



Inspection report

Midfield Primary School

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 101634
LEA London Borough of Bromley

Inspection number 275349
Inspection dates 6 and 7 June 2005
Reporting inspector Mr S Harford HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Type of School	Primary	School address	Grovelands Road
School category	Community		St Paul's Cray
Age range of pupils	3 to 11 years		Orpington
			Kent
			BR5 3EG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8300 6161
Number on roll	313	Fax number	020 8300 0686
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs P Baines
Date of previous inspection	December 2003	Headteacher	Mr J Howard

Age group	Published	Reference no.
3 to 11 years	7 July 2005	275349

Introduction

When Midfield Primary School was inspected in December 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in June 2005.

Description of the school

Midfield Primary School serves the suburban area of St Paul's Cray in Bromley. It is of average size, with 273 full-time pupils and 40 pupils who attend part-time in the nursery. The school has a Special Opportunities Unit (SOU) which caters for 20 pupils who have complex learning difficulties, including autism; these pupils are drawn from across the borough. Approximately one in ten of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds; few of these pupils are at the early stages of learning English. Nearly 47 per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above average. About a third of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and 23 of the pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need; this is well above average for a school of this size. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average.

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Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. Through the purposeful and determined leadership and management of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and the hard work of staff, the school has successfully overcome its main barriers to improvement. Standards are well below national averages and below those of similar schools, but they are rising as the teaching force has stabilised and its quality improved to a satisfactory level overall. The pupils generally behave well and have sound attitudes towards their learning, though their rate of attendance is well below the national average. The school's provision for the pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory and ensures that they make similar progress to the other pupils.

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of December 2003 required the school to address key issues concerned with standards and achievement, the quality of teaching, the accuracy and use of assessment, and subject leadership. The school has made good progress in relation to the leadership of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and the accuracy and use of assessment; satisfactory progress has been made elsewhere. However, standards need to rise further.

Capacity to improve

While the pupils' achievement is rising, there is a legacy of low attainment to overcome before the school's performance matches that of similar schools. However, the senior leaders demonstrate the capacity to lead the improvements necessary. The school's systems for self-evaluation, especially those that track the pupils' progress and monitor the quality of teaching and learning, are thorough and effective. The resulting information has been used well to identify where additional support is needed and to set the agenda for the next stage of the school's development. The school has managed well turbulence in the staffing, and with the exception of one teaching post it is fully staffed for September. The local education authority (LEA) has plans to continue its very good support for the school, most notably through improvements to the accommodation in the SOU.

What the school should do to improve further

The key priorities for the school's development plan are to:

- raise standards and continue to raise achievement;
- continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning;

- improve the accommodation and learning environment in the SOU;
- improve the pupils' rate of attendance.

Achievement and standards

Starting from a low level of basic skills, especially in language and communication, the pupils in the Foundation Stage make sound progress towards the standards expected by the end of the reception year. In the nursery, the pupils' early language skills have developed reasonably through purposeful play activities, and in reception the pupils have begun to form letters correctly and recognise the related phonemes when reading words.

Standards in reading and writing in the national tests at Key Stage 1 have risen steadily since 2002, but those in mathematics have declined; overall, they remain too low. In 2004, the pupils' results for reading, writing and mathematics were well below average. However, the pupils' achievement was broadly in line with schools having a similar intake, and standards in writing were above the average for schools in similar contexts.

For the last three years, overall standards in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 have remained well below the national average and the average for schools in similar contexts. However, in 2004 the proportions of the pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science were above average compared with schools having pupils with similar prior attainment.

Standards vary widely in lessons and are below average overall. However, considering the pupils' starting points, their progress is satisfactory across the school. Over recent terms, the school has used assessment information effectively to group pupils with similar prior attainment; as a result, a significant number of the pupils in the higher-attaining groups in Years 5 and 6 reach standards beyond those expected for 11-year-olds.

Personal development

The pupils' behaviour in lessons is generally good. Most of the pupils respond well to the teachers' high expectations and the wide range of strategies used to promote good behaviour. Many of the pupils willingly take responsibility for distributing equipment in lessons and are mostly supportive and considerate to their classmates. The pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall; generally, they concentrate well and approach their work enthusiastically. However, some pupils have not developed good work habits and need frequent reminders to ensure tasks are started promptly and completed to time. Around the school, most of the pupils show appropriate care for one another. There has been no need to use exclusion as a sanction this year, reflecting the improvement in the pupils' behaviour.

At 90.3 per cent, the pupils' rate of attendance so far this year is well below the national average. Unauthorised absences have increased since last year and, at 3.4 per cent, they are well above the national figure, but this reflects the school's firmer policy on granting

permission for term-time holidays. The school monitors absences carefully, follows them up rigorously and regularly reminds parents about the importance of consistent attendance. However, it recognises that there is much to do to improve the impact of these measures. Most of the pupils arrive promptly for the start of the school day.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and the school is providing good opportunities to improve this further. Assemblies contribute successfully to the pupils' development by creating a caring and inclusive ethos. Broadly Christian themes are addressed through appropriate stories and prayers, to which the pupils respond with interest and respect. The school provides a reasonable number of opportunities for the pupils to take responsibility. The school captains, for example, organise games well at break and lunchtimes and enjoy helping to look after the younger pupils. The pupils are given opportunities to participate in a wide range of extracurricular activities, for example netball club, choir and the junior citizen programme. All of the pupils have the opportunity to go on at least one educational visit in the year, though trips to places of worship are limited to the local church. Expertise is drawn appropriately from the local community to address issues such as rail safety, drugs awareness and charity work.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall; it was at least satisfactory in all but one of the lessons and good in nearly three fifths. Most lessons were planned with clear learning objectives and included a reasonable range of activities that were accurately matched to the pupils' varying needs, although this was done most successfully in English and mathematics. The teaching assistants were generally employed well when working with individual pupils and small groups, but a few used questioning ineffectively. Equipment was used successfully to promote the pupils' learning in a number of lessons, but the effective use of the school's interactive whiteboards is at an early stage of development. The good teaching was characterised by strong relationships between the pupils and adults, high expectations for the pupils' achievements, and useful methods of evaluating the pupils' learning at strategic points in the lessons.

The school has developed rigorous systems for tracking and assessing the pupils' performance throughout the year. The resulting information is analysed systematically to identify gaps in the pupils' knowledge and understanding, set targets for learning and provide extra support. The evaluation of their own work by the pupils is developing in some subjects, though there is still much to do in this area. The teachers are increasingly confident about assessing the pupils' work against national criteria. The quality of marking has improved, but is not yet consistently good at highlighting how the pupils' work could be made better.

A broad and balanced curriculum, based on national requirements and recommendations, is provided for the pupils. The school has responded well to the national strategies and, ably led by the deputy headteacher, is focusing on how best to improve the pupils' reading.

The provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. A good range of practical activities is used to promote the pupils' early communication and numeracy skills. Despite some work

done to improve the outdoor area in reception, the area remains underdeveloped and underused. The provision for those pupils who have special educational needs is sound overall; they make similar progress to their peers. They are supported well in lessons generally, and teaching assistants have built up good relationships with them. The provision in the SOU is satisfactory overall; in Key Stage 2 it is at least good, with some very good elements. All the pupils in the SOU benefit from the music therapy provided. Some of the pupils are integrated effectively into other lessons; they respond very well to these opportunities. Because of the lack of comfortable furnishings and changing facilities in the SOU, its accommodation provides an unsatisfactory learning environment for the pupils. However, the LEA has plans to improve the fabric and services for the unit.

The pupils are well cared for and supported by the school. Any bullying incidents are dealt with sensitively and the pupils know who to turn to for help. Lunchtimes provide good opportunities for socialising and eating healthily; many of the teachers eat with the pupils on a regular basis.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall, with some good elements. Since taking up his post shortly after the inspection in December 2003, the headteacher has given the school a strong focus on tackling its weaknesses. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide good leadership and management, and make an effective partnership. They use their own expertise and the support of outside agencies well to improve the quality of provision, and have managed some difficult staffing issues successfully. The subject co-ordinators provide satisfactory leadership and management overall, although the co-ordination of English across the school is stronger than that of other areas. The governors have suitably high expectations of the school's managers; for example, the subject co-ordinators make regular reports to them. The governors have a clear view of the key challenges still facing the school.

The school's capacity to evaluate its performance has increased significantly since the last inspection through appropriate monitoring procedures, including a comprehensive programme of lesson observations by senior and middle managers to judge the quality of teaching and learning. The school has an accurate view of the quality of provision and has identified its priorities for the future accordingly. The headteacher is a sound financial manager and the school's expenditure is now within its income. The school's communications with parents are satisfactory; the informative, well produced newsletter is a recent addition that has been welcomed by a number of the parents.

The LEA has provided the school with very good support. Its advisers have worked closely with the senior leaders and subject co-ordinators on evaluating the quality of teaching and learning; suitable training has been given to the school's staff. Financial support has also been good. The plans to continue to assist the school in its next stage of development are detailed and well considered.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

Midfield Primary School was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in December 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in July and November 2004 and in February 2005 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of December 2003.

In June 2005, one HMI and one Additional Inspector returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

During the visit, 14 parts of lessons and an assembly were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, other senior and middle managers, representatives from the LEA and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and areas for improvement in the inspection report of December 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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