

# Milestone School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119061
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	379719
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Wendy Simmons

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	248
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Theresa Davies
<b>Headteacher</b>	Margaret Fisher
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19–20 May 2009
<b>School address</b>	Ash Road New Ash Green Longfield Kent DA3 8JZ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. In total, 27 lessons/part lessons were observed as well as a few therapy/medical support sessions. Twenty-seven teachers were seen teaching along with teaching assistants. Meetings were held with the staff and members of the governing body. Parents' and carers' views were evaluated based on the 64 questionnaires received and from other sources. Discussions were held with groups of pupils and students in addition to the analysis of their 57 questionnaires. Staff returned 45 questionnaires. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the improvement plans, policies, samples of pupils' work and assessment information. Child-protection and safeguarding information was scrutinised.

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

- Inspectors examined the evidence to assess whether the pupils possibly make outstanding progress in all key stages whatever their special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How effective the school's specialist status for 'Cognition and Learning' is in promoting learning and progress.
- The team evaluated the quality of teaching and learning to see if it is outstanding at all key stages and for all groups of learners.

## Information about the school

Milestone is a large school when compared with other special schools, but is smaller than most mainstream schools that teach the same age groups. Numbers attending the school have risen considerably since the school's previous inspection. All pupils have statements for special educational needs or attend for assessment. Broadly, 20% of all pupils have complex medical conditions, which require specialist on-site nursing care. Broadly, 19% have profound and multiple learning difficulties. The large majority of pupils use signing to communicate and a high proportion have a diagnosis of autism.

Most pupils come from a 20 mile radius although some come from other local authorities. The vast majority of pupils are boys from White British backgrounds. A few pupils are of Asian, Black African or mixed heritages. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The school provides outreach support for autism and behaviour difficulties for pupils at other schools. There is an on-site after-school club, which is managed by the governing body. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage, which is made up of a Nursery and Reception class. Provision continues through Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4. There is also a sixth form, which includes a further education centre. Further education was not part of this inspection. The school gained specialist school status in Cognition and Learning; as well as a wide range of other accreditations.

**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?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

Milestone is an outstanding school that provides exemplary education, care and value for money. The school has gone from strength to strength owing to highly effective leadership. Links with parents and carers and others play a highly significant part in the pupils' development. The headteacher explained it like this, 'So many people have played an important part on the journey, building step by step on the foundations. Then came the layers of icing and finally we worked for the cherry on top of the cake in our vision to be outstanding. We have all done this for our youngsters.'

The impact of outstanding teaching and an exciting and relevant curriculum leads to the pupils achieving exceptionally well, whatever their need, as they move through the school. The Early Years Foundation Stage is good and the sixth form is outstanding. The school's specialist accreditation for 'Cognition and Learning' is greatly deserved due to the impact on the pupils' development and because of the impressive outreach support for other schools.

Almost all parents and carers agree that their children enjoy school. Inspectors confirm that pupils in each department are very safe; safeguarding procedures are exemplary. Adults go out of their way to ensure that the outstanding promotion of equal opportunities is at the core of the school's work.

The pupils are so well supported and praised that they learn how to behave outstandingly well. They very quickly overcome any daily difficulties that occur so that they can get on with the business of learning and having fun. They show immense respect and are kind and helpful to each other. As one pupil explained, 'I learn to behave good'; while another said, 'We keep each happy'. Almost everyone makes significant improvement in their ability to concentrate.

The pupils' involvement in the school and their interaction in the wider community, nationally and globally are substantial and highly valued. This underpins the outstanding community cohesion. In addition to basic communication and academic skills, opportunities to adopt healthy and safe lifestyles are very impressive. Everyone values the range of exercise, very good food and varied ways that enable exploration of emotions. The excellent work of the chef, therapy and nursing staff as well as the arts and physical education staff contributes immensely to the notable outcomes. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very carefully interwoven into the daily life of the school in exceptional ways.

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The superb vision of the headteacher, when linked with the outstanding work of the governing body, and dedicated teamwork of staff, has resulted in the pursuit of excellence. There is determination to lift the long-term economic well-being of the pupils to be outstanding in the future. A sizeable group of pupils has to have time off due to their complex illness, sleeping difficulties or hospital treatment. This is why rates of attendance are low overall. When they are well, their attendance quickly improves. The attendance of all other groups is exceptionally high. So far, the school is doing very well in almost all areas, but correctly wants to make sure that the pupils have the best possible understanding of transferable skills, for example in using shape, space and measurement, where there is room for further improvement. Ambitious plans are underway to expand pupils' experiences for transition into adult life. These features remain the focus for the school's development and correctly so.

Since the school's previous inspection, staff have maintained the pupils' outstanding personal development and moved almost all other outcomes over a grade boundary from being good, because of high expectation and very rigorous self-evaluation. Highly sophisticated and accurate analysis of pupils' progress is used unflinchingly to set and achieve targets against the most stretching of benchmarks. The school demonstrates an outstanding capacity to improve and remains relentlessly focused on ensuring that teaching continues to be consistently of the highest order.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Maintain the drive to help pupils to be as well prepared as possible for their future lives by:
  - expanding pupils' experiences for transition into the world of work and adult life
  - providing more real-life opportunities for them to understand about shape, space and measurement.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**1**

The cognitive abilities of the pupils are often so severely restricted that attainment is not graded. Nonetheless, the lessons and evidence about progress and learning show that achievement is outstanding. Pupils enjoy taking a full part in planning their targets and are delighted in their achievements. They are helped to have a strong impact on the decisions relating to their learning and well-being.

At all key stages, everyone enjoys school. Parents and carers note their children's eagerness to attend and comment about assemblies being a joy as they see their children happy and confident. Inspectors agree. The pupils explain how they enjoy many subjects and are setting up a vegetable and herb garden, which will be used by the chef in daily cooking. They enjoy music. Art work is of high quality.

Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 make rapid progress. They build very securely on this

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between Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils in Key Stage 4, for example, really flourish in developing their confidence to express themselves. They become increasingly independent. Almost all pupils stay on into the sixth form. No one leaves without employment or some form of accredited vocational qualification, or placement at college. Excellent links, with such places as Hadlow College of Horticulture and Thames View, support training and employment very well.

The most able group are helped to make very good progress As one parent explained, 'My son is now doing GCSE at college for mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). The school gave him the personal and basic skills to have the confidence to do this.' Pupils with communication difficulties, including autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties, make powerful steps in their communication and often make a leap forward in vocalising sounds, then using single words. Those who are able gain the confidence to speak in longer sentences. Those who have immense physical disability are helped to develop both communication and greater physical skills very well.

Lessons and progress data show that there is outstanding progress in reading. Pupils all enjoy books and stories. For example, pupils in Years 6 and 7 explored emotions when reading the book, 'Little Mouse, Big Book of Fears'. As a result, pupils were able to learn, use and understand new vocabulary such as, 'scared', 'worried', 'petrified' or 'alone'. Year 11 pupils worked hard on linking letters and sounds to develop their knowledge of phonics, to help them to read new words. Writing is also developing very well for those who are able, such as in Years 7 and 8 where pupils wrote 'All About Me'.

Learning in mathematics is good because the pupils often gain a very strong understanding of numbers and basic calculations. However, learning about shape, space and measure is good rather than outstanding. Some opportunities are being missed in lessons to make mathematics as meaningful as it might be, for example by having a shop when learning about money. Examples of outstanding learning were seen when pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 explored time through work on the seasons and when a specialist teacher led a dance and art lesson, which helped pupils to use creative pictures by the artist Paul Clay to explore shape and pattern.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1

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

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teachers are very knowledgeable and extremely enthusiastic. They have a very good understanding of pupils' specific needs, which is a factor in why the school has gained specialist 'Cognition and Learning' status. Staff work very hard to make lessons lively and fun. Lessons move on at a swift pace and behaviour management is highly effective and sensitive. The use of communication books, computer technology and signing enables the pupils to be fully involved and express their ideas, concerns and views. Many high quality multi-sensory activities aid learning. In Year 1, pupils made and tasted bread and explored new vocabulary about touch and taste very effectively. In Year 2, superb links with physical activities helped pupils to understand the positional language of 'in' and 'on'. Specialist teaching is similarly very effective.

The curriculum is planned to ensure that individual needs are very well met and the school fully deserves its achievement of the Arts Mark, Healthy Schools and Active Awards. The school provides many extra activities, such as horse riding and outdoor adventurous activities, which are challenging and exciting.

Very strong links with other agencies and with parents and carers ensure that all groups do well, especially the most vulnerable and those who are looked after by carers. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the pupils' development. Very effective physiotherapy and the use of the sensory room enable pupils to make very good physical and cognitive development. Adults plan extremely well defined small steps of development and assess progress very carefully. The pupils' personal needs, including eating and hygiene, are treated with dignity and respect. Medical interventions ensure that pupils can access learning and feel comfortable and safe. Support ensures that pupils can go out and have access to the full curriculum. The school has gained the Anti-Bullying Award. Pupils benefit from effective care in the after-school club.

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*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

At all levels of leadership there is an excellent distribution of roles and responsibilities, so that the vision and determination to do the very best for all groups of learners are achieved. Professional development and very regular checking of lessons ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is continuously improving. There is a common sense of purpose among staff to sustain ambitious targets for the pupils in their care. Staff questionnaires confirm they are almost always very proud to be a member of staff, although a few of the teaching assistants and non-teaching staff would like to be even more involved in the evaluation of the work of the school.

The promotion of equal opportunities is extremely well embedded in all aspects of the school’s work. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated. Pupils are never left out. Monitoring and evaluation are sophisticated and highly influential in maintaining and improving the school’s effectiveness for all groups of pupils.

The governing body holds the school to account very well for the pupils’ achievement, personal development and safeguarding arrangements. Governors are effective, fully involved in development planning and currently working in joint partnership with several other schools to become an Academy.

Staff and governors are very well trained in child protection and safeguarding. There are rigorous staff recruitment procedures. Governors have thorough monitoring systems. Risk assessments are very good. Links with other agencies ensure joined up checking and support for the most vulnerable pupils. Pupils who do not have verbal facility are helped to express any concerns using other communication technology.

Community cohesion is very well promoted. Cultural links are extremely wide ranging and involve both local schools and schools in other parts of the world. The school has links with Turkey, Poland, Greece and partnership visits with Namibia and a connecting classroom project with a school in India, which reflects why the school has an International Award. The school took part with six other local schools in a music festival of singing and signing. The young people at Milestone wanted blazers and got them, so that they are the same as other pupils when they visit each other’s schools. The school works successfully to raise the profile of disability, for example older pupils maintain flower tubs at Waitrose supermarket and are planning a garden for Hampton Court Flower Festival.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are welcomed into the very safe and well-planned environment in a friendly and encouraging way. The welfare arrangements are outstanding, including the care and provision in the after-school club. Children benefit from a curriculum that is adjusted to meet their individual needs. Teaching is good and allows children to learn in different ways. When finding out about mini beasts there was plenty of multisensory activity, which opened children’s access to learning, and adults seized the moment to extend learning in meaningful ways.

As a result of very strong links with parents and carers, children settle quickly and everyone works for the benefit of the individual child’s needs. Some parents and carers have been involved in a 10-week course to develop their child’s behaviour and social skills, the findings of which are being used as a university research project. This project is also open to other parents and carers in the school.

During the inspection, children especially enjoyed the hydrotherapy and soft play activities. Both of these features are very impressive because they enable children to begin to communicate their joy of learning, while also helping them with important physical and communication development. Children make good progress across all six areas of learning in activities that combine them. Leaders show an outstanding passion for improvement. They are looking to provide more purpose-built accommodation and resources so as to enrich learning to outstanding. Plans are securely underway to bring this about.

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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Sixth Form

The Sixth Form is exceptionally well led and this is reflected in its popularity. The school is getting a much wider range of needs and the number attending has increased. Arrangements for care, guidance and support are of the highest quality. As a result of this high-quality provision, outcomes for students at all levels are outstanding.

Since the previous inspection, there has been a drive to enrich and extend the range of accredited examinations that students can follow, with more variety in other activities. The development of independence and life skills is at the core of this work. All leaders are also working to make transition into the outside world as smooth as possible. Currently, senior staff are hoping to provide even more opportunities for students to work alongside other teenagers of different abilities. This is a very good initiative in helping with transition into the diverse society that they will encounter after leaving school. Links with families are very well established.

The teaching seen during the inspection was at least good and often outstanding. Students were observed being absorbed by designing scenery for the school pantomime. In another lesson their excellent behaviour and interest in the role-play activity helped them to work with St John’s Ambulance while learning how to cope if someone is bleeding. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties gained much from the outstanding sensory massage work, which calmed them and provided a very strong spiritual experience; as well as effective paired work.

The provision for enterprise skills has developed especially well. Students are helped to manage calculated risks to gain confidence to be able to travel in the community. They learn a wide range of life skills including cookery. Basic communication, reading, writing and information and communication technology (ICT) are very well promoted. Students, who are able, know how to plan their curriculum vitae and can do job applications. They enjoy many gardening activities. The curriculum is very well organised to promote the arts. The students put on a production of Bugsy Malone as well as enjoying a visit to the Globe Theatre to perform *Midsummer’s Night’s Dream*. Exercise is high profile through physiotherapy, use of the on-site gym and swimming. Visits to a local golf course and adventurous activities help students to gain confidence and self-esteem. An increasing proportion of students gain the Bronze Level Duke of Edinburgh Award.

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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

## Views of parents and carers

Slightly less than the average proportion of parents and carers returned the questionnaire. The overwhelming majority are happy with the school. The words of one parent summed up the views of many when saying, 'They are incredibly focused on helping our children to achieve'. While another commented on the, 'Relentless caring work by all at Milestone'. The majority agree that their children are making good progress and inspectors found this to be outstanding overall, because the school works very hard to meet pupils' needs highly effectively. Most feel well informed about their children's progress. A few felt that the school does not take sufficient account of their concerns or meet the needs of their children. However, inspectors feel that the school does do this and confirms that staff deal effectively with any unacceptable behaviour.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Milestone 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 64 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 248 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	75	11	17	3	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	51	80	11	17	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	41	64	19	30	1	2	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	55	24	38	1	2	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	50	78	10	16	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	39	61	19	30	3	5	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	66	18	28	2	3	0	0
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)	28	44	28	44	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	46	72	12	19	3	5	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	55	20	31	3	5	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	63	15	23	2	3	3	5
The school is led and managed effectively	43	67	14	22	2	3	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	48	75	9	14	1	2	2	3

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



17 November 2011

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Milestone School, New Ash Green, DA3 8JZ**

Thank you so much for helping us to find out about your school when we visited. You go to a fantastic school, it is outstanding. There are so many things that have impressed us. Many different adults are working together extremely well to make the school just right for you. This means that you learn new things very well and enjoy exciting activities. Everyone works together to make sure that you are very well cared for and safe and you agree.

We are pleased to know that you make friends, are happy, and feel exceedingly safe. You behave extremely well and when you sometimes find this hard, you are quickly helped to find very good ways to calm down. We are impressed by the way that you let others know about your feelings and ideas. You help others and try hard to show kindness to them. We really like the excellent way that you do things with other children in New Ash Green, Longfield and in the big wide world. Well done for working to be as fit and healthy as possible. We were amazed by the great work of the chef and delighted to know that you will soon be growing more herbs, fruits and vegetables to help him. There are just a few things to do to make the school even better.

- We want the school to continue working as hard as possible to make sure that you are ready for life in the wider world as adults, especially in your understanding of shapes, measurement and money.

Keep up the superb fund raising for the school in Namibia. We wish you every success with your pantomime. Good luck with your garden design for the Hampton Court Flower Festival. I will look out for it when I visit; that will remind me of your amazing school.

Yours sincerely  
Wendy Simmons

Lead inspector

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