

Milton Court Primary Academy

Brewery Road, Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 2EE

Inspection dates

15–16 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- Leaders recognise that a legacy of weak teaching means that many older pupils, and others who have left recently, have crucial gaps in their knowledge and basic skills.
- Many older pupils lack the necessary skills, especially in reading, to flourish as independent learners.
- Not enough pupils learn in depth or attain standards that exceed those expected for their age.
- Until recently, disadvantaged pupils did not have sufficient help to overcome their barriers to learning.
- Teaching is not always pacy enough to secure the rapid gains most pupils need to catch up with other pupils nationally.
- The quality of teaching overall is improving over time but still varies too much from class to class.
- Appropriate changes to the curriculum put in place in 2015 by the new, much stronger, leadership team have not yet had sufficient time to lift levels of attainment in published results.
- Some pupils lack the maturity and self-discipline to keep trying when learning is tough. They are too easily distracted and lose concentration.
- Pupils do not attend as often as they should, especially those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Children in a small group of families have stubborn patterns of persistent absence.

The school has the following strengths

- Leadership is highly effective. Senior leaders know the school well. They have a clear plan to raise standards further.
- All staff, the trust, and the governors are admirably committed to improving standards for Milton Court pupils.
- Children make an increasingly positive start to their time in school. The early years, including the Nursery is led strongly and provides a rich learning environment for children.
- The quality of pupils' learning in art and the contribution this makes to their cultural and spiritual development is strong.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase rates of pupils' progress so that greater proportions meet age-expected standards and more work at greater depth, by:
 - extending more widely the effective practices evident in some parts of the school
 - ensuring that in all year groups the curriculum fully supports the development of pupils' basic skills, particularly in reading
 - eliminating remaining variations in the quality of teaching over time.
- Increase further rates of attendance and reduce further rates of persistent absence, especially for disadvantaged pupils, by:
 - pursuing relentlessly those strategies that have worked so far
 - ensuring that all parents understand the impact on learning of missed time from school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders at all levels are admirably ambitious for the school. The executive headteacher is determined that Milton Court will become the best it can be. She is honest about the school's shortcomings and where it needs to improve further; she also has a realistic understanding of how long it may take to eradicate fully weak historical underachievement.
- The executive headteacher is ably supported by the head of school. Senior leaders work well as a team, building on their successful leadership of the partnership school. Senior leaders are supported well by the REAch2 Academy Trust. At the same time, representatives of the trust, particularly the local governing body, hold leaders to account for their work stringently.
- Leadership is strengthening across the school. Notably, the early years leader ensures that both the provision and outcomes in this setting are good. Teachers responsible for leading the different phases of the school are similarly growing in confidence and expertise. The contribution that these leaders make to the progress of the school enables constant improvements to teaching.
- Leaders know the school's relative strengths and weaknesses thoroughly. In 2015, they acted decisively to improve the culture in the school. This means that most of the teaching staff have only been in place for two years. Many are new since September 2016.
- Leaders communicate enthusiastically their ambitions. Teachers respond professionally to leaders continuously reviewing what they are doing to make it better for the pupils. Leaders ensure that staff have access to good-quality training so that new ideas and methods are constantly being tried out.
- With the support of the trust, leaders only reward teachers who achieve their targets. They use a strong system to determine annual pay awards. Governors oversee the process but rightly allow leaders to manage it themselves.
- Leaders put in place an improved curriculum when they took over the school in September 2015. It is intended to make sure that all pupils attain standards expected for their age in the end-of-key-stage tests. The curriculum is also intended to avoid a narrow focus on English and mathematics. As such, pupils have access to a wide range of experiences which help them to learn about the world they are growing into. Leaders check regularly that the curriculum is affording relevant opportunities, through topic work, for pupils to write at length and to practise their number skills in each year group.
- The curriculum provides several opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. This is especially the case in art, where pupils explore an extensive range of creative experiences. The curriculum also helps pupils develop thoughtful attitudes for living and thriving in modern Britain.
- Leaders are aware that disadvantaged pupils historically made less good progress than their peers. Leaders are refocusing all the school's work so that the large proportion of disadvantaged pupils can quickly fill any gaps in their knowledge, skills and

understanding and catch up with other pupils nationally. Leaders make extremely good use of the pupil premium to support this work. Every penny is accounted for accurately. Leaders know that they still need to show the impact of such spending on educational outcomes as well as improvements to disadvantaged pupils' well-being.

- Similarly, leaders have upgraded the ways in which the school supports the learning of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The special educational needs coordinator knows these pupils well and is improving the school's system for tracking their progress.
- Leaders overall have put in place the same system used in other REAch2 schools so that they can monitor effectively how well pupils are doing term by term. This is helping to identify gaps in skills, knowledge or understanding. It is also being used by teachers to plan their teaching to help all pupils catch up.
- The large majority of parents who took part in Ofsted's survey, Parent View, praised leaders' efforts in improving the school. One commented, 'I feel the school has developed well over the past two years and significant changes have been made. I feel this change has been driven by the commitment of its head.'

Governance of the school

- Governance is good. The local governing body is suitably skilled and experienced. It is supported well by the central REAch2 team. Delegated powers are handled securely. Governors are not required under the scheme of delegation to manage all the school's finances. This means they have more time to devote to supporting improvements in teaching and learning and reducing persistent absence.
- Governors are suitably trained for their roles. Governors take responsibility for different aspects of the school's work such as health and safety, links with the community and improvements to the building. They oversee the school's secure safeguarding policies and procedures. Governors check pupils' performance regularly, using information provided in a timely manner by senior leaders.
- Governors ensure that the pupil premium and the primary sport and physical education premium are used wisely. This has led to an increase in the number of children regularly participating in competitive sport. Governors, parents, teachers and pupils commented on the many benefits of their participation in the REAch2 regional 'Olympics' at the Julie Rose stadium in Ashford.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have clear policies on all aspects of safeguarding. They ensure that the checks made on anyone wishing to work at or volunteer in the school are undertaken rigorously. Leaders maintain an up-to-date record of these checks.
- Leaders also ensure that staff receive all the relevant training for the safeguarding aspects of their work. In the last year they have been trained to spot signs of neglect and pupils at risk, including of potential radicalisation and child sexual exploitation or female genital mutilation.

- Staff contribute to an appropriately vigilant culture in school. They make sensible decisions about when to refer issues to external agencies or partners. Staff keep detailed and helpful records, including, for example, of any of the few, prejudice-based incidents that occur.
- Leaders maintain an appropriate register of risks, even for regular school activities such as visits to the leisure centre. This is because they are aware that some pupils still present a risk to themselves or other pupils. Over time, leaders have developed an appropriate culture of safeguarding which means that pupils are safe and cared for well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Published outcomes indicate that for too long, teaching did not enable pupils to attain the standards of which they were capable. Teaching did not lead to pupils making good or better progress.
- Leaders have put together skilfully a team of professionals now capable of supporting pupils' progress and diminishing any differences between their progress and that of other pupils nationally.
- However, there is still considerable variation in the quality of teaching from class to class. This is seen by the varying amounts of progress seen in lessons, in books and in the speed that pupils move through the stages of the school's comprehensive assessment system.
- Some teachers are skilled at ensuring that pupils make strong progress from their starting points. Where teaching is less effective, it is because staff have not taken account of what pupils already know, understand and can do. Inspectors recognised that there are wide variations in individual pupils' attainment. Some have quite detailed knowledge in some areas but huge gaps in others. This makes planning and the preparation of lessons difficult.
- The most able pupils often receive work that is too easy. They finish it quickly and are not provided with work that stretches them or enables them to work at greater depth.
- Adults cooperate well in each class. There are good relationships typically between pupils and adults. The majority of teaching assistants are highly effective, working purposefully with small groups of pupils at the direction of the class teacher. Others support individual pupils who have specific learning needs.
- Too often, individual teaching assistants take too much responsibility for the learning of the pupil they are supporting in a lesson. While this may encourage cooperative behaviour, it does not allow the pupil to make the necessary learning gains. Consequently, progress for the individual learner is sometimes slower than it could be.
- Leaders are determined to improve pupils' reading so that more can become independent and extend their own learning. Many older pupils, poorly served in the past, are not confident in using reading skills and are not able, for example, to apply phonological techniques successfully. The teaching of such basic skills is a major focus for the school so that in key stage 1 there are promising signs that greater proportions

of pupils are meeting the expected standards for their age.

- The school is continuing to recruit skilled practitioners who are capable of driving up standards in teaching. Some exemplary practice exists and leaders are providing increasing opportunities for these methods to be shared with the rest of the staff. In mathematics, some teachers use the correct technical language so that pupils also become fluent in its use. Teachers also give good pictorial representation of sums to support pupils' understanding.
- In particular, good learning habits formed in the early years are being reinforced now as pupils go through the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development requires improvement. The school has put in place several strategies to support pupils' personal development such as mindfulness and creativity through art. It is too early to judge whether or not these will have a lasting impact on levels of development or pupils' welfare.
- Many pupils exhibit signs of immaturity. Too many are overly dependent on adults for organising themselves or their work. Some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities leave adults to make decisions for them. This hampers further their personal development.
- When teaching is not immediately engaging, too few pupils are able to get on by themselves. They wait to be directed. Leaders are attempting to address this by applying consistently tried and tested methods for enabling pupils to manage their own emotions and behaviour. Most teachers have adopted these strategies in their class.
- The school does all it can to support important initiatives, such as making suitably nutritious food available at lunchtime to support healthy eating. All pupils engage in the 'daily mile' so that they get at least fifteen minutes exercise every day.
- Leaders, with the help of parents and governors, have put in place an extensive range of play and activity equipment at lunch time. Skilled staff organise games and activities, making particularly good use of the 'arena'. The outside space has been reorganised recently so that pupils from Reception upwards can flow freely between the different playgrounds.
- Further positive initiatives such as providing blazers for the Year 6 pupils, to give them a sense of status and importance, have raised these pupils' self-esteem and pride in the school.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Too many pupils are absent too often. A small group of families contribute to high levels of persistent absence for a minority of pupils. This is out-of-step with the vast majority of parents who have formed

positive working relationships with the school's leaders.

- A few parents reported that their children have been the victims of bullying. Pupils reported that they know what to do when bullying occurs. Inspectors found no evidence of regular and persistent bullying. Inspectors did find that teachers acted swiftly when instances of bullying or other poor behaviours were reported.
- Leaders maintain accurate records of any incidents in breach of the school's sensible behaviour policy. The head of school maintains a close eye on these records so that he is able spot worrying patterns of behaviour or any emerging concerns.
- Pupils are generally well behaved when they are in school. Leaders occasionally have to take the tough decision that an individual pupil's behaviour puts themselves or others at risk. Under those conditions the executive headteacher exercises her right to exclude pupils. These are usually for fixed terms only.
- Pupils play well in breaktimes and lunchtimes. They move quietly and in good order between activities. Teachers set realistic and sensible ground rules for behaviour and the majority of pupils observe these rules consistently.
- Teachers use an innovative mobile system for communicating when things have gone well for pupils. Parents like the instant information they get. Many respond positively to teachers' messages. Some parents reported receiving as many as five messages a day.
- Teachers also use various strategies to encourage good behaviour. Billy the dog visits the school and is popular with the pupils.
- Staff agree that rates of attendance need to rise and rates of persistent absence need to fall. The school continues to work tirelessly with local agencies and the trust to ensure that trained and skilled personnel are available to address these issues as quickly as possible. The recent appointment of an attendance officer employed directly by the school is one example of these active strategies.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Published information for the last three years shows that pupils in Milton Court Primary Academy have made less good progress than similar pupils in other schools elsewhere.
- Pupils enter the school at levels below those typical for their age. Until recently, they made slow progress in the early years, with only about half attaining a good level of development at the end of Reception.
- Pupils made equally slow progress in key stage 1. For example, less than the national average made sufficient progress in phonics to achieve the expected standard in the screening check in Year 1. Similarly, in Year 2, in reading, writing and mathematics, less than average proportions of pupils attained the expected standards. In 2016, none went on to work at greater depth in any subject.
- These patterns of underachievement are also seen historically in outcomes at the end of key stage 2. Typically, progress is below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2016, pupils in Year 6 had lower-than-average scaled scores in reading, mathematics and the grammar, punctuation and spelling test.
- Disadvantaged pupils, about half of every year group, make rates of progress that are

comparable with their classmates. As their starting points are generally lower, they achieve standards that are well below the standards of other pupils nationally.

- However, leaders are aware that these standards require improvement and are focused intently on making necessary changes. Up-to-date information about pupils' progress is already showing that more focused teaching, careful checking and better, well-aimed interventions are increasing rates of progress for all pupils and all groups of pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Many start from a long way behind their peers and are unlikely to attain the levels expected for their age.
- Each year, a few pupils achieve the standard required to pass the Kent Test. Most pupils are ready to begin secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- Children make an increasingly strong start to their time in school in the well-run and attractively designed early years.
- Leaders judged wisely that children would be more likely to attain expected levels at the end of Reception if they started earlier. Two-year-old children have been attending the early years part time since September 2016.
- The refurbished and well-staffed Nursery provides a nurturing environment for very young children to start in school. Staff have created a bright, cheerful and well-resourced environment where children make good learning gains through play.
- Staff provide a rich array of activities both inside the building and in the secure outside space. Children are busy at all times. Children benefit from focused, adult-led sessions which focus on developing basic skills. On one such occasion, children were confidently predicting what might happen next in a delightfully read story.
- Children have opportunities to make marks in a variety of media, explore number with good-quality resources and experiment creatively using their imagination with all sorts of stimuli. In one session, children moved between making noises with several percussion instruments to searching for bugs in a garden area, and playing with water using a pump and some carefully positioned guttering.
- Staff know the children well. They keep very detailed records of each new piece of learning securely made by children. The early years leader has the necessary expertise to judge the quality of learning and to see how children's performance matches to the early learning goals.
- The early years setting is managed carefully. All staff have the required and relevant qualifications. Good policies are in place to provide staff with a framework in which to operate safely. Staff pay attention to up-to-date safeguarding guidance.
- Staff are well-trained in child protection and first aid. The early years leader provides effective and regular supervision, coaching and mentoring to all staff. There are no breaches of the statutory welfare requirements.
- Parents speak highly of the recent changes to the early years. They say it is meeting their children's needs well. Parents like the opportunities they have now to contribute

to their children's learning journey. Many maintain regular contact and dialogue with the staff through a mobile application. This helps staff to create secure evidence of children's progress towards the attainment of a good level of development.

- Adults in the setting take every opportunity to record children's learning and development. Assessment is secure and accurate and mapped appropriately to the age-appropriate descriptors in the early years foundation stage profile.

School details

Unique reference number	139397
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10024519

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Eileen Hargreaves
Executive headteacher	Cathryn Andrews
Telephone number	01795 472972
Website	www.milton-court.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@milton-court.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 January 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets the current government floor standards.
- Milton Court is smaller than an average-sized primary school.
- There are slightly more boys than girls.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is well above the national average.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils receiving support for their special educational needs and/or

disabilities is well above average.

- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan or who have a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average.
- The number of pupils leaving or entering the school every year is above average.
- The school serves a community which has above-average levels of deprivation.
- Milton Court is part of the Grovehurst federation with Kemsley Primary School. Both schools are part of the REAch2 Academy Trust. The executive headteacher of Milton Court is also the executive headteacher of Kemsley Primary School.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in classes on 18 occasions. Most of these observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders frequently throughout the inspection. Inspectors also met members of the governing body and a representative of the REAch2 Academy Trust.
- Inspectors met informally with pupils, heard six pupils read and met six pupils formally. Inspectors took account of 21 responses to Ofsted's confidential online pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with a group of six parents and took into account 27 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's confidential survey. The lead inspector read through 13 free-text responses to this survey.
- Inspectors met formally with four teachers at different stages in their careers and spoke to members of staff at various times during the inspection. The lead inspector considered five responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.
- The team reviewed a wide range of the school's documents. These included the school's own evaluation of its performance, records of governors' work, information relating to the delegated powers from the REAch2 Academy Trust and information relating to the performance of disadvantaged pupils. In particular, inspectors examined records of work undertaken to improve attendance.

Inspection team

Dr Simon Hughes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Helen Tait

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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