

Millthorpe School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121706
Local authority	York
Inspection number	359072
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Gina White 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	1,007
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Sydes
Headteacher	Steve Smith
Date of previous school inspection	06 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 40 lessons, taught by 39 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the arrangements for safeguarding and policies, the tracking of students' progress, case studies, school plans, reports and evaluations. Questionnaires from students, staff and 262 parents and carers were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively the school uses assessment data and information to promote students' learning and progress in lessons.
- The achievement of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are in the care of the local authority to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging.
- How effectively the drive for improvement is demonstrated at all levels of school leadership.

Information about the school

Millthorpe is larger than the average secondary school. It serves the western area of York. Slightly more boys than girls attend the school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Almost all students are of White British heritage and small numbers are from a range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is low. Around 20% of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is broadly in line with the average nationally, and of these, the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school was designated as a specialist school for languages in 2000 and holds an International School award (2010). An executive headteacher was appointed to lead the school from November 2009 and an associate headteacher from June 2010. The governing body was in the process of appointing a new headteacher at the time the inspection took place.

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? 2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement 2

Main findings

Millthorpe School provides a good standard of education for its students. It has taken some effective steps to promote improvement since the last inspection. The strong leadership provided by the senior leadership team has resulted in staff working together to successfully improve teaching and learning and accelerate the progress made by students. As a result, attainment is above average and the majority of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are in the care of the local authority are now making good progress. Consistent systems to track students' progress quickly identify where they are starting to slip. The school uses its intervention and support well to help students make gains in their learning. Consequently, most students enjoy school and this is reflected in their above average attendance. Students say they feel safe at school and the systems to support their care and guidance have a good impact on their personal development. The behaviour of the vast majority of students is consistently good. Relationships between staff and students are also good and students say they are treated with respect.

Teaching is good overall and this is reflected in the students' progress, although there are some inconsistencies in its quality. Higher expectations of students and consistent approaches to making assessments and providing feedback to them about what they need to do to reach the next level are helping students to make better progress. The good use of assessment to better tailor the learning in all lessons for each student is not embedded consistently in classroom practice.

Since the last inspection the school has developed more choice in the curriculum, particularly in courses and qualifications for students in Key Stage 4. Students value these opportunities but insufficient time is provided in the curriculum for their learning and this accumulates to a significant shortfall for 14–16-year-olds. A number of students, parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire felt the school could do more to help students adopt healthy lifestyles. Inspectors investigated the concerns and came to a similar view. Opportunities are limited for all students to take-up two hours of physical education each week and to enable students to partake of fruit and healthy diets during the school day. Students understand what is required for a healthy lifestyle. Despite this, most students do not apply it.

As a result of accurate self-evaluation, members of the governing body and the senior leadership team have a good understanding of the strengths of the school as well as areas that require improvement. Since the last inspection, systems and procedures in the school have been strengthened and brought greater consistency to the work of middle leaders. Training and initiatives designed to raise achievement, which have been introduced over the last 18 months, have challenged the expectations of staff and students. The senior leadership team has managed the process of change well. This is evident in the positive impact that it has had on students' achievement. The school has retained the support of parents and carers during this process. Leaders recognise that communication with students and their families requires attention and has instigated parent forums, but this is not fully embedded. The response of parents and carers to the inspection survey also demonstrates that they welcome further opportunities to help them support their children's learning. The improvements since the previous inspection, particularly with regard to promoting student's achievement, indicate that the school's capacity for improvement is good. The school provides good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Embed good assessment for learning consistently in classroom practice.
- Improve achievement and curriculum provision further by ensuring 14–16-year-old students have sufficient time for learning and meeting the recommendation of 25 hours per week.
- Embed the parent forums and develop further opportunities for parents to engage in their children's learning.
- Encourage and enable students to partake in a healthy diet and provide further access to sport to develop their fitness levels.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Most students enter the school with attainment broadly in line with average. Examination results have improved over the past three years to above average. The gap between boys and girls has narrowed. The number of students gaining five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics improved further in 2010 to well above average. Information gathered during the inspection indicates this is on track to continue. School data and students' current work in lessons indicate that the majority of students in each year group are making good progress to achieve challenging targets in most subjects. An exception is science and the school is currently working to tackle this.

Students act safely and their conduct around school and the sensible way in which they follow health and safety rules and identify risks contributes well to their sense of security. Students make good use of key literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects and recognise their importance to both academic and personal development. In lessons, students work well in groups and when given the opportunity manage their own learning effectively. The large majority of students understand how aspects of their learning link to future careers and courses. They understand clearly the array of possible options open to them beyond school and

many feel they are well prepared for the future. The development of the teaching of citizenship has improved students' understanding of managing money. Students' attendance is above average and they are punctual to lessons. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is adequately promoted. They have a strong moral sense and understanding of right from wrong and this is well demonstrated in their good behaviour. The school's specialist status is effectively widening students' horizons and experiences as are the designated 'international days' each year within school. Although students appreciate diversity, their understanding of other cultures and faiths is limited.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has a bedrock of strengths and this is why the majority of students are making good progress. Teachers display strong subject knowledge which is evident in their explanations and response to students. A consistent approach to planning clear and purposeful lessons promotes learning. In the good lessons, teachers plan activities and use resources well to tailor the learning to meet the needs of all students. In these lessons, each student is challenged effectively and makes rapid progress. Teachers also use teaching methods expertly to actively engage students in learning. For example, students in Year 7 enthusiastically followed clues around the school and analysed them to successfully write about and solve a murder mystery. On occasions, learning is more passive with some lessons over-dominated by students listening and undertaking work that is well within their ability and does not challenge them. Support staff are used well in most lessons. Their individual assistance with reading and focused questioning enables some students, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make accelerated progress. Assessments, marking and verbal feedback to students are purposeful and students understand what is expected of them. Occasionally, some students find they do not have sufficient time to act on the good advice and consolidate their understanding before they are moving onto new topics.

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

The stronger features in curriculum provision have been maintained since the last inspection and school productions remain highly popular with students, parents and carers. Extra-curricular opportunities through the early bird and twilight sessions continue to provide good opportunities to study up to four languages and a relatively small but enthusiastic group of students take this up in Years 10 and 11. Extended learning days are used effectively to enrich students' learning and enjoyment of school life. Local 14 to 16 partnerships with other schools and colleges contribute to a wider range of opportunities. Since September, Year 10 students have benefited from the partnership development to pursue their interests and enjoy a breadth of academic, vocational and work-based learning courses. However, insufficient time is provided in the curriculum for Year 10 and 11 students to take full advantage of these learning opportunities.

The good care, guidance and support students receive are underpinned by well established systems to support their personal development. There are effective links with health, social and other specialist services to support the requirements of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The support provided by the school and its partners for students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and most in need is highly effective. Attendance and behaviour systems are well managed across the school and their effectiveness is demonstrated in above average levels of attendance and good behaviour. Transition arrangements are effective: the use of Year 10 students to support and mentor each new student helps them to settle quickly to learning. Support to enable students to continue with languages from their primary school is very good.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team has successfully communicated high expectations to staff and students. The school's vision and ambition to improve progress and raise attainment further for students is well reflected in the clear priorities and closely targeted actions in school plans. The additional support provided by the executive and associate headteachers strengthened the leadership team at a key time during the absence of the substantive headteacher. The senior leadership team has moved swiftly forward. For example, consistent systems to record data relating to students' progress are implemented and training opportunities and partnership initiatives have been embraced. The impact is seen in students' outcomes and improvements since the last inspection in the quality of teaching provision and in students' care and welfare. Senior managers are holding middle leaders to account for performance in subject departments. However, they recognise that the level of monitoring by some middle leaders is not as consistent and rigorous as it could be. There is too much inconsistency in the way teachers use assessment and school-held data to plan lessons so that they challenge all students. A firm base of good practice is

established, for example, in languages and English. The recent introduction of structures such as the 'School Improvement Group' has yet to improve the quality of teacher assessment securely to good.

Support provided by the governing body is satisfactory. Training has enabled them to provide increasing challenge, scrutiny and support of the schools' work. They are well informed. Governors are developing a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, for example, they recognise the need for consistent communication with parents and their desire to be more engaged in their children's learning. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination effectively. This is evident in the work underway in citizenship lessons to develop students' awareness of prejudice in all its forms, and in the improved progress that the great majority of students are making throughout the school. The school has a policy in place to promote community cohesion and the impact can be seen in students' contribution to the school and wider community and in their moral, social and cultural development, which are satisfactory.

The school is thorough in its work to safeguard students and to minimise risks to their safety. Requirements for checking all adults' suitability to work in the school are met in full. There are robust systems in place for child protection and regular training of staff.

These are the grades for the 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	3
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers, who returned questionnaires, hold overwhelmingly positive views of the school. They are satisfied with almost all aspects of the school's work and the impact this has on their children's enjoyment and progress. A minority noted that the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. During the inspection, inspectors observed no evidence of very poor behaviour; indeed, much of it was good. When minor incidents occurred, staff were on hand and dealt with matters straight away. Some parents and carers felt the school could do more to help their children have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors investigated and endorse the view of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Millthorpe 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 262 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,007 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	68	26	165	63	22	8	4	2
The school keeps my child safe	80	31	166	63	11	4	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	69	26	176	67	10	4	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	66	25	168	64	21	8	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	64	24	170	65	17	6	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	16	170	65	35	13	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	13	174	66	35	13	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)	47	18	163	62	18	7	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	58	22	161	61	20	8	6	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	60	23	149	57	28	11	6	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	16	141	54	27	10	7	3
The school is led and managed effectively	63	24	149	57	22	8	6	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	81	31	154	59	19	7	2	1

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 is for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and is 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.



28 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Millthorpe School, York, YO23 1WF

Thank you for making the inspection team welcome when we visited your school. We found what you had to say very helpful and informative. We found that Millthorpe provides you with a good education and the care, guidance and support you receive make a good contribution to your personal development and safety. We were particularly impressed by:

- the good progress that the majority of you are making in lessons, the responsible attitudes you are developing to health and safety and the support Year 10 mentors provide to younger students
- the good behaviour by the overwhelming majority of you in lessons and around the school, your good attendance and punctuality
- the good quality of teaching and learning and, in particular, the enthusiasm and concentration you showed during the extended learning day
- the quality of partnership work with local schools and colleges to provide you with more choice of courses and qualifications, and with health and social services to enable you to access specialist support when you need to
- the good leadership and management displayed by the senior leadership team.

The inspection team has asked your school to do these things to improve.

- Make sure assessment for learning is consistently good in all classrooms.
- Make sure 14–16-year-old students have sufficient time for learning and meet the minimum recommendation of 25 hours per week.
- Embed the parent forums and develop further opportunities for your parents to support your learning.
- Encourage and enable you to partake in a healthy diet and develop your fitness levels.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector

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