

Midsomer Norton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109080
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	356471
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Ann Henderson HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	346
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Evans
Headteacher	Damian Knollys
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. They visited 24 lessons, observed 13 teachers and held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff, pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, its self-evaluation, tracking information on pupils' attainment and progress, curriculum documentation, minutes of the governing body meetings, staff and pupils' questionnaires and 139 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- The quality of teaching and learning and the use of assessment and their impact on the learning and progress of pupils, particularly boys and lower achievers in English and all pupils in writing at Key Stage 1.
- Whether the level of expectation and challenge in lessons is sufficient to enable all pupils to reach higher standards and make rapid progress.
- How effective leadership at all levels, including the governing body, is in meeting statutory requirements, promoting equality, eliminating discrimination and monitoring the work of the school.
- The cohesiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the impact of its leadership on ensuring consistently good or outstanding outcomes for children.

Information about the school

Midsomer Norton Primary School is a larger than average-sized primary school. It has Early Years Foundation Stage provision in one Nursery and two Reception classes. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, mainly with specific learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average. A breakfast club operates on the school site which is managed by the governing body and was included as part of this inspection.

The headteacher was seconded to another school from January to August 2010, to provide support. He returned to the school in September 2010. A new deputy headteacher took up post in September 2010.

The school is undergoing a major building project at present, which has significantly reduced the space available for pupils outside. In addition, the Early Years Foundation Stage is accommodated temporarily on the school site, but separate from the main building until completion of its new accommodation.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Midsomer Norton Primary School provides a satisfactory quality of education within a safe, welcoming and caring atmosphere. Parents and carers are pleased with the quality of education that the school provides. It has strengths in the Early Years Foundation Stage where children get off to a good start because they are taught well and make good progress. Progress between Year 1 and Year 6 is variable. There has been a history of underachievement and even though teaching has improved recently, it will take time to address fully this legacy of underachievement; therefore, progress in these years is satisfactory. Attainment is broadly average, although improving by the end of Year 6.

The school has good procedures for pupils' care and well-being. Safeguarding arrangements are good. Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning. They say they feel safe in school and know how to live a healthy lifestyle. They are keen to attend school and this is reflected in their above average attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, with particular strengths in their moral and social development.

Teaching has improved and is now good, so learning is good in lessons, but this is comparatively recent and so has not yet had a full impact. School tracking shows that progress and achievement are not yet securely good over time. Where teaching is less strong, while planning identifies the range of work for different ability groups, it does not focus clearly enough on exactly what pupils are expected to learn and assessment information is not used well enough to plan lessons that match tasks to pupils' different needs. In addition, the use of targets to promote learning is inconsistent and does not always provide pupils with sufficient information on their next steps in learning.

The satisfactory curriculum provides a solid foundation for a variety of activities across the school. There is an appropriate emphasis on instilling basic skills in literacy and numeracy, but these, along with other subjects, are not yet extended and developed as imaginatively as they could be and opportunities for writing across the curriculum are limited.

The headteacher and newly-appointed deputy headteacher have a clear focus on raising pupils' achievement. Improved tracking procedures provide leaders with a clear picture of how well pupils are achieving. Teachers are held more accountable for the attainment and progress of pupils through regular progress meetings with senior leaders. However, the role of middle leaders in monitoring their areas of responsibility is underdeveloped. Governors carry out their statutory responsibilities but strategic planning does not precisely measure the success of planned improvements and their monitoring does not always focus on the most important areas for improvement. Nevertheless evidence of the school's success in improving the leadership and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the commitment to tackling the weaknesses that remain give confidence that there is a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

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Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - using sharper and more measurable success criteria in development planning so that the impact of improvements can be evaluated
 - increasing the rigour with which governors monitor the work of the school to more precisely identify where best to encourage the school to improve
 - ensuring middle leaders plan for improvement in their areas of responsibility and monitor pupils' progress systematically.
- Make more effective use of assessments by:
 - ensuring all teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that build on pupils' prior attainment in order to improve pupils' progress
 - consistently using pupils' targets to promote learning and provide detailed steps for improvement.
- Implement a curriculum that excites and engages pupils by:
 - creating a whole-school curriculum plan which makes clear meaningful links and provides activities that are interesting and challenging for all groups of pupils
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to practise their skills, particularly in writing, across other subjects of the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most pupils enjoy their learning. In lessons seen during the inspection, the learning observed was good overall, allowing pupils to make good progress. However, the quality is inconsistent across the school. In the best lessons, pupils are challenged in their thinking, producing work of good quality. In one Years 5/6 class, skilful questioning by the teacher supported pupils to think deeply about the picture story 'The Arrival' ♦by Shaun Tan, to search for the meaning of the images and interpret the story. Pupils were enthusiastic participators, sharing their ideas articulately and were challenged to further explore and consider what was happening in the story. In another Years 5/6 lesson, this book was used as a stimulus for writing a play script. Pupils worked diligently and conscientiously, producing high quality scenes, stage directions and dialogue. During this lesson the teacher worked with one group of pupils to move learning forward and by careful reference to the criteria for success and perceptive questioning by the teacher, pupils made good progress. Good use was made of peer assessment and pupils responded well to this opportunity to share their work with one another.

Children start in the Nursery class with wide-ranging skills and make good progress, so that when they begin in Reception their skills are broadly in line with those expected of their age. Their good progress during the Reception year enables them to begin in Year 1 with a good level of understanding. By the end of Year 6 attainment is average and achievement is satisfactory, due to the variation in progress across the school. Pupils with

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special educational needs and/or disabilities make a similar level of progress to other groups.

Pupils behave well in lessons and as they move around the school. Despite the restricted area outside at playtime during the current building work, pupils play safely, are polite and friendly and display sensitive consideration to one another. They say they feel safe in school. They know there is always an adult in whom they can confide if they have a problem and that they will be listened to sympathetically. Pupils know how to keep safe when using new technologies. Their understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle is good, they know they should eat sensibly and take regular exercise. Pupils are keen to contribute to the school and the wider community and particularly enjoy supporting older people in the community with their knitting skills! The school council is effective in ensuring that pupils have their say in what happens in school and some Year 6 pupils organise extra-curricular activities after school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good overall, although it is a little too inconsistent across the school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught well and because of this they make good progress. In some Years 1/2 classes the rate of pupils' progress slows, affecting their progress throughout the school. From Year 2 onwards, most teaching improves and pupils begin to make better progress. At its best, teaching engages pupils

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well, encouraging them to be actively involved in their learning. For example, in one Years 1/2 class, groups of pupils were excitedly creating 'hot seats' of a scene, which were used as a stimulus for writing the setting for their stories. The quality of writing in this lesson was good and pupils also used their targets to determine their own success. They shared their writing with a partner, and enjoyed providing one another with feedback on the successes and improvements that could be made to make their writing even better. Support staff are mainly used well, but in less effective lessons, they are insufficiently involved in supporting learning. While planning largely identifies different work for different abilities, it does not focus precisely enough on what pupils are to learn. Teachers assess pupils' work, but some assessments are insecure and are not always used well enough to let pupils know how to improve their work.

The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. It is enriched by opportunities for pupils to develop skills in sport, music and French. A range of visits and visitors help to promote pupils' personal, social and health education. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures they enjoy full access to learning and social inclusion. Pastoral care is good and the school works sensitively to support pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and to support their families. In particular, vulnerable pupils are supported very well during the transition to secondary school. The breakfast club provides satisfactory provision for pupils before school in the limited space available during the current building programme.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's improvement and is fully supported by the senior leadership team. Senior leaders recognise that inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching and in the monitoring work of middle leaders. They have taken clear steps to hold teachers more accountable for the progress pupils make by implementing a regular assessment programme and meeting with class teachers regularly to discuss the attainment and progress of their pupils. However, this is at an early stage of development and the impact of this action is limited, particularly in writing. The governing body is supportive and challenging in equal measure and has a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It is influential in determining the strategic direction of the school, which is evidenced through the ambitious building project underway at present. The governing body meets statutory requirements, particularly in relation to safeguarding. The school promotes equality of opportunity by ensuring staff are well trained to meet the differing needs of all groups of pupils. Satisfactory steps have been taken to promote community cohesion through a range of activities and initiatives. It has

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yet to analyse its context and implement and evaluate plans to extend pupils' understanding of cultural diversity within the United Kingdom and the wider world. The views of parents and carers are regularly taken into account through questionnaires, newsletters and meetings, and action is taken to address issues and concerns. The school works well with external partners to promote the personal well-being, self-esteem and confidence of pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Significant improvements have been made to the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage since the last inspection. The new Early Years Foundation Stage leader provides a clear focus on ensuring children are well cared for and make good progress. She has implemented good systems for monitoring the progress children make and is sensitive to the individual needs of children. As a result, the whole staff team work effectively together, to ensure children are safe, cared for and develop confidence and independence. As one parent commented, 'The care and compassion of the staff are wonderful.' All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the support they receive. Considerable time and effort have been taken to ensure that during the period in temporary accommodation, the learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, provides opportunities to develop skills across all areas of learning. In particular, although still not ideal, the large outside area, now jointly shared, enables children in the Nursery and Reception classes to learn together and share activities, which provides for good transition for children from the Nursery to the Reception class. The staff team is highly reflective and seeks the views of parents and carers as well as children in determining the shape of learning themes to ensure the interests of children are taken into account. For example, children showed great enthusiasm and excitement when learning about the theme of 'Roar'. One boy in a

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Reception class was able to convey his excitement very clearly when telling the class about the information book he had made about dinosaurs at home! Children were also very excited to take part in creating a dinosaur song and dance routine outside using a range of percussion instruments. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is fully aware of the need to build on the strengths in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially when they move to their new accommodation.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

Views of parents and carers

A higher than average number of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. Their views of the school are overwhelmingly positive. Of those that did so, most said their child enjoys school, is kept safe and that teaching was good. A few expressed concerns about their child's preparation for the future and some felt that they are not informed about their child's progress or that the school does not take account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors found no evidence to substantiate these concerns during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Midsomer Norton Primary 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 139 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 346 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	50	67	48	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	72	52	65	47	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	43	31	85	61	11	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	37	80	58	5	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	55	40	82	59	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	42	86	55	3	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	30	89	64	5	4	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)	45	32	80	58	3	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	36	81	58	4	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	25	95	68	5	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	28	81	58	12	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	74	53	60	43	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	66	47	69	50	2	1	0	0

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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 March 2011



Dear Pupils



Inspection of Midsomer Norton Primary School, Radstock, BA3 2DR



Thank you for welcoming us to your school and special thanks to those of you who took the time to talk to us. We found you extremely interesting to talk with and very polite and helpful. You spoke enthusiastically about your school and how much you enjoy learning.



These are some of the things the school does really well.

- Children get off to a good start in Reception and make good progress.
- You have a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle.
- You feel safe in school and know there is always someone to talk to if you have a problem.
- You make a good contribution to your school and the local community.
- Your attendance is above average.



We have asked the school to work on three things to make your school even better.

- Improve the way the school's big plan is written, so each step of progress is measured and all school leaders take part in checking on the school's improvement.
- Improve the way teachers use the information about your progress to make sure activities are always interesting and at the right level for you.
- Make the curriculum more exciting and interesting for you and provide you with more opportunities for writing in other subjects.



It was a real privilege to visit Midsomer Norton Primary School. Continue to work hard and most of all enjoy your learning!



Thank you again for your help.



Yours sincerely



Ann Henderson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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