

Middlemarch School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	125761
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	381127
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2012
Lead inspector	Keith Sadler

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Gibson
Headteacher	Georgina Mawdsley (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2006
School address	College Street Nuneaton CV10 7BQ
Telephone number	024 7632 8009
Fax number	024 7632 6293
Email address	admin5202@we-learn.com

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Keith Sadler

Additional inspector

Alan Dobbins

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 17 lessons led by nine different teachers or practitioners. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation. This included: the school's analysis of pupils' progress; teachers' lesson plans; the school development plan; leaders' monitoring records; and pupils' work. Questionnaires completed by 61 parents and carers, together with others from staff and pupils, were analysed and their responses taken into account.

Information about the school

Middlemarch is below average in size for a junior school. Pupils attend the school from a number of partner infant schools within the town. The large majority of pupils are White British, with a small minority from minority ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

The school has specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. This designated unit is for up to 10 pupils who have speech and language difficulties (DSL). There is a breakfast and after-school club, but it is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection.

The school has had an acting headteacher since September 2010. She has been appointed to the headship on a permanent basis and will commence her permanent headship in the near future.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Middlemarch is a good school. It provides a safe and supportive environment where pupils grow up as independent and confident learners. Pupils do particularly well in English, but the school is not outstanding because teaching is not yet consistently strong enough to ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress, particularly in mathematics and science.
- All groups of pupils, including those in the DSLP, achieve well, and attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. However, not enough pupils attain the higher level in mathematics because pupils' strong calculation skills are not always applied well in practical mathematics activities.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers manage the pupils well and foster good relationships. They invariably provide interesting and exciting activities that capture the pupils' interest. Lessons are generally planned well to meet the varying learning needs of pupils. This is particularly the case in English, but in mathematics and to a lesser degree in science, the work set is not always sufficiently challenging for the more-able pupils. On occasion, teachers spend too long introducing lessons and this slows the pace of learning.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy school and learning. They feel safe because the staff ensure that there is a warm and welcoming environment. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- The effective acting headteacher provides a clear direction for the school. She is supported well by the governing body and senior and middle leaders. They share a commitment and determination to make the school even better. The leadership of teaching and management of performance are good. Rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress ensures that clear priorities for school development are established and implemented.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Lift the quality of teaching and learning from good to outstanding by:
 - raising the proportion of pupils gaining the higher level in mathematics by ensuring that lesson plans consistently provide challenging activities for the more-able pupils
 - ensuring that the pace of learning is consistently brisk by reducing the time that some teachers spend introducing activities
 - ensuring that teachers' planning in science is suitably matched to the varying learning needs of pupils in each class.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Lesson observations during the inspection confirmed parents and carers' positive views regarding their children's achievements. Boys and girls, including those who attend the DSLP, make good progress in their learning. Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress. Assessment information is used well to provide targeted support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. As a result, these pupils achieve well.

Pupils achieve well in all year groups, and by the end of Year 6 attainment is above average. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher National Curriculum levels has been small in the past. This is being successfully addressed in English. For example, two thirds of the current Year 5 class are already reaching the level expected of pupils at the end of Year 6, with some attaining the higher level. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are benefiting from a consistent and structured approach to improving achievement. They make good use of their various literacy targets such as those relating to vocabulary, connectives, and punctuation of their own volition. They explained confidently to inspectors how their targets help them to develop their skills when they are writing independently. In mathematics and science, although achievement is good and about a third of the pupils in Year 5 have already attained the level expected at the end of Year 6, fewer pupils are working at the higher level. This is also the case with Year 6 pupils. This is because work is not always sufficiently challenging to extend the most-able pupils. These pupils themselves say that work is sometimes easy.

The school is successful in promoting an interest in reading and in books. Even pupils who struggle to decode words understand the phonetic principles they need to apply. In a Year 4 group reading activity, for example, less-able pupils thoroughly enjoyed reading and talking about *Peace at Last*, and they were able to interpret aspects of the main characters. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils' reading skills are particularly well developed and standards are high. More-able Year 6 readers can

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compare and contrast characters and plot from favourite texts and they explain their preferred authors well. As one pupil said, 'I really enjoy fantasy books such as *Inkspell* because they just carry me away.' Pupils' engagement and interest in reading are enhanced by focus weeks such as that during the inspection when pupils were inspired by readings and lessons from an established poet.

Staff ensure that pupils with speech and language difficulties learn well in mainstream classes. In a successful Year 6 science lesson, for example, skilled support and carefully prepared resources ensured that a pupil from the DSLP made excellent progress in understanding food chains.

The school is keenly aware that in the past, the attainment of boys in writing has lagged behind that of girls. As a result of a successful review of the curriculum in which writing themes have been made more 'boy-friendly', their level of engagement, interest and achievement has improved. As a result, the gap between girls and boys is being reduced. This has been aided by the carefully planned inclusion of writing in topic work. Year 4 boys, for example, talked enthusiastically about the newspaper reports they prepared as part of their topic on the Egyptians.

Quality of teaching

The large majority of teaching is of good quality and this leads to pupils enjoying lessons and learning well. As one Year 6 pupil said, 'Our teachers make our learning fun because they give us lots of practical tasks to do.' Key improvements in teaching include the consistently good challenge that is now provided for all groups of pupils in reading and writing. However, this is not always the case in mathematics and science, where teachers' planning is sometimes not sufficiently well matched to pupils' varying ability levels. This is because teachers do not always make sufficient use of the good and improved procedures to track pupils' progress. However, these data are used well for the quick and accurate identification of any pupils who are in danger of slipping behind. The school then provides good-quality targeted interventions. It is the relentless determination of senior staff to improve teaching that has led to the strengthening of learning and achievement for all groups of pupils. This is recognised by parents and carers, almost all of whom affirm that teaching is good.

Throughout the school, teachers have positive relationships with the pupils and they manage them well. This results in classrooms having a calm and purposeful learning atmosphere. Teachers ensure that there are many opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively, and this is appreciated by the pupils. Paired and small group learning supports pupils' personal development well and has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Work in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is planned well across the curriculum, and pupils are able to practise these skills in subjects such as history, geography and science lessons. Year 6 pupils were proud to show their work on the Second World War, which included a wide range of writing genres.

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In the best lessons, teachers ensure that the pace of learning is brisk and this helps to engage the interest of pupils. However, this is not always the case, and on occasion the pace of learning dips because teachers spend too long introducing lessons.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

At the previous inspection, pupils' personal development was good and pupils behaved well. These strengths have been maintained; pupils feel safe in school and their behaviour is typically good in lessons and around the school. Parents and carers reflect the pupils' positive views in saying that their children are kept safe, and although a few suggested that behaviour is not always good, incidents of inappropriate behaviour and bullying are rare. Pupils are aware of the various risks they face in and out of school, such as when using the internet or when walking and cycling, and how to respond to them. Pupils say that they particularly enjoy the road safety quizzes and they say that this helps them in their knowledge of how to stay safe. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying, and know how to deal with them. Pupils with a concern turn confidently to an adult, knowing that it will be quickly resolved.

Staff ensure that there is a positive and welcoming atmosphere and the good levels of pastoral support ensure that there is sensitive support for pupils and families whose challenging circumstances may make them vulnerable. The well-established nurture group, for example, enables the pupils who attend to develop their self-esteem and confidence.

Leadership and management

The school is led and managed well. Parents and carers who met with inspectors made positive comments about improvement since the acting headteacher started. She has galvanised the staff well. They work closely as a team and morale is high. She is supported well by senior leaders. Subject leaders for English and mathematics check provision and pupils' progress well. The leadership and management of the DSLP are good, and the leader shows a strong commitment to ensuring that these pupils' needs are met, and that the unit staff work closely with all the other mainstream staff in the school. Governance has improved and governors ensure that regulatory requirements for safeguarding pupils are met. Their regular visits to the school enable them to provide suitable challenge to the senior leadership team as well as support.

A clear commitment to improvement and a secure vision for school's future are shared by the governing body and staff. Rigour in the school's self-evaluation has secured an accurate view of the school. This has led to a series of well-conceived improvement projects that are showing positive impact, particularly in lifting the quality of teaching. For example, newly instigated performance management procedures are used well to identify staff's development needs. Leaders are ensuring that teachers are provided with opportunities to learn from those whose practice is

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most effective.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum and the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and the school is successful in ensuring equality of opportunity for all its pupils.

The strengthening of teaching and acceleration of pupils' progress, when linked to leaders' drive and commitment, demonstrate the school's good capacity for further improvement.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



14 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Middlemarch School, Nuneaton, CV10 7BQ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed hearing about the many things that you enjoy, and thought that the poet Paul Cookson provided a really exciting start to your reading week. Thank you to those who completed questionnaires.

Middlemarch is a good school. Your teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and they plan lots of exciting activities for you to do. This helps you to make good progress in your learning. Those of you who find learning hard make good progress because the teaching assistants support you well.

You told us that your school is a happy place and that the adults look after you. We agree with you and so do your parents/carers. We were impressed about how well you get on together. Your behaviour is good and you feel safe in school. We think that your acting headteacher does a good job and she is greatly helped by all the staff. They are always checking on how well you are doing because they want you always to do as well as you can.

Even in a good school like yours, there are things to improve. We have asked your teachers to make sure that more of you reach Level 5 in mathematics by giving you more challenging activities. Sometimes your teachers take too long to introduce lessons so we have asked them to make sure that introductions are brief. Finally, we have asked your teachers to make sure that their lesson plans in science give you activities that are challenging for all of you, whether you find learning easy or hard.

You can help by working hard to reach your targets. Thank you for taking time to talk to us and we hope that you continue to enjoy your education.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler
Lead inspector

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