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Michelle Holford
Headteacher
Millfields Church of England (Controlled) Primary School
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Dear Mrs Holford

Monitoring inspection of a school not in a category of concern of Millfields Church of England (Controlled) Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 23 September 2025, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school meets the monitoring threshold as set out in the [Monitoring Inspection Handbook](#).

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's key and (where applicable) provision judgements, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, other school leaders, governors, and a representative of the local authority and the diocese the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. I visited lessons, spoke with pupils, looked at curriculum information and pupils' workbooks. I reviewed the single central record. I reviewed minutes of governing body meetings. I also reviewed the school's self-evaluation document, the school development plan and records of external quality assurance visits. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made insufficient progress to improve the school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that pupils' errors, misconceptions and gaps in knowledge are consistently identified and addressed.

Main findings

The school has experienced significant turbulence in leadership and staffing since the last inspection. This has included changes to teaching staff, a temporary executive headteacher during the 2025 summer term, a new special educational needs coordinator taking up post this month, and an acting deputy headteacher, who is currently in post. The school has also seen a fall in the number of pupils on roll. This has required the school to reorganise class structures several times. Additionally, the nurture hub that was in place at the last inspection has since closed. While these factors have disrupted the school's improvement work, the school, including governors, has been too slow to address its areas for improvement. The lack of decisive action over time has ultimately meant that pupils' experiences have not been of the necessary quality for them to achieve consistently well.

The school has taken some encouraging steps to improve its curriculum. It has adopted published schemes in many subjects, which outline the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. In English and mathematics, the curriculum provides additional guidance for teachers on how to deliver the required knowledge in mixed-age classes. However, the school is still in the early stages of adapting curriculum materials to cater for mixed-age classes in most other subjects. This limits the guidance available to staff to design learning that helps pupils build securely on what they already know. Ultimately, curriculum developments have not so far translated into measurable improvements in pupils' attainment. This remains low, and pupils have notable gaps in knowledge in a number of subjects.

Since the last inspection, the school has identified that its assessment strategies are inconsistent and have a variable impact on pupils' learning. Pupils' errors, misconceptions and gaps in knowledge sometimes go unaddressed. This limits how well pupils achieve in several subjects. Although the school intends to address this shortcoming, its actions are in their infancy.

The school has ensured that staff deliver its chosen phonics programme with confidence and consistency. Staff support pupils at the early stages of reading effectively. They model sounds and letters clearly to help pupils develop their early reading skills. Pupils who need extra help are identified quickly and given regular, targeted support. This is helping them to develop their confidence as readers.

The school readily accepts that little progress has been made towards improving the curriculum experience of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This is within a backdrop of a notable rise in pupils at the school with, or being assessed for, an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has made it a priority this academic year to improve how it supports pupils with SEND. It has recently invested in a framework to help staff identify the progress that pupils with SEND should make from

their starting points. Nonetheless, most planned improvements, including the new framework, have not been implemented or remain at the inception stage. As a result, there has not been enough change in this area of practice to date.

Governors have begun to acknowledge that they have not sufficiently improved their ability to provide effective challenge or strategic direction. Too much of their attention has focused on a narrow range of matters, and they do not gather all the information that they need to fulfil their duties thoroughly. This has weakened their wider oversight and meant that some important compliance checks have been overlooked. Although governors have recently undergone an external review, they have not given enough priority to reflecting on and acting upon its findings with the determination or urgency required to bring about rapid improvement. Since the last inspection, they have largely remained too passive and relied too heavily on school leaders for setting the strategic vision and priorities. Ultimately, this approach has prevented the school from securing the improvements necessary to raise standards for pupils.

Pupils' attendance rates remain well below national averages. In addition, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is consistently high. The school has introduced some initiatives, such as rewards and attendance challenges, in an attempt to reduce absenteeism. However, the school has not evaluated these initiatives well and cannot demonstrate that they have made a measurable difference. Wider strategies to improve attendance still lack rigour and are not targeted sharply enough at the pupils who need the most support. Attendance for some groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, remains particularly low. As a result, these pupils continue to miss important learning and are hindered in closing gaps in their knowledge.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of governors, the director of education for the Diocese of Chester, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Wirral. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

David Spruce
His Majesty's Inspector