

Middleham Church of England Aided School

Park Lane, Middleham, North Yorkshire, DL8 4QX

Inspection dates 2–3 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement by the end of Year 6 is not as good as it should be given pupils' starting points.
- A lack of continuity in staffing has had an adverse impact on pupils' learning and hindered aspects of the school's development.
- The approach to teaching mathematical calculations is inconsistent and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to solving problems.
- Standards in writing are not consistently high. Pupils do not write enough and handwriting is untidy in upper Key Stage 2.
- Outdoor learning activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not consistently provide children with the necessary stimulus to learn effectively.
- The systems for helping pupils who are falling behind are not effective because teaching assistants are not trained well enough.
- Pupils are not consistently given enough time to reflect on their achievement so that they can seek ways of doing better. Pupils say that they do not always understand the meaning of their targets for improvement, especially in mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- Strong leadership by the headteacher is quickly improving teaching and progress is accelerating rapidly.
- Pupils enjoy school. Their behaviour is good; they are kind and considerate and make lasting friendships. Pupils are kept safe.
- Some high quality art and exemplary use of computer technology enriches pupils' learning.
- At times, very imaginative and innovative teaching inspires pupils and excites them enough to learn quickly.
- Parents value the school and most have stood by it throughout the changes.
- The school is well placed to improve because of its good governance, effective support by the local authority and the caring and determined leadership of the headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, six of which were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Many aspects of the school's work were evaluated, including the support for pupils who need extra help. Inspectors listened to pupils read and had discussions with pupils to establish their views of the school. Inspectors examined pupils' work in their exercise books and that displayed in classrooms and around the school.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents. These included: records of incidents relating to bullying; the tracking of individual pupil's progress; the school's plan for improvement; the impact of the primary school sports funding; safeguarding and child protection arrangements and pupils' attendance records.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and teaching staff to evaluate their impact on the pupils' achievement.
- A discussion was held with six governors and a local authority representative.
- The inspector evaluated the overall views of parents. A meeting was held with 10 parents on the second morning of the inspection. Eleven responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were evaluated. A recent parental survey conducted by the school was also evaluated to gauge parents' views.
- The views of staff were gathered by analysing the six questionnaires returned by staff and discussions with them during the inspection.

Inspection team

David Byrne, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Numbers have declined since the previous inspection.
- All pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is just above average.
- A below average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant staff changes. Between September 2011 and August 2012, the school was led by an executive headteacher from a local primary school. The current headteacher took up post in September 2012.
- A major restructuring of staffing since 2012 has reduced the hours of some staff. There has been an amalgamation of the Key Stage 2 classes each afternoon.
- During the inspection, two supply teachers were in post. This was due to the unavoidable absence of two substantive teachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - establishing a stable staff team so that pupils have continuity in their learning
 - training teaching assistants more effectively so that effective support is provided for pupils at risk of falling behind
 - extending the good systems that exist for some pupils to evaluate their achievement and understand the meaning of their targets for improvement to all pupils.
- Raise achievement to be good or better by:
 - improving the quality of outdoor activities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - improving pupils' writing skills and, at upper Key Stage 2, the quality of their handwriting
 - making sure that the school's policy for teaching calculations is applied consistently and giving pupils more opportunities to apply their basic mathematical knowledge practically to solving problems.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because, in recent years, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has not been as high as it should be. In addition, while most pupils make the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics, not enough make better progress than this.
- Strong leadership by the headteacher is bringing about rapid improvement to pupils' achievement. Data held by the school, supported by inspection evidence from observations of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils and staff, indicate that standards are rising rapidly and are now average.
- The progress of the most able pupils is accelerating. A good proportion of pupils in Year 6 are, for example, now aiming to achieve the high standard for their age of Level 6 in mathematics.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils' progress is accelerating and standards are rising because the quality of teaching is improving. Pupils' reading skills are improving securely because the school has worked successfully to improve the teaching of phonics (sounds that letters make).
- Children join the Reception class with skills that are typical for their age, with strengths in their personal, social and emotional development. They make good progress because the activities interest them and develop their communication skills, including early reading, writing and mathematics. When they move onto Year 1, they are well prepared for learning.
- Standards in reading are a relative strength across the school. Standards in writing are getting better but are not yet high enough. In the past, pupils have not been given enough opportunities to develop their writing skills and this has depressed attainment. However, this is beginning to be rectified. An increased focus on improving grammar, punctuation and spelling is improving the structure of the pupils' writing but the quality of their handwriting varies greatly, most noticeably in upper Key Stage 2. Increased rigour and raised expectations for presentation are starting to improve the quality of pupils' work.
- In mathematics, variations in how pupils do calculations slows their progress, although a new school policy is now bringing about greater consistency in approaches to teaching. Pupils report that they love practical, problem-solving work but also say that they do not do this often enough.
- The school is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all pupils, although disruptions to the continuity of teaching have hindered its ability to achieve this aim fully. In 2013, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieved well, especially in mathematics and writing.
- In 2013, there no pupils in Year 2 or Year 6 known to be eligible for free school meals and there are insufficient numbers in the school to draw secure conclusions about their relative attainment in comparison to other pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, in recent years, it has not enabled enough pupils to make more than the progress expected of them. Both pupils and parents talk of the adverse impact that disruptions to teaching have had on learning. Older pupils in Year 6 say that they have had too many temporary staff, and that the activities that they have been given have not been challenging enough.
- The headteacher is relentless in her focus on improving the quality of teaching. Big improvements to assessment are making a significant impact on the quality of learning across the school. In Key Stages 1 and 2, checks on the progress of each pupil are now routinely completed each term. This makes it easy for staff to identify any pupil who is not learning as well as he or she could and to enable extra support to be given. This is having a positive impact on increasing the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress.
- Pupils benefit from a good range of activities to develop their reading and, increasingly, tasks in

mathematics are planned to capture pupils' interest. For example, one class had learnt about fractions by exploring patterns in 'loom bands', the current playground craze.

- Learning in the Reception Class and Key Stage 1 is good. It has improved after a time when it was hindered by unavoidable staff absence. Children thrive on interesting activities connected to a class theme. For example, the children's story Jack in the Beanstalk has enabled children to learn to count and measure seed growth, and write for purpose.
- In Key Stage 2, the quality of learning varies. It is of a high quality in lower Key Stage 2 but in upper Key Stage 2, the negative impact of staff changes on pupils' learning over time is obvious. Across the school, pupils benefit from activities that connect with their lives. Because of the relevance of what they are doing, they are increasingly motivated to read and write and learn mathematics. Well-planned activities seamlessly link different subjects and makes learning fun.
- The 'Tour de France', which passed through the town, triggered activities that inspire learning. Pupils enjoyed writing about bicycles, designing leaflets describing the route and creating high quality artwork, some of which was displayed in the local community venue, 'The Key Centre'. A review of how pupils learn phonics is giving more confidence to pupils when they come across new words in books. Older pupils are very positive about reading which they do regularly.
- Pupils in most classes use information and communication technology well to develop their skills in grammar and punctuation.
- Pupils with disabilities and special educational needs have effective support because their needs are clearly identified. Teaching assistants play their part in the support provided, but their role in intervening to teach other pupils who are at risk of falling behind is not always effective.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly but not enough time is given for pupils to reflect on their achievement so that they can seek ways of improving. Pupils report that they understand what they need to do to improve their writing, but are less clear about the meaning of their targets in mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in class and around the school. They are caring and polite. Pupils like being part of a smaller school and they say, 'We make good friends that we stay with throughout our time in school'
- Behaviour is not outstanding because there are occasions when pupils are mildly boisterous, mostly outside at play. Football dominates play and leads to pupils arguing at times. There are systems in place to help pupils to deal with disagreements, and new systems are being developed to help pupils manage their own behaviour better.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, especially when they are actively involved in practical activities. They enjoy taking responsibility. The school council contributes to decisions that affect them, for example, contributing to improving play facilities outdoors and the range and quality of the school meals.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe. They know about different types of bullying, such as cyber-bullying, but say that bullying of any kind is practically non-existent in their school. Efforts by staff to widen pupils' experiences and understanding of people from different backgrounds are helping to make sure that racism or prejudice of any sort is not tolerated.
- Attendance is above average and reflects the pupils' enjoyment of school and the value parents place on education. This is a key factor in the increasing success of pupils.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has managed well the necessary efficiency savings resulting from the fall in number of pupils on roll. Wise decisions are enabling the school to overcome the impact of the reductions in staff and the amalgamation of classes. Achievement is rising and the quality of learning is improving.

- Strategies to improve the consistency in the quality of teaching are now in place and are paying dividends. More efficient systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and the termly reviews of each pupil's progress have increased the precision with which staff can meet pupils' needs. Lesson planning now follows the same format in all classes and pupils are much more involved in evaluating how well they achieve and how they can improve. These strategies are bringing about good improvement to the pupils' performance and raising the quality of teaching.
- Teachers who have responsibilities carry them out increasingly well. They are clear about what is expected of them and take their responsibilities seriously.
- Initial parental concerns about the changes are diminishing as the school settles and pupils' learning improves. All staff spoken with have adjusted well to the changes and are very willing to try new approaches to raising pupils' achievement. They trust and respect the headteacher and understand the rationale behind the changes that were required to secure the school's future.
- The headteacher has established rigorous checks on the quality of teaching. These give staff clear guidance not only about what they do well, but also about how they can improve. This positive culture of self-improvement pervades the school and is tied in with the management of teachers' performance. Systems are established whereby staff are held accountable for how well classes perform, allied to good and supportive training. Pay awards are closely, but not exclusively, linked to the rate of pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is interesting and relevant to pupils. They undertake interesting projects, often linked to the pupils' experiences, for example, learning linked to the Tour de France. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to be involved in the local community. A study of Shakespeare's Macbeth led to some pupils performing their version of the play in Middleham Castle.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Internet communications with schools in Australia, New Zealand and the USA are very productive and widen pupils understanding of the wider world. Links include blogging and skyped conversations with pupils from the other schools.
- The school spends its primary school sport funding wisely. It has employed a sports coach who works with each class and has widened the range of sports on offer. Staff have benefited from his skills by giving them a greater confidence in teaching sport. The increased participation among pupils, results in gains to their health and well-being.
- Parents' support for the school has for most, remained firm. Increasingly, parents are becoming more involved with the school, for example, as members of the recently formed Friends of Middleham School. There are effective ways of communicating with home, for example, through the well-developed website which showcases exemplary work of pupils.
- High-quality support from the local authority has been a very significant factor in enabling the school to minimise the negative impact of the changes in the school and to put in place the necessary strategies that are bringing about secure improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has become much effective in holding the school more rigorously to account. Members have attended training and taken advice from the local authority. Governors understand and interpret assessment data to secure a clear picture of how well the school performs in comparison with other schools and of the trends in standards over time.
 - In addition, governors are increasingly visiting the school to join in lessons or to hear pupils read. They are skilled in making judgements about the school that are independent of the view presented by the headteacher; this ensures that they can effectively hold the school to account.
 - Finances are constantly at the forefront of the governors' minds. Falling numbers of pupils has demanded great care to make sure that every penny is wisely spent. The performance of staff is checked rigorously to make sure that it impacts positively on improving achievement. No one progresses along the salary scale without demonstrating their successful contribution to the pupils' education.
 - The pupil premium funding is a relatively small amount of money. It is spent wisely to enable

pupils eligible for the funding to access all parts of the curriculum and to receive support in order to catch up academically if they need to.

- Governors are rigorous in keeping an eye on health and safety by surveying the school regularly to identify any risks and seeking the judgments of external safety consultants. All procedures for securing pupils safeguarding meet 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

Unique reference number	121614
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	443888

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Adamson
Headteacher	Jo Dobbs
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2011
Telephone number	01969 623592
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	admin@middleham.n-yorks.sch.uk

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