

Inspection of Middleton-in-Teesdale Nursery and Primary School

Town End, Middleton-in-Teesdale, Barnard Castle, County Durham DL12 0TG

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Over time, leaders, including governors, have not taken the urgent action needed so that pupils experience a good quality of education. Although leaders and staff want the best for the pupils, they have not ensured that the curriculum is well planned. Pupils experience a disjointed series of lessons that do not help them to achieve well in a range of subjects.

Pupils are friendly, well mannered and welcoming to visitors. School is typically calm. However, some pupils do not behave sensibly. They need support to listen to one another. Pupils learn about and understand what bullying is. They have concerns that even when they report bullying to adults, it does not always stop. Despite this, most say that they feel safe in school.

Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their shared class books. They enjoy taking online quizzes to check their reading comprehension skills. This motivates them to read 'more and more and more!'.

Some pupils have benefited from experiences beyond the classroom, such as working with Bowes Museum to create an art exhibition. However, there is not a well-thought-out plan for how these experiences contribute to the curriculum. Some pupils are not getting a wide range of opportunities. The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is weak, which means that pupils are not prepared for life in modern Britain.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

There has been significant instability in leadership since the previous inspection. Current senior leaders have been in place since November 2021 on a part-time, temporary basis through an arrangement with a local multi-academy trust. They have begun to act on some important priorities, such as reading and safeguarding. However, major weaknesses remain that have not been tackled quickly enough by leaders and governors since the previous inspection. Governors have not secured a permanent leadership arrangement. The school currently does not have the capacity to improve without external support.

The school's curriculum in most subjects is not well planned and does not meet pupils' needs. This includes in early years. Leaders have not clearly identified the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn, or the best order in which to teach it. Staff have not had the subject-specific training that they need to plan and teach the curriculum effectively. Pupils do not build knowledge well enough over time. They are not well prepared for their next stage in education. New leaders have correctly recognised some of the weaknesses in the school's curriculum. They have begun to take action, but it is too early to see the impact of their work. Currently, there is insufficient subject leadership capacity within the school to urgently make the necessary improvements.

Leaders have recently introduced a new programme for the teaching of early reading and phonics. They have trained staff in the new scheme and books are generally matched to the phonics that pupils already know. Pupils are beginning to read with growing confidence and fluency. However, leaders have not yet assessed the impact of this programme.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has been weak over time. Until very recently, pupils' needs have not been clearly identified or well supported. New leaders have plans to make improvements, but these are in the early stages of implementation. While pupils now have individual plans that detail the support they need, some targets are not well focused or sufficiently ambitious. Teachers have not had the necessary support to enable them to meet the needs of pupils with SEND in lessons. Pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should.

While the behaviour of the majority of pupils is typically positive, some pupils do not display consistently strong attitudes to their learning. Some older pupils lose focus when they are not directly supervised. Pupils usually cooperate and play well together at social times. However, some pupils do not make the right choices and can be unkind to one another. Teachers do not tolerate name-calling or physical aggression and take steps to stop it happening. However, despite this, pupils have concerns that these behaviours continue.

Some pupils benefit from some wider experiences, such as the Jubilee celebrations. Pupils know how to stay physically fit. However, their knowledge of how to keep themselves emotionally and mentally healthy is less secure. There is no planned curriculum for PSHE. Pupils do not know enough about fundamental British values. They lack an understanding of religions and other cultures. There is no relationships and sex (RSE) or health education curriculum in place. Leaders have not consulted with parents and carers about a curriculum for RSE. This is a statutory requirement. Pupils are not clear about important concepts, such as healthy relationships. Pupils are not being prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Leaders are considerate of staff well-being and workload. Staff feel well supported. Governors have an overly positive view of the school. Over time, they have not taken suitable steps to assure themselves of the accuracy of information given to them by senior leaders. Governors do not have a sound understanding of their statutory duties, including in relation to the Equality Act 2010. Although the governing body has tried to secure stable, permanent leadership, it has failed to do so. This turbulence in leadership has contributed to the slow pace of improvements in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Current senior leaders have rightly prioritised a review of safeguarding systems in the school. Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are made on staff prior to

employment at the school. Staff receive regular training on safeguarding. They have a clear understanding of how to keep pupils safe. Staff know how to report concerns about a pupil's safety or well-being. This helps leaders to identify and support pupils who may be at risk. Action is taken quickly and leaders proactively seek support from external professionals when it is needed.

Pupils feel safe in school and know whom to go to if they need help. They learn how to stay safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is limited leadership capacity in the school, including at subject leadership level, and there has been instability in senior leadership since the previous inspection. Previously identified weaknesses have not been tackled quickly enough and the school has declined. Leaders and those responsible for governance need to swiftly establish strong, stable and permanent senior leadership to enable fundamental weaknesses to be tackled rapidly. Leaders should rapidly strengthen the skills and expertise of subject leaders, so that they can fulfil their role in ensuring a good quality of education for all pupils.
- Leaders have not established a well-planned curriculum in many subjects. The important knowledge that pupils should learn has not been identified, including in early years. In early years, the curriculum does not take account of the revised early years framework, which became statutory in September 2021. Pupils do not achieve well and are not well prepared for their next steps in education. Leaders should urgently define the important subject knowledge that should be taught in each subject and area of learning, from early years to Year 6. Staff should be provided with the training and support they need to deliver the curriculum effectively, so that pupils achieve well.
- Provision for pupils with SEND has been weak over time. In early years, some children's needs have not been identified quickly enough. Some pupils are not receiving the support they need to achieve well. Leaders should ensure that systems are in place and that training is provided to staff so that pupils' needs are promptly identified. Leaders should also make sure that precise and ambitious targets are set for pupils with SEND, and that the right support is in place to help pupils to meet these.
- Governors accept information too readily from leaders about the impact of their actions. Governors have not challenged leaders well enough. As a result, the school has declined over time. Governors should take steps to assure themselves about the impact of leaders' actions and ensure that they ask the right questions of leaders so that urgent improvements happen without further delay.
- There is not a coherently planned curriculum for RSE or health education, or for PSHE. This means that pupils have gaps in the important knowledge that they need. Leaders should establish a carefully planned curriculum for pupils' personal

development that includes fulfilling the statutory obligations for RSE and health education, so that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

- While staff do take action where bullying occurs, some pupils have concerns that bullying is not resolved and that issues resurface. Leaders should strengthen the planned curriculum to support the prevention of bullying. Leaders should take further steps to ensure that all pupils feel safe from bullying and have confidence that it will be swiftly and effectively tackled by adults.

Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next inspection.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	114109
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10210886
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Richard Welsby
Headteacher (interim)	Alison Lazenby
Website	www.middleton-in-teesdale.durham.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The local authority has not given approval for governors to appoint a substantive headteacher due to financial constraints. Since February 2019, there have been three different models of brokered leadership support in the school.
- A deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2021.
- In November 2021, two senior leaders, an executive headteacher and a headteacher were brokered on a service level agreement from a multi-academy trust on a temporary, part-time basis. Each leader is in school for one day a week.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met the part-time, interim executive headteacher and the part-time, interim headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other leaders, a group of governors and the school improvement partner from the local authority.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in reading, mathematics, art and design, and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, considered curriculum planning from early years through to Year 6, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited early years and spoke with leaders and staff about how the curriculum is implemented.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their learning and heard pupils read with familiar adults.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils and staff at breaktime, during lunch and in separate focus groups.
- Documentation was reviewed, including school improvement plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, documents linked to pupils with SEND, records of behaviour and exclusions, and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors considered the Ofsted survey responses from 31 pupils, 10 staff and 21 parents. Inspectors also spoke to parents before the start of the school day.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead to review how staff log safeguarding concerns. Inspectors met with a range of staff about the training that they have had for safeguarding. Members of the team also spoke with pupils about safeguarding.

Inspection team

Asa Britton, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alison Stephenson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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