

# Middlefield Primary Academy

Andrew Road, Eynesbury, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, PE19 2QE

**Inspection dates** 25–26 June 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b> <b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher has a clear vision of how pupils learn best. This translates into a rich, broad and practical range of learning opportunities, where pupils make rapid progress.
- In 2014, rates of progress improved significantly, particularly across Key Stage 2. Nearly all pupils in all year groups achieved exceptionally well. Attainment is currently well above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is outstanding. Work is planned to challenge all abilities, including the most able. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Children make good progress in the Reception class, but do not make as much progress as the older pupils.
- Pupils have sufficient time to apply their communication, literacy and numeracy skills in practical activities, which consolidates their understanding and increases their knowledge.
- Pupils achieve well in reading but as yet do not have a natural love of literature because they do not read widely enough.
- Teaching assistants provide excellent support to individual pupils ensuring that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs now make rapid progress.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average. This reflects pupils' very positive attitudes and the high expectations the school has of parents in ensuring their children attend regularly and get the best out of school.
- Behaviour in classrooms, outside and in public places is exemplary. The school's values, based on mutual respect, tolerance and kindness are constantly apparent in the harmonious way pupils relate to each other and adults.
- Specialist teaching in music, dance, art and physical education, plus visits, enhance the rich and varied learning experiences.
- The headteacher is an inspirational leader who successfully inspires other school leaders in the collective drive to achieve excellence, including high quality teaching. Team spirit is strong and staff value opportunities to develop their own skills.
- Governors are highly committed and contribute well to the school's shared values and aims. They use a wide range of professional skills to challenge the school about its performance.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons and made short visits to the shared curriculum areas for both key stages, inside and out-of-doors. Five observations were done jointly with the headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors talked to pupils in all classes, in a formal meeting with the school council and informally with Year 6 pupils in the dining room. They held discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and other staff. They held meetings with the members of the governing body, the Chair of the Academy trust, the chief operating officer, and the school's consultant.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in all classes, displays, photographic evidence relating to school events and the outcomes following the involvement of the artist in residence.
- Inspectors listened to 12 pupils reading and talked about their books.
- Inspectors to account of 54 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View and 30 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documents including progress data, governing body minutes, the school development plan, the self-evaluation report, the headteacher's reports to governors, safeguarding documents and records, attendance and behaviour data, policies, records of the monitoring of teaching and information relating to teachers' performance targets and training.

## Inspection team

June Woolhouse, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Pippa Jackson-Maitland

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Middlefield Primary Academy is smaller than the average-size primary school. The school converted to academy status in June 2012. When the predecessor school, Middlefield Primary was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good. The school is the lead school in the Diamond Learning Partnership Trust. The Trust has four other schools in the neighbourhood three of which it sponsors.
- This is a one-form entry school where children begin the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception class.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is well above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is well below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children in local authority care.
- The headteacher is the executive headteacher of the other four academy schools and provides strategic direction to their governors and staff.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

- Develop pupils love of literature and reading for pleasure by:
  - increasing pupil's access to a wider range of books
  - working closely with parents to help them support the frequency and range of pupils' reading experiences out of school, particularly for those pupils who find reading difficult.
- Secure outstanding progress for all groups of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - making sure children have opportunities to explore and investigate in order to develop their skills more quickly and deepen their understanding and knowledge
  - increasing the time that adults teach literacy and numeracy skills directly, particularly for the most able pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Most children start school in the Reception class with skills that are broadly typical for their age. All children make good progress and achieve a good level of development by the end of the year. Nevertheless, adults do not always plan activities which enable the children to investigate and to find out for themselves, in order to deepen their understanding. Likewise, the most able children do not always achieve what they are capable of, because there is not always enough direct teaching of the basic literacy and mathematic skills.
- Progress rates improve in Years 1 and 2 and as a result by the end of Year 2 standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This year, more pupils are achieving well in using the sounds that letters make to read. Attainment is higher in this area than last year. Pupils, including those not yet fluent readers, apply this knowledge accurately when they tackle unfamiliar words in their reading books.
- Some lower attaining pupils read less fluently because they have fewer opportunities to practise their reading on a daily basis when not at school.
- In 2014, attainment in all year groups is well above average in reading, writing and mathematics, representing rapid progress for all groups of learners. The proportion of pupils exceeding expected progress between Key Stage 1 and 2 is now well above average. The Year 6 results this year show that the school has secured sustained improvement after an unexpected dip last year in Key Stage 2.
- The most able pupils achieve well. The proportion of pupils who attain the highest levels in reading, writing and mathematics is testament to teachers' success. For example more pupils have achieved the higher level 6 in mathematics. In Key Stage 2 pupils begin to exhibit a studious and serious attitude to their learning especially in writing and mathematics. These important skills are applied very effectively to other subjects resulting in increased knowledge and understanding, for example in science, history, geography, art and design technology.
- Likewise, the progress disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has improved considerably, and they now achieve exceptionally well. Teaching assistants are skilled in supporting these pupils. They plan activities carefully, use specialist equipment to support pupils' specific needs and they are well trained.
- The school has been highly successful in reducing the gap between those pupils eligible for the pupil premium and all other pupils in the school. In 2013 these pupils were two terms behind other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's information shows that they are now achieving as well as their classmates.
- Pupils across the school also achieve equally as well in subjects other than English and mathematics as a consequence of the way different subjects are organised and specialist teachers are deployed. This outstanding achievement is particularly noteworthy in art, physical education, music, design and technology and dance.
- Pupils enjoy sport and are enthusiastic about physical education. The additional sports funding is used very effectively to employ specialist physical education teachers. Pupils reach good standards in games, gymnastics and dance. Pupils' skills are enhanced further in after-school clubs and competitive games against other schools. Pupils' experiences in physical education and sport also contribute to the development of their social skills, their health and well-being.

**The quality of teaching is outstanding**

- Teaching is consistently of a high quality. This, together with pupils' excellent attitudes to learning, secures outstanding progress across the school and in all subjects.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve regardless of their starting points. They plan work carefully to ensure that the work is pitched at just the right level of challenge, so that it is not too easy or too hard for all ability groups.
- When pupils work on their own or together, adults plan further activities based on their ideas and interests. Pupils are then encouraged to undertake investigative work which enables them to practise and extend key skills, including their enquiry skills. This increases the pace of pupils' learning and progress. Planning reflects the National Curriculum targets in all subjects and is displayed in all dedicated subject areas. As a result pupils know what they are aiming to achieve.
- Teachers mark and assess pupils' work very rigorously. The written feedback to pupils in their books clearly tells them in what ways they have been successful and then gives them the steps that must be taken either to correct errors or move on to the next stage. Pupils must write a reply in green ink to confirm they have understood these instructions. This dialogue makes a considerable contribution to the high standards and also helps pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and progress.
- Teachers give pupils time to review their work or to check another pupil's, working at a similar level. Their progress is compared with the national targets termly and this informs pupils about well they are learning and the amount of progress they have made. Pupils find out what they will be learning next by checking the records placed in their exercise books.
- Teachers provide opportunities for children to develop their communication and language skills through good quality questions and time for discussion in pairs or very small groups. Photographic evidence captures the high quality of pupils' work for example, in design and technology, art, drama, dance, horticulture and educational visits. The school website is used very effectively to share these achievements with parents and other children.
- Pupils learn in areas which are dedicated to working intensively on topics. In these areas, resources required for practical subjects remain in place at all times. No time is wasted preparing equipment, tidying up or trying to decide where to store unfinished work. Pupils manage their own resources and clearing up, confident that they will be able to complete intricate models, art work or research next time. They record their own strengths and areas for improvement and so adult knows what support, if any, they need. They are highly motivated by this system.
- Trained adults support learning outside which includes tending the vegetable and flower gardens, gathering crops to cook and then sell to customers, tending the hens or retreating to the school yurt to read and contemplate in solitude. The quality of the outdoor environment and the respect pupils afford it are noteworthy.
- Teachers work well together to secure accuracy of their assessments of pupil achievement. They assess work in books to ensure accuracy but also to identify areas that they need to improve in their own practice. The Academy Trust successfully deploys specialist teachers across its five schools to enhance practice for everyone.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Staff, pupils and the vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View, agree. Pupils behave with consideration and respect in classrooms, the shared and outside learning areas and recreation spaces. Playtimes are harmonious events.
- Pupils develop excellent attitudes to learning because what they study is designed and delivered to stimulate their minds and imaginations. Their natural curiosity is encouraged by the wide range of topics covered. Pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding of all subjects by applying their communication, literacy and numeracy skills to practical problems.
- Pupils develop a love of learning as they move through the school, which shows in the way they relate to each other, share their ideas, and work in teams. Their positive attitudes secure exemplary work, including high-quality writing, mathematics, science projects and artistic creations in workbooks and pupil-generated displays.
- Teachers use time to maximum effect because pupils concentrate on learning together, do not waste time and know the classroom routines. They relish being given responsibilities, discharge them in a mature way and understand the school's reward system. A Year 6 boy, for example, spontaneously initiated a dance practice in preparation for a public performance and gained the cooperation of his classmates during their lunch break.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils themselves agree, and their parents wholeheartedly support the school's approach. Pupils are taught about personal safety, how to be safe when using technology and what to do if they need further support. There is no bullying because 'the headteacher can't stand bullying and neither can we'.
- Attendance is now above average and a testament to pupils' desire to be at school involved in interesting learning. They enjoy their time in school. In addition, parents recognise that their involvement is crucial. They understand that assuring full attendance and punctuality are valued by the school. Regular homework maintains their interest and consolidates what they learn in school, although there is more work to be done to encourage pupils to read more widely.

**The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The school is extremely well led by the inspirational headteacher. She is very well supported by the entire staff and governors, who share and promote her values for the benefit of all pupils. Staff are very proud of their school encapsulated thus by a comment written on a staff questionnaire, 'I am very proud to work for Middlefield Primary Academy. I enjoy being part of a fantastic educational experience'.
- The headteacher has established a culture of collaboration and high expectations. Nothing but the best is acceptable and is fundamental to the way learning is planned, based on professional understanding of how primary pupils acquire knowledge and key literacy, numeracy and communication skills. There is a strong belief in everyone's right, staff and pupils, to rich and varied experiences that promote academic and personal excellence.
- The headteacher provides strategic direction for the other four schools in the Diamond Trust, which involves sharing best educational practice and deploying specialist teachers to support and mentor less experienced teachers. As a result teaching is at least good and a large proportion is outstanding.

- School leaders, led by the headteacher, have established a relentless focus on improving and sustaining excellent teaching that results in high standards and very good pupil progress. The quality of teaching is checked regularly, aspects that need improvement are identified and further training is provided.
- The role of middle leaders is developed across the Diamond Trust and teachers meet together to increase their understanding of how well pupils are learning. School improvement leaders support the staff responsible for English and mathematics and they examine work together from each school to check that their judgements are accurate when compared with national targets.
- All staff performance is evaluated annually and they are set targets which are based on those set for the headteacher and which are school targets for further improvement. All staff are therefore responsible for assuring high standards and excellent progress. The school's performance is proof of their commitment and dedication to the very best all-round results.
- The range of subjects planned and taught and the effective way they are organised and assessed result in outstanding academic outcomes and excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Further enrichment comes from cultural trips, residential sporting experiences and after-school clubs and competitions.
- Additional sports funds are deployed effectively to promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles. They pay for specialist physical education and dance teachers and a means of attending sports activities or competitions.
- An external consultant provides an accurate moderation of the school's own assessments and challenges senior leaders sufficiently to effect further improvement. This has included how well teachers plan and assess pupils' work, the accuracy of their assessments of pupils' performance and the progress they make in each year group.
- Excellent support from the Academy Trust has helped the school to become more successful because the headteacher has been supported well in her determination to eliminate all less-than good teaching. Directors recognise that this insistence on excellence has started to make a noticeable impact in the other academies.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors provide a good level of support for and challenge to the headteacher and senior leaders. They subscribe fully to her vision and the direction in which she and her staff are taking the school.
  - The chair of governors promotes an inclusive approach towards the school community recognising the importance of a successful school at its heart. Together with the chair of the Diamond Trust he supports the school's wider involvement in order to spread the excellent practice and school leadership to the other schools.
  - Governors are aware of pupils' standards and the progress they are making, including how well pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding are achieving and the impact of this funding. They ask searching questions of the headteacher and are increasing their understanding of relevant data through regular training and discussion. They have supported the headteacher fully in her mission to eradicate mediocre teaching, and have a good overview of the quality of teaching, including strengths and areas for improvement. They understand the link between increases in pay and teachers' achievement of annual targets.
  - They are stringent in their oversight of finances assuring the effective use of funds such as the pupil premium and additional sports funding. They ensure that safeguarding procedures fully meet statutory requirements.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138595
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	444177

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	214
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mark Young
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susannah Connell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01480 375270
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