

Middleton Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124600
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	395546
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2012
Lead inspector	Robert Greatrex

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	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Painter
Headteacher	Kath Cook
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2009
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Age group	4–10
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Introduction

Inspection team

Robert Greatrex

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed teaching and learning in eight lessons or parts of lessons taught by three different teachers. For all of these observations, the inspector was accompanied by the headteacher. The inspector listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work. Other discussions were held with a member of the governing body, the headteacher and other staff. The inspector also observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation report, the school's own assessment data and a report from an independent consultant. The inspector analysed questionnaires from pupils and staff as well as those from parents and carers of 28 pupils.

Information about the school

Middleton Community Primary School is much smaller than the average primary school. Since April 2011, after a period of informal partnership, it has been federated with a local school of similar size. This approach means that older pupils from both schools are routinely taught together. The two schools share the same headteacher and governing body. Many staff also work in both schools. Middleton has two classes: children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught in one class, and pupils in Years 3 to 5 in the other. From September 2012, as part of the local authority's school reorganisation, this will extend to Year 6. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below average. The school holds the eco-schools award and healthy school status.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- Middleton is an outstanding school, as it was when last inspected. From the moment they join, pupils thrive. The innovative federation creates many benefits, such as more efficient management, improved teaching and more opportunities for pupils' learning, particularly through stimulating outdoor activities. Partnership with parents and carers is excellent, and all responding to the questionnaire would recommend the school.
- Children's attainment levels vary greatly when they join the school, but all groups of pupils achieve exceptionally well and attainment is well above the levels expected for their age in the oldest year groups.
- Teaching is outstanding. Activities are very carefully planned to be just at the right level, neither too easy nor too hard. They are interesting and arouse pupils' curiosity. Staff regularly challenge pupils to think for themselves and decide how best to meet the challenges given. Every moment in lessons is used productively with a real sense that learning is enjoyable. Pupils have a good understanding of the 'next steps' in their learning and how to achieve them except in writing, where the school does not yet have a sufficiently clear understanding of higher attainment levels to advise pupils precisely.
- Pupils' behaviour and moral development are excellent. Partly because pupils enjoy school so much, they attend very well. Pupils take pride in their community and work as a team, for example when singing very tunefully in three parts.
- One governor summed up the attitude of the whole school community: 'We don't do "coasting" at this school'. The headteacher has created an excellent culture of always looking outwards, working with many partners to seek ways to offer new opportunities to pupils and staff. As a result, the school is constantly evolving. Teaching, for example, is rigorously monitored, and staff performance is supported well by professional development.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the school is fully prepared for Year 6 pupils by increasing staff knowledge and understanding of the higher levels of attainment in writing, so that they can more precisely advise pupils working at these levels to ensure their continued outstanding progress.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Individually pupils make rapid and sustained progress, even though year groups in such a small school vary greatly in size and results can vary greatly from year to year. All the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire feel their children are doing well. Achievement is outstanding because all pupils are given activities at just the right level. For example, pupils in the younger class often work academically with an older age group, but spend social time with their peers. This accurately reflects different levels of development and ensures they consistently achieve very well. This high-quality provision, tailored to each pupil's needs, continues through the school.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with very varied levels of skills and knowledge. They settle very quickly, and make particularly good progress in their social and emotional development because of the very supportive and encouraging climate for learning. This benefits all groups of pupils and helps to ensure that, by Year 5, most pupils are working well above the level expected for their age, and the remainder within that level.

Pupils are very enthusiastic learners and this contributes to their excellent progress because they work diligently and always look to improve. Year 2 pupils, for example, eagerly link their spelling knowledge and understanding of letters and sounds to recognise when long and short vowel sounds are used. Their attainment in reading is above average. Pupils love reading because staff promote enjoyment of reading alongside technical understanding. Year 5 pupils understand how to generate atmosphere and tension through the construction of their writing. Occasions such as an author's visit further enhance the pleasure with which they write.

The school tracks each pupil's progress closely to ensure all stay on course to reach their targets. On the rare occasion that a pupil begins to fall behind, this is quickly identified. Teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively to tailor and target extra support programmes so that these pupils quickly catch up. An equally effective approach to personalised support for each individual ensures that different groups, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make progress in line with their classmates.

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Quality of teaching

All parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire feel their children are well taught. The key to the effectiveness of teaching and learning is the way pupils learn and practise life skills in problem-solving situations. Importantly, they learn how to approach new challenges. The philosophy of child-initiated activity begins when they first start school. As a result, pupils build experience of applying what they know and understand to everyday situations. In Year 5, for example, they discussed how they might go about finding the capacity of a hexagonal flower bed, so that the right amount of soil was purchased. Several methods were tried until one pupil noticed that the hexagon contained a rectangle, a shape they can calculate the area of already. Another listened and noticed that the shapes left over were all triangles. So the discussion went on until the problem was resolved. Teachers effectively build these skills from an early age. In a Year 2 phonics activity, pupils were paired, with one in the role of teacher. How they 'taught' was left for them to decide, but through 'What if...' questions the teacher built their understanding of how to support their partner if they struggled. Social development is also greatly enhanced.

Planning is always very thorough. It starts from the pupils' current levels, so that no-one is bored by tasks that are too easy or frustrated by tasks that are too hard. As the lesson develops, particularly in the younger class, subsequent tasks are very carefully chosen on the basis of pupils' responses to the current activity. As a consequence, pupils never waste a moment. Teaching outdoors particularly develops pupils' spiritual dimension. Teachers give high-quality advice and guidance, often through perceptive questioning, so learning is purposeful. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are taught very well because activities are changed to meet their particular needs. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are helped to behave appropriately because teachers and teaching assistants offer a consistent approach with clear expectations.

Marking generally gives pupils very clear confirmation of what has been achieved and useful guidance on how to improve. Subsequent work often demonstrates that pupils have understood and followed this advice. While older pupils working at levels above those expected for their age also receive this quality of feedback in mathematics, feedback about their writing is often too broad to guide them sufficiently.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary and they contribute much to the success of lessons through their eagerness to learn and willingness to work together. Their understanding of what it means to be safe and look after themselves and others is excellent because of the high quality of the personal, social and health education programme. For example, a Reception child returned to class from an outdoor investigation to change a glass magnifying glass for a plastic one because he

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understood the increased hazard this presented. Older pupils talk with clear understanding about how to spot the potential dangers of the internet, their learning enhanced because the school involved their parents and carers, too.

All pupils asked during the inspection said they felt safe at school. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that behaviour was consistently good in lessons and around the school, and that their school deals with all types of bullying very well.

The 'pupil voice' is strong in the school. For example, pupils were involved in a recent teaching assistant appointment. They agreed their approach as a team. After interviewing a current member of staff about her role and looking at a job description, they wrote questions to ask. Within the community, many pupils helped to design the new children's facility at a local nature reserve.

All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agreed that there is a high standard of behaviour at the school, and that their children are kept safe. There have been no exclusions in recent years, and attendance is well above average.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is the catalyst, offering pupils and staff endless support and encouragement but always demanding their best. Regular monitoring of teaching ensures that the skills and attributes of everyone are recognised and utilised fully. A recent innovation is random sampling by the headteacher, who thoroughly analyses a piece of work with a pupil. This yields much useful information about pupils' levels and the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils say they enjoy this, too. Where necessary, action is taken and further checks are made to ensure improvement. Training is effective because it is closely linked to need.

Governors contribute fully to the sustained level of excellence. Highly effective strategic planning, and innovation, have enabled the school to benefit from its close links with its federated school. The expansion from a first school to a primary school was carefully planned so that the eldest pupils are catered for very well in almost every aspect of school life. They ensure that safeguarding policies and practices meet statutory requirements. The school recognises the risks of pupils working on two sites, and has taken sensible measures to ensure their safety.

The outstanding curriculum is built on presenting imaginative and relevant activities, often extended and enriched by visits and visitors. Pupils' clear recollections of 'hands-on' learning demonstrate how much they gain. Whether cooking soup outdoors or building shelters, they clearly enjoy working as a team and these activities promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development fully. The curriculum helps prepare pupils for life in multicultural Britain, and plans in response to the recommendations made at the last inspection are having a good impact. Tolerance, understanding and respect for others are core values of the school, clearly seen in everyone's day-to-day actions. The school is very inclusive and has a well-

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deserved reputation for enabling every pupil to find their feet and thrive.

The school and parents and carers work as one. All responding to the questionnaire agreed that the school keeps them well informed about their children's progress, that the school responds well to their concerns, and that the school helps them support their children's learning.

The school is continually evolving and improving, largely because everyone is encouraged to look outward from the school and learn with and from others. The leadership capacity of senior staff is high because of their increased role within the federation. The small size of the school is not allowed to restrict any aspect of school life. For example, the school joins with others to offer a residential visit, and is planning to draw on outside expertise to develop the Year 6 physical education curriculum and use the high school facilities in its delivery.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Middleton Community Primary School, Saxmundham, IP17 3NW

Thank you very much for the very warm welcome you gave me when I came to visit your school recently. I enjoyed every minute of my time in your school. A special 'thank you' to those who came and talked with me about your work and all the wonderful and exciting things you do, and those who completed questionnaires. Your school is outstanding. Here are some of the excellent things I found out about your school.

- Your staff take great care of you. They work very closely with your parents and carers to see you get the best possible start in life.
- You make outstanding progress all the way through Middleton so that those of you in Year 5 are mostly working well above the levels expected by your age.
- Your behaviour is excellent. You love school and always try very hard.
- You often used the word 'fun' about your lessons, and staff clearly plan exciting and challenging activities for you.
- Your school is getting better and better. Everyone is always trying new ideas.
- The federation with Peasenhall and the links with other local schools give you lots more wonderful and fun experiences, such as the opportunity to use the woodland.

Even though you attend an outstanding school, your headteacher, staff and governors want your school to get better. I have asked them to make sure that when they mark writing, for those of you working at more advanced levels, they clearly explain how you can make it even better.

I am sure you will continue to do your best at Middleton and I wish you every success in the future. This is a very busy term with lots of interesting and fun things planned. Enjoy them!

Yours sincerely

Robert Greatrex
Lead inspector

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