker some pupils, particularly those with PMLD, wait too long for their turn, the pace of learning slows and pupils lose interest. Teaching assistants are well deployed to support pupils' care needs and are beginning to develop further roles in promoting pupils' learning.

Some parents want to be involved further in their children's learning. Current systems do not provide all parents with information about the strategies they can use to help reinforce learning. The school has plans to tackle this.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

Individual education plans help make the curriculum relevant to pupils. Pupils are taught in ability groupings within each key stage. This meets their needs and contributes to their satisfactory achievement. A wide range of experiences support pupils' cultural and physical development. A review of the curriculum is underway to coordinate the experiences and explore alternative approaches to learning. Recent improvements to resources and facilities have improved play opportunities for the whole school and for the small numbers of pupils in the Foundation Stage. As a result pupils have more opportunities to take part in sports, exercise choice about activities and to learn in different ways. Pupils say this makes school a more exciting place to be. ICT facilities have improved but they have yet to become embedded and fully used by pupils. Consequently for some pupils, including the most vulnerable their progress in ICT is weak.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good in the Foundation Stage and across the school. In addition to the care they give their pupils, staff offer support to parents to help them meet their children's needs. Almost all parents/carers are full of praise for the support they receive. One parent wrote that: 'Staff are very good, they go out of their way to help us out as much as possible.'

Good links exist with outside agencies. Health professionals based in the school give a range of help and advice to pupils and families and promote referral to local support services. This results in timely support for vulnerable pupils in greatest need and consequently they make good progress.

Pupils' progress in relation to the targets in their individual educational plans is regularly reviewed. More able learners know and can recall their targets and want to please their teachers by reaching them. Arrangements for child protection and health and safety risk assessments are in place and effectively monitored. However record keeping relating to vetting procedures do not meet current requirements.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management of the school and the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. The headteacher has a determined drive to improve pupils' achievement. She provides good leadership and much has been achieved in a relatively short period. She has recognised areas for school improvement and well founded decisions to tackle weaker features are firmly prioritised in plans. Changes to the way teachers plan their lessons and use strategies to improve learning in literacy have been introduced systematically, although many aspects are relatively recent and are only just beginning to have an impact on pupils' achievement. Good teamwork and support between senior leaders have already brought changes in the deployment of support staff to focus more fully on the care and learning needs of pupils. Equality of opportunity is very well promoted and the care and support for vulnerable pupils is good. Assessment systems have been strengthened to support secure judgements in key subjects. Performance management procedures are in place. School targets to enable senior leaders to evaluate performance over the longer term have yet to be set.

Systems to monitor and track pupils' academic achievement are developing but are not fully in place in every subject. This is partly due to a lack of data over time, which better assessment practice is beginning to address, but it also reflects inconsistencies with which middle leaders check the quality of teaching and learning and the benefit of actions taken to bring about improvement.

Governors are becoming better informed about the school and are beginning to take an active role, particularly in financial monitoring. However, governors do not discharge their responsibilities fully in respect of complying with aspects of safeguarding. Consequently, governance is inadequate overall.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | <b>School Overall</b> |
|--|-----------------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 3   |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 2   |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage  | 3   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 3   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 3   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 3 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 4 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 3 |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |
| The attendance of learners  | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community                                    | 2 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

### The quality of provision

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 3 |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 3 |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 2 |

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 3  |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2  |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets   | 3  |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 2  |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 3  |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 4  |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?  | No |
| Does this school require special measures?   | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve?  | No |

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited you recently. I really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about your school. I said I would write and let you know what I found out.

- You behave well in lessons and around the school and try to please your teachers. You take care of each other well and act safely. Most of you seem to like school and especially the dressing up clothes, go-karts and sports games at lunchtimes. You are really good at taking exercise and know about and eat healthy food.
- The adults who support you during lessons know you well and teachers are working hard to make learning exciting. Some of you are beginning to do more things for yourselves and are confident to try new things in PE.
- The school gives you a satisfactory education and it is good at caring for and supporting you so that you develop and become confident young people.
- The school works well with partners so that your parents/carers can get advice about your health and care.

Things the school could do better are:

- to set some targets to help the senior staff and governors check for themselves how well the school is doing in the things that are important to them
- to put checks in place to make sure all staff know how well you are doing in all subjects and what helps you to do well and what does not
- to make sure governors check the things they are responsible for.