

Millom School

Salthouse Road, Millom, Cumbria, LA18 5AB

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Exceptionally good relationships provide a positive climate for learning. Teachers know the students extremely well and help them gain in confidence and make good progress.
- Achievement is good. Students attain good grades at GCSE in most subjects. The most able students make particularly good progress.
- Good teaching helps students to develop the knowledge and skills they need for each subject. Teaching is lively and motivating. Good marking helps students to improve.
- Students' behaviour is good. They engage with learning enthusiastically in lessons. They are courteous and friendly around school.
- Students feel safe. They develop good personal skills in this friendly and supportive school.
- Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders set high expectations for students and staff. Accurate self-evaluation ensures that areas for improvement are tackled effectively.
- There are good procedures to manage teachers' performance. Professional development is planned well to enable teachers to share good practice and improve.
- Leaders at all levels are highly motivated and effective in ensuring good teaching and achievement.
- Governors provide good strategic leadership. They have a wide range of skills and expertise.
- The impact of good leadership and management is seen in improved GCSE results in English and a number of other subjects. Leaders have good capacity to sustain improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' achievement in mathematics is not as strong as it is in other subjects.
- Some lower-attaining students do not understand clearly enough what is being taught before moving on to the next activity.
- The sixth form requires improvement. The proportion of students attaining A and B grades at A level is below average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in a range of subjects and year groups. Twenty-two teachers were seen.
- Inspectors examined students' work during visits to classrooms. They carried out a detailed scrutiny of Year 10 and Year 11 students' English and mathematics work and a random sample of work from other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the Executive Headteacher, head of school, senior leaders, subject leaders, the special needs coordinator and a number of teachers. The lead inspector met with three governors, including the Chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with groups of students and spoke to others in lessons and around the school.
- A range of documentation was examined, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement planning, and the latest assessments of students' progress, behaviour and attendance records. Inspectors examined the school's performance management systems and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 51 responses to Parent View, which is the on-line questionnaire and the school's most recent survey of parents' views. They also took account of staff responses to questionnaires.

Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Patrick Feerick

Additional Inspector

Jonathan Woodyatt

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Millom School is smaller than the average sized secondary school. It has a small sixth form.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided to the school for students known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority and children from service families.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs and are supported through school action is average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The school does not use any alternative off-site provision.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE.
- The school has a partnership with St Benedict's Catholic High School. An Executive Headteacher provides strategic leadership and management of both schools. Each school has a governing body and there is a joint 'Project Board' setting performance management objectives for the Executive Headteacher.
- The school has gained a number of awards including the Healthy School status, Artsmark silver award and Football Association Chartered status Award.
- The school is a strategic partner in the Queen Katherine Teaching School Alliance, part of the Millom Partnership of schools and the Furness Education Consortium. Leaders contribute to the Cumbria Association of System Leaders.
- The school has two specialist leaders of education and the Chair of the Governing Body is a National Leader of Governance.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard which is the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in mathematics so that more students attain grade C and above at GCSE and make similarly good progress to that made in other subjects by:
 - making sure students are equipped to answer higher level questions in examinations
 - building on students' prior learning in mathematics systematically across the whole school.
- Build on good teaching in all subjects further by:
 - making sure students, particularly the lower attaining in each teaching group, clearly understand what is being taught before they move on to the next activity.
- Improve achievement in the sixth form by making sure that, as part of their induction to sixth form work students develop the study skills they need to achieve higher grades at A level, including advanced reading and research skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students make good progress from their starting points. Attainment at GCSE has improved in the last three years in a number of subjects, including English, sciences, languages and humanities.
- Achievement in English has increased significantly since the last inspection when it was identified as an area for improvement. Students make good progress and a well above average proportion gained good grades at GCSE in 2013.
- The improvement was not sustained in mathematics where there was a dip in attainment in 2013. Students did not make expected progress from their starting points and the proportion attaining grade C or above fell to below average. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C and above, including English and mathematics consequently also dipped.
- Leaders have investigated reasons for the decline in mathematics thoroughly. They have taken effective action to ensure achievement improves. The most recent assessments, which have been externally moderated, show that Year 11 students are on track to achieve better standards in mathematics and maintain the high standards in English. Mathematics work in students' books shows more rapid progress since the start of the year.
- Students' work shows that they currently make good progress in each year group. Students of all ability make good progress in reading, writing and communication because skills are taught effectively in all subjects. Mathematical skills are reinforced effectively in other subjects, which is helping to raise further students' achievement in mathematics.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium do well in a number of subjects but do not do as well as others in the school in English and mathematics. In 2013, they were at least one GCSE grade behind in English and two grades behind in mathematics. Leaders have put appropriate support in place, which is now closing the gap in achievement in each year group. The gap is considerably narrower in the current Year 11 than it was in 2013.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress both academically and personally because they are supported very well. Students who receive extra help with reading and literacy skills make rapid progress so they are able to cope better in lessons.
- The most able students make particularly good progress, because they are set challenging activities both in ability sets and mixed-ability classes. The school does not enter students early for GCSE and this ensures that all students continue to build on their knowledge and skills to achieve the best possible grade in the summer of Year 11.
- There are occasions, however, when a few less able students in the set or class struggle to keep up. They do not make the same rapid progress because activities move on before they have grasped new concepts sufficiently or had the opportunity to practise new learning.
- Retention in the sixth form is good, with the vast majority of students completing their courses. However, students' achievement requires improvement as the proportion of students achieving the higher A to B grades is below expectations given their starting points. Nevertheless, most students achieve well enough to pursue their choice of employment, further or higher education.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching promotes good progress overall. Students say that teachers work hard to make activities motivating and interesting. They feel confident to ask for further support and guidance whenever they need it.
- Thorough, good quality marking ensures that students know how to improve their work. Students particularly value the guidance they receive when they have completed a unit of work.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning. They are well briefed and organised effectively to support individuals or to provide general support in lessons.
- Students' good progress is supported by teachers' good subject knowledge, effective questioning

and clear explanations. The most able students are consistently provided with appropriate levels of challenge so that they make at least good progress.

- Students who are eligible for the pupil premium are provided with a range of additional support and opportunities to enrich their experiences. The impact of such support was limited last year and leaders have carried out a full review. They have ensured that additional support for reading, writing and mathematics is closing the gaps in achievement lower down the school and amongst the current Year 11 cohort.
- Students with disabilities and those with special educational needs receive very good support. Detailed record keeping ensures that individual education plans are always up to date and relevant. Students are well supported in class and through additional personalised tuition.
- Students are encouraged to read widely and often. Younger students value the support they receive from sixth form reading mentors. Writing skills are developed effectively in a range of subjects. Literacy skills are improving as a result and students' accuracy in writing has improved across many subjects. Mathematical skills are reinforced and extended effectively in science, design and technology and in geography.
- The sixth form is integrated into the school. Students enjoy lively and interesting topics and good relationships with teachers. However, they do not develop the study skills they need to achieve the higher grades at A level, for example, in advanced reading and researching subjects in depth.
- Students receive good quality information, advice and guidance to inform their choices in Year 9, Year 11 and the sixth form. As a result, the vast majority successfully go on to further or higher education, employment or training.
- Students develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness because it is promoted very well through teaching, in assemblies and through a rich programme of additional activities. Students are knowledgeable about global and local issues and keen to contribute their ideas. For example, in the vibrant STEM group (a science, technology and mathematics club run after school), students were keenly working on solutions to the disposal of nuclear waste and other environmental issues.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- The school is friendly and students say that 'everyone feels part of a real team'. They are very well supported when they first join the school.
- Students' behaviour in lessons is consistently good and often impeccable. Students engage enthusiastically with questioning, concentrate well and persevere with tasks.
- Students' behaviour around the school is good. They are well mannered and show courtesy and respect towards one another. They care for the environment and make sure that they pick up any litter and keep the school tidy.
- Students have a good understanding of different types of bullying and the detrimental effects of name-calling of any sort, particularly that based on race, sexuality or disability. They feel that bullying is rare.
- Students feel they are listened to and can contribute their views. Students in the sixth form make a good contribution as role models and as mentors to younger students.
- The student leadership council is active and has informed school policy, for example, on the use of mobile 'phones, uniform design and the outside environment. Students develop effective leadership skills, for example, in leading fundraising and events, and gain recognised leadership accreditation for their work.
- Attendance declined in 2012 to 2013 from very high to broadly average levels. This was mostly because of persistent absence by a few students. School leaders have pursued all available support and eventually, sanctions to improve the attendance of these students. Attendance

shows improvement since the start of this academic year, although persistent absenteeism is still too high and is being rigorously followed up by school leaders.

- Leaders do all they can to keep students in school and there are no permanent exclusions. No alternative provision is used. Fixed-term exclusion was high in 2012, particularly for students known to be eligible for free school meals. Leaders have taken effective action to support students who are at risk. Consequently, the number of students excluded and the number of days that students have been excluded have significantly reduced during the last year.
- The vast majority of parents, who responded to Parent View were positive about behaviour, feel their children are safe and bullying is dealt with effectively. A small minority gave negative responses. Inspectors found that bullying is rare and any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with effectively.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders and governors provide good leadership. Areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been tackled successfully. Thorough monitoring systems ensure that self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders and governors are sharply focused on the right priorities and have good capacity to secure further improvements.
- The Executive Headteacher and Head of School work effectively together and set high expectations for students. Their aspirations are shared by teachers and leaders at all levels. Staff use technology productively to store and share information to support self-evaluation, plan for improvement and track students' progress in each subject.
- There are effective methods to manage teachers' performance. Teachers are set challenging performance targets, which are appropriately linked with students' achievement. Salary progression is based on how well students do. Support for professional development is drawn from a range of specialist providers and planned well to support individuals as well as whole-school priorities.
- Middle leaders have received good quality support to develop their role in monitoring and assuring the quality of teaching. There is a consistently effective approach to subject review and development. Following a dip in performance in mathematics in 2013, leaders have carried out a detailed review and made changes to the mathematics programme of study.
- The leadership of special educational needs is good. Parents are extremely positive stating, for example, 'the SEN team work with thoroughness and determination' and 'expertly support students who have a range of needs'.
- Leaders have developed extremely productive partnerships with other schools and local businesses and industry to enhance the experience of students. For example, links with the nuclear power station have inspired some interesting technology projects.
- Teachers have also developed their skills by sharing good practice through various school consortia and the teaching school alliance. Millom staff make a good contribution to support development in other schools, including through their specialist leaders of education. The partnership with St Benedict's Roman Catholic High School and shared executive headship have enhanced provision.
- The school offers a broad and relevant curriculum appropriate to the needs and aspirations of students. Students are given good information, advice and guidance to access further education and training. There is a rich programme of activities for students outside school hours providing opportunities for students to develop their skills and talents.
- Leaders and governors ensure that good relationships are fostered, discrimination is tackled and all students have equal opportunities to learn and make good progress. Students feel extremely well supported and as one student said 'teachers give everyone equal support so we all do as well as we possibly can; it's not just about getting a C grade'.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View feel the school is well led and would recommend the school. There are a few who feel they could be better informed and

communicated with more frequently. School surveys show a much more positive picture based on a larger number of responses.

- The local authority provides light touch support to the school under terms agreed for schools requiring minimal support. It works closely with the Cumbria Association of System Leaders and local leadership groups to share good practice and keep up to date with the performance and developments in the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are led effectively and kept fully up to date by the Chair of the Governing Body who is a National Leader of Governance. The governing body is well organised, with a good range of expertise.
 - Governors are extremely well informed through links with key staff, visits to school, thorough analysis of data and regular reports. As a result, they have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses. They ask challenging questions and manage the performance of leaders rigorously. They have a good overview of the quality of teaching and procedures to manage staff and their salary progression.
 - Governors monitor the spending of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding closely to ensure eligible students make gains in their achievement and personal development. They are aware that impact was limited in mathematics last year and are monitoring impact more closely.
 - There are rigorous procedures to safeguard students and ensure their health and safety. All statutory requirements are met.

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	112388
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	445977

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	478
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Richards
Executive Headteacher	Ian Smith
Head of School	Simon Laheney
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2011
Telephone number	01229 772300
Fax number	01229 772883
Email address	genenquiries@millom.cumbria.sch.uk

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