



Inspection report

# Maidwell Primary School

**Better  
education  
and care**

Unique Reference Number 121845  
LEA Northamptonshire

Inspection number 276111  
Inspection dates 15 and 16 June 2005  
Reporting inspector Ms L McGill 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	Draughton Road
School category	Community		Maidwell
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		Northampton
			NN6 9JF
Gender of pupils	boys and girls	Telephone number	01604 686240
Number on roll	34	Fax number	01604 686394
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr P Oliver
Date of previous inspection	March 2004	Headteacher	Mrs R James

---

Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	15 July 2005	276111

## Introduction

When Maidwell Primary School was inspected in March 2004, 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 two occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in June 2005.

### Description of the school

Maidwell Primary School is a very small school situated in the village of Maidwell, ten miles north of Northampton. There are 34 pupils on roll; this is significantly fewer than when the school was last inspected, but numbers have ceased to fall. The pupils come from the village, other villages in the area and further afield. The pupils, who are all of white British heritage, are taught in two classes, one for the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and the other for Key Stage 2. The headteacher shares the teaching of the younger pupils with a part-time teacher. Two of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has identified five pupils as having special educational needs, but none has a formal Statement of Special Educational Need. On entry to the school, the pupils' attainment is broadly what is expected for their age.

---

© Crown copyright 2005

*This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.*

*Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.*

## 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.

The hard work and determination of the headteacher and staff have ensured that Maidwell Primary School is well on the way to becoming a good school. The school had been allowed to drift for some time and, despite its small size, considerable work was required to establish the policies, procedures and practices which would enable the pupils to achieve their best. Standards are rising: most of the pupils work at the levels expected for their age and some achieve more highly. Progress in lessons and over time is good overall, although improvement in the pupils' writing has been slower. Improvements in teaching and the organisation of the curriculum have helped some of the older pupils to make up ground they had lost in previous years, although some gaps in their knowledge remain. The pupils have consistently positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour is good. There is a warm, supportive atmosphere and the pupils and staff know and care for each other very well.

### Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of March 2004 required the school to address areas for improvement concerned with the standards attained by the pupils and their achievement, leadership and management, teaching, learning and assessment. The school has made good progress in strengthening leadership and management and in establishing effective systems for assessment. The pupils' achievements are much closer to what they should be. Reasonable progress has been made in improving teaching; progress was slower here because of turnover of teaching staff. The school has an experienced, stable staff for the coming academic year.

### Capacity to improve

The school has a good capacity for further improvement. Having been successful in tackling the most pressing areas for improvement, the school is developing its vision for the future and a sensible plan for continuing improvement is in draft form. The staff discuss and evaluate initiatives thoughtfully and identify what the next steps should be; there is no complacency about what has been achieved so far. Subject leadership is improving and there is a growing knowledge of strengths and aspects which require further work. Better arrangements for assessing the pupils' attainment and tracking their progress enable swift steps to be taken to identify what needs to be done to make sure that all pupils achieve what they are capable of; standards are set to continue to rise. The local education authority (LEA) has given the school a high degree of support, which has been instrumental in helping the school achieve what it has, and has also kept a close eye on progress. The LEA, staff and governors share a determination that the school should continue to move forward.

## What the school should do to improve further

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

- continue to work to improve the pupils' progress and raise standards, particularly in writing;
- work to ensure that as much of the teaching as possible is of a good standard;
- further strengthen subject leadership.

## Achievement and standards

The provision for the pupils in the Foundation Stage has improved considerably. The pupils are given a good start and they are on track to reach, and in some instances exceed, the Early Learning Goals in each of the required areas of learning by the end of the reception year. The pupils in Key Stage 1 are doing well; many of the pupils in Year 1 are working at levels higher than expected for their age and they have made significant gains, especially in reading. The school is confident that the three pupils in Year 2 will achieve the expected Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics in this year's national tests. Most of the pupils in Key Stage 2 are working at the levels expected for their age although there are wide variations in attainment in some year groups. The small cohort sizes mean that comparisons with national averages can be unreliable as evidence of progress; however, the school's assessment information indicates that all of the pupils in the Year 6 group should achieve or exceed the expected Level 4 in this year's national tests. Gaps in the pupils' previous learning still remain, a legacy of weaknesses in the past, but the school's systematic approach to planning and teaching means that the weaknesses are effectively being addressed.

The rate of progress in lessons and over time has improved and, in many lessons, the pupils make good gains. This is because of better teaching, a clearer understanding of what the pupils should know and be able to do in each year group and greater rigour in lesson-planning. The higher-attaining pupils are increasingly challenged to think and reason, which has improved their ability to check and reflect on what they have done, rather than assuming they are invariably correct. Lower-attaining pupils are given good support in lessons and the good work of the teaching assistants helps them make progress in line with their classmates.

## Personal development

The pupils have good attitudes to learning. The younger ones are keen to learn and show interest and enthusiasm for the topics they are studying. They set to work readily, concentrate well and the praise and encouragement they receive from the adults helps them to do their best. The older pupils are generally confident learners and they are

becoming increasingly reflective about their work; in the past some would rush their work without checking it but now they talk about what they are doing with classmates, persevere with things they find difficult and think more carefully when solving problems. This is because the work is more challenging and the pupils are beginning to see the part that they play in learning in lessons. They ask questions to seek clarification and make pertinent observations during whole-class discussions. In both classes, there are instances of pleasure and delight in learning.

The pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is good. They play happily with one another and the older ones look out and care for the younger pupils. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are supportive and caring; the strong family ethos makes the school a safe and inclusive place in which to learn. Attendance levels are close to the national average and there have been no exclusions.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because the school takes care to promote these aspects of the pupils' education alongside their academic achievements. Assemblies are well planned and provide opportunities to consider social, moral and cultural issues and include time for reflection and prayer. The pupils think about those less fortunate than themselves and have raised funds for charitable causes. Visits to places of interest and visitors to the school, such as an artist-in-residence, broaden the pupils' horizons. The pupils know right from wrong and are generally happy and secure individuals.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching was good, overall; it was at least satisfactory in all of the lessons and good in two thirds. This is a significant improvement since the school was last inspected, but is short of the school's target of all teaching being either good or very good. The quality of teaching in the Key Stage 2 class was consistently good; in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 the teaching ranged from satisfactory to good.

The teachers' planning was thorough and detailed, with clear objectives for the pupils' learning in lessons. However, they were not always expressed or explained simply enough for the youngest pupils to understand, and this lack of precision sometimes led to activities which did not help the pupils develop their understanding securely enough. In contrast, the objectives for learning were clear and specific for the older pupils and the teacher skilfully put each lesson into context, enabling the pupils to build effectively on what they already knew, and apply their knowledge in different ways. The teachers used a good range of questioning techniques; the most effective required the pupils to consider their responses carefully before replying and to give full and detailed answers. The pace of learning was usually brisk and there was a good degree of challenge for pupils in most lessons.

The teaching assistants made a significant contribution in lessons and were skilled and assured practitioners. There is a good partnership between the assistants and the teachers, and the assistants' role in lessons is clearly defined. This helped groups of pupils to make at least satisfactory progress in lessons. Those pupils who have special educational needs are

given good support; their difficulties have been clearly identified and suitable strategies devised to help them make progress.

The school has established good systems for assessing the pupils' attainment and tracking their progress. The teachers have a secure grasp of the levels of attainment and rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics of all of the pupils in their class. The information, together with evaluations of the effectiveness of lessons, is used to help plan work which is well suited to the pupils' needs. It is also used to set appropriate targets for the pupils. The school knows its pupils well, both in terms of their academic achievements and their physical and emotional well-being.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and planned to take account of the mixed-age classes, ensuring that there should be no gaps in the pupils' learning in future. The curriculum is enriched by frequent visits and visitors, helping to enliven the topics; the visit of two owls and their owner led well into excellent work on habitats. The teachers' confidence to make appropriate cross-curricular links is growing and helps to put work into context; for example, the pupils responded with enthusiasm to a spelling lesson which involved words with Latin roots, because of the links with their work in history. There is a small but appropriate range of after-school activities and clubs.

Links with parents have improved considerably since the last inspection. Parents receive regular, informative newsletters and are sent questionnaires to allow them to express their views on the school's work. The responses show that parents can see improvements over the past year. The parent and teachers' association works hard on behalf of the school, raising significant amounts which are spent on improvements to resources and to fund out-of-school visits.

## Leadership and management

The headteacher is a good leader; she provides clear direction to the school's work and has been steadfast in her determination that the quality of provision should improve as quickly as possible, despite setbacks caused by turnover of staff. Until recently, the headteacher shouldered the greater part of the burdens of leadership herself and there was no-one of suitable experience to share the workload; recent appointments, however, have meant that subject leadership is more equitably distributed and there is a clear second-in-command. The leadership skills of other staff are improving. The school is now well placed to determine the way forward and skills in self-evaluation are growing. There is a clear commitment to keeping the school's work under review and adapting plans in the light of accurate evaluations. For example, the findings of lesson observations, examination of samples of the pupils' work and regular meetings to discuss how the curriculum is working all feed in to plans for the future. There is a strong sense of teamwork; teaching assistants and other support staff play a full part in ensuring the school's success.

The headteacher and governing body are well aware that the school's small size puts pressure on the budget. Following the school's removal from special measures, a concerted campaign is to be mounted to try to attract more pupils in order to strengthen the school's

viability in the longer term. Various budget projections are to be developed so that all possibilities are anticipated. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is supportive of the school and fulfils its statutory responsibilities effectively. Governors have improved their role in holding the school to account for its performance.

The LEA's support has been effective in helping to bring about improvements in teaching and the curriculum. There have been regular meetings to review the school's performance and the link adviser has undertaken joint reviews of teaching and learning with the headteacher. This has helped to strengthen a shared understanding of what the school does well and where further work is needed. The school is now in a position where it is being called upon to share its expertise with others.

## Appendix – Information about the inspection

Maidwell Primary School was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in March 2004. 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 December 2004 and in March 2005 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of March 2004.

In June 2005, one HMI 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.

Six parts of lessons and one 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, the chair and vice chair of governors, the Key Stage 2 teacher, a representative of 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 March 2004 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet 'Complaining about HMI-led Ofsted inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2005. This document may be freely reproduced in whole or in part, for non-commercial purposes, provided the source and the date are acknowledged.