

Millom Infant School

Address: Lapstone Road, Millom Infant School, Millom, Cumbria, LA18 4LP

Unique reference number (URN): 112159

Inspection report: 3 February 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	●
Needs attention	● ● ●
Urgent improvement	● ● ●

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

This school requires special measures

His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires **special measures** because it is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Expected standard

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Despite other weaknesses in the school's provision, leaders have maintained a strong focus on pupils' personal development since the previous inspection. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, benefit from a well-organised programme that ensures they gain the knowledge that they need for their future lives in modern Britain.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe. They enthusiastically sing the penguin online safety song, learn about healthy choices and talk about their feelings. Pupils learn how to be kind and understand that families can be different from their own. Pupils also discuss questions of fairness and demonstrate a secure understanding of right and wrong. They think carefully about the impact their choices have on others. Pupils gain an age-appropriate understanding of fundamental British values and healthy relationships.

Leaders make sure that all pupils, regardless of their needs or circumstances, can join clubs and participate in school trips. Pupils enjoy visiting the care home, where they sing and join in with craft activities. They also talk fondly about helping at community events and learning about local history. These experiences build their confidence and pride in their town.

The recently reintroduced school council gives pupils a voice. Pupils suggest ideas, such as holding a fundraising party to raise money for charity. They look forward to seeing their plans come to life. Outdoor activities, such as making s'mores and building dens, help pupils to develop resilience, teamwork and curiosity.

Parents, carers and local residents come in to school and talk about their careers. This includes police officers and nurses. This helps pupils, even at their young age, think about what they might want to do when they grow up.

Needs attention

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Over time, attendance rates have been below the national average. Some pupils miss too much school. However, leaders are beginning to take appropriate steps to improve pupils' rates of attendance. The breakfast club provides a calm and supportive start to the day, helping pupils to arrive on time. Leaders have started to track absence and they contact

families promptly when pupils' attendance starts to cause concern. This has led to some improvements for individual pupils, but this work is relatively new and has not had a sustained impact on different groups.

Typically, pupils behave sensibly in most areas of the school. Many follow the established routines well and settle quickly to learning. Generally, staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and they apply the behaviour policy consistently. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. However, at times, a small number of pupils disrupt learning. This is often when learning does not meet their needs.

Relationships between staff and pupils are warm, contributing to a caring and safe school culture. Pupils report that bullying is rare and that staff respond promptly to any concerns. Leaders act swiftly when any discrimination or harmful behaviour arises.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders do not have a full understanding of the quality of the curriculum or the manner in which it is taught. Their checks do not accurately identify weaknesses in curriculum design or teaching. As a result, leaders cannot make swift decisions that improve practice so that recent improvements can be built on.

The key stage 1 curriculum has improved. It is well ordered and sets out the knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should learn. However, the delivery of the curriculum remains variable. Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to match activities to pupils' needs. Sometimes, these activities are too easy or difficult. In addition, gaps in pupils' fundamental knowledge, especially in writing and mathematics, are not identified or addressed well enough. Some teachers miss important errors in pupils' work. In contrast, the teaching of early reading is more secure. Teachers follow the phonics programme well to build pupils' early reading knowledge.

Teachers are at the early stages of knowing how to adapt teaching to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those pupils with other barriers to learning. These pupils struggle to catch up or find it difficult to meet their short- and long-term goals.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Leaders do not identify pupils' needs with sufficient accuracy. This is particularly the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There have been some recent improvements to identifying and supporting pupils' needs. However, these changes are not fully understood or followed consistently well by staff. Some adults do not have the expertise to adjust their teaching to meet pupils' different needs.

Leaders are successful in reducing some barriers to pupils' learning through the care that is provided, as well as the daily 'check-ins' and the helpful school routines. The pupil premium funding is used appropriately to promote pupils' attendance and support their wellbeing. Leaders work with families and external agencies to bring in external expertise when it is needed. However, the school's work to reduce barriers to pupils' academic success is

inconsistent and lacks oversight. Pupils' needs are not known well enough, so the help they receive is not targeted with precision or it often comes too late.

Leaders' checks on the additional support that pupils receive is variable. In reading, they have a clear insight into those pupils who struggle to gain phonics knowledge. This ensures that these pupils receive the support that they need. This is not replicated as well in other areas.

Urgent improvement ●

Achievement

Urgent improvement ●

Many pupils do not achieve well across the curriculum. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. A considerable number of children leave the early years ill prepared for the demands of key stage 1. They do not catch up. This slows their progress through the curriculum and means that they are not ready for their move into key stage 2.

Weaknesses in the previous curriculum mean that many pupils have considerable gaps in their knowledge. Writing is a common weakness across the school. Pupils struggle to form letters correctly, spell accurately or write clear sentences. In mathematics, several pupils lack secure recall of basic number facts. At times, they cannot apply simple ideas, such as shapes or number relationships. These weaknesses limit pupils' ability to build new learning securely.

There are signs of improvement in reading. More pupils are reading confidently and fluently. They talk with interest about what they have read.

Early years

Urgent improvement ●

The early years provision is ineffective. Children do not learn what they should. They are not prepared for their move into key stage 1 at the end of the Reception Year.

The curriculum does not set out what children should learn over time. This means that the activities that children complete do not build their early language, physical development or early mathematics knowledge and skills well enough. Sometimes, adults' interactions do not extend children's vocabulary. Adults miss the chance to introduce new language or deepen children's thinking during play. The outdoor provision does not support children's curiosity, problem-solving or early physical development sufficiently well.

Staff do not check children's starting points accurately. This means that gaps in early learning are not identified or addressed quickly enough. Leaders are aware of the weaknesses in the early years. However, their actions to improve the situation have been too slow. Consequently, very little has changed in the early years since the last inspection.

Children are cared for well and they feel safe. They enjoy phonics sessions and story time. Adults help them to form warm, trusting relationships. Children play kindly with one another

and move confidently around the environment. Adults support children to understand routines and how to manage their emotions. Parents and carers value the positive relationships they have with staff.

Leadership and governance

Urgent improvement 

Turbulence in leadership and limited leadership capacity mean that the school has not eradicated the serious weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Despite some recent improvements to aspects of the curriculum, particularly phonics, children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 do not achieve well. This is especially true for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who face other barriers to learning. Governors and leaders are too reliant on external partners to identify weaknesses in the school's provision. The school does not have the capacity that it needs to bring about improvement.

Leaders and staff care deeply about the pupils. They have maintained a clear focus on keeping pupils safe and safeguarding their wellbeing throughout a challenging period of change. Staff appreciate the help that they receive to manage their workload and wellbeing. They are proud to work at the school. Staff's professional development is having a demonstrable impact in phonics. However, its influence across other curriculum areas is not securing consistently improved practice.

Governors are invested in the school and they seek to meet their statutory duties. However, they do not hold leaders to account well enough regarding the quality of education that children in the early years and other pupils receive. They do not receive information about the impact of provision for pupils with SEND. Nor do they gain sufficient insight into pupils' attendance and achievement. They are ill equipped to offer leaders informed challenge and support.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

The school has faced considerable disruption in recent years. Changes in leadership and shifting approaches to the design and delivery of the curriculum have created uncertainty. During this period, staff have continued make pupils' wellbeing and safety a priority. This means that pupils enjoy coming to school. However, leaders' progress in tackling the weaknesses in the curriculum and teaching have been too slow. As a result, children in the early years and pupils across the rest of the school do not achieve well. They do not gain the basic knowledge that they need to build secure foundations for later learning. Pupils' needs and barriers to learning are not identified well enough. As a result, gaps in pupils' knowledge, especially in writing and mathematics, do not reduce quickly enough over time.

Classrooms are generally calm. There are clear routines that help pupils settle quickly. Pupils enjoy learning new vocabulary in science and engaging with story books. They play kindly and support their friends if they become upset. However, this positive climate is not consistent across classes. Some lessons become unsettled, particularly when pupils are asked to complete work that is either too easy or presents too much challenge.

Leaders have built positive links with families and the community. Many families spoke highly of the school. Leaders promote the value of attending school regularly. Pupils enjoy the attendance race and want their class to win. Even so, some pupils miss school through absence.

Pupils speak warmly of the relationships that they hold with staff and their peers. They are proud to belong to a small, caring community. They feel safe and have confidence in staff to resolve any concerns, including bullying.

Pupils enjoy clubs, trips and special events. They learn how to stay safe and treat others with respect. Pupils feel included in school life and take part in wider experiences that extend their learning and knowledge of the world. This ensures that they are ready for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Governors must ensure that leadership capacity increases. This is so leaders can identify weaknesses in the school's provision and then take action that leads to sustainable improvement over time.
 - Governors must ensure that they maintain an accurate oversight of the school so that they can offer well-informed support and challenge to leaders.
 - Leaders must design a purposeful early years curriculum and ensure that this is taught well so that children secure important knowledge and skills that equip them to be successful in Year 1.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff in the early years identify gaps in children's knowledge and use this information, alongside purposeful interactions, to help children gain secure early writing, mathematics and communication skills.
 - Leaders should ensure that the newly designed curriculum is taught consistently well, and assessment systems are used purposefully, so that pupils gain secure knowledge, especially in writing and mathematics, which enables them to achieve well.
 - Leaders should ensure that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and other pupils with barriers to learning, are identified accurately. They should also ensure that additional support has an impact so that barriers reduce over time.
 - Leaders should continue to develop their approach to improving pupils' attendance so that more pupils are in school regularly.
 - Leaders should address the causes of the occasional incidents of disruptive behaviour so that pupils' learning is not interrupted.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Jacqueline Stocks.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection we carry out.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the acting headteacher and other senior leaders during the inspection. They also met with members of the governing board, as well as a representative of the local authority.

Inspectors spoke with several pupils, staff, parents and carers. They considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:
The school does not use any alternative provision.

Acting Headteacher : Tracy Preston

Lead inspector:

Helen Friend, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Andy Beattie, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 3 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

57

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

108

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

38.60%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.51%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

7.02%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	5.6%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.7%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	11.0%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	14.0%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	21.7%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	45.5%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
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