



Middlewich Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131727
LEA Cheshire
Inspection number 282249
Inspection dates 7 December 2005 to 8 December 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs Marguerite McCloy HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Park Road
School category	Community		Middlewich
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Cheshire CW10 9BS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01606 738880
Number on roll	372	Fax number	01606 737979
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr T. Bailey
Date of previous inspection	15 January 2001	Headteacher	Mr J Kenyon

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 7 December 2005 - 8 December 2005	Inspection number 282249
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Middlewich Primary is a large, two-form entry school which was formed six years ago following the amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools. Following a rebuilding programme, pupils were transferred over a six-month period in 2004 to the new school building which was completed by September of that year. The school is situated in Middlewich, in an area of mainly owner-occupied residential housing. The majority of pupils are of white British background.

The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, as is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, there are 15 pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need, which is above average. This is because of the school's additional provision of two hearing impaired units (HIUs) with five pupils in Key Stage 1 and nine in Key Stage 2. When they begin school in the reception classes, children's skills are broadly average, representing the full range of ability.

The school holds the Eco School Outstanding Achievement Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Middlewich Primary school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils, and has a number of strengths.

The personal development and well-being of pupils is good. They enjoy their education and benefit from the high quality of care and support and the very positive relationships which exist in the school. Very effective provision is made for pupils in the HIUs, who make good progress in their learning as a result. The school is committed to inclusion, and all pupils are fully involved in all lessons, both within the units and in mainstream classes.

The headteacher provides sound leadership overall with a particular dedication to the care, safety and well-being of all pupils, and to promoting good communication and positive relationships between the school and the community. Parents and governors have commented on his exemplary work in this area, which had not been a positive feature before the amalgamation of the two schools or at the time of the previous inspection.

The judgements of the inspection team closely match those of the school. The senior management team is aware of the need to improve the school's monitoring and evaluation systems in order to use assessment information more rigorously to set challenging targets and improve outcomes for pupils.

Teaching is good across the school, although the progress pupils make is not always as good as it should be due to inconsistency in teachers' expectations of what they should be able to achieve.

The school gives sound value for money. It has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in 2001 and is in a strong position to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish more rigorous assessment procedures to track pupils' progress more effectively and set challenging targets for them to improve their standards of work.
- Sharpen the role of middle managers to focus on their contribution to raising standards and expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially at Key Stage 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards in the school are satisfactory.

Test results in Year 2 show that standards have been maintained at above national averages over the last five years. This represents good progress in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Pupils come into the school with average abilities overall but with a particular need to develop their speaking and listening and pre-writing skills. By the end of Year 2 the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in writing, reading and mathematics is above average.

The school's results in Key Stage 2 tests at the end of Year 6 in 2005 were disappointing. In all three core subjects, English, mathematics and science, results fell just below the national average. This represented a dip in standards compared with 2004, which was a very high achieving year for the school. This was particularly true of English, where achievement had been significantly above average in 2004. Not enough Year 6 pupils reached the higher levels in the 2005 tests which represented insufficient progress since they were in Year 2. However, the school identified mitigating circumstances for a group of pupils who had not performed to their capabilities, which had a negative effect on the school's overall results. The school's targets for the current Year 6 are over-ambitious, although achievement is on line to match national averages.

The school gives close attention to meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they make good progress. Higher achieving pupils are given additional challenge in lessons, although there is scope for this to be even better. Expectations of what these pupils should be able to achieve are not high enough in Key Stage 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy coming to school and have very positive attitudes towards learning. They say that 'teachers make their lessons fun.' They also particularly enjoy the 'Multiflex' sports, drama and dance activities. The good relationships between pupils and staff, and amongst the pupils themselves, ensure that they are happy and confident with high self-esteem. They show respect and care for others and consequently, behaviour is good.

As an Eco School, members of the Agenda 21 Environmental Group have been influential in promoting recycling and helping clean up the local environment. They recently successfully campaigned to have the pedestrian walkway into the school cleaned.

Pupils take responsibility well and are keen to serve the community. For example, some act as 'playleaders' in supporting other pupils at break times.

Pupils in reception and Key Stage 1 classes adopt a healthy eating policy, although this has yet to be incorporated into Key Stage 2. As a result, not all pupils are making informed choices about healthy eating.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and their reflective thinking is encouraged particularly through personal, social and health education. However, they do not learn enough about life in a diverse multicultural society.

Pupils are aware of the importance of achieving good academic standards as a means to obtaining future employment. Good attendance, punctuality and pupils' ability to collaborate well with others are good starting points for future success in the workplace.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

While the school considers teaching and learning to be satisfactory, inspectors judge them to be good overall.

On occasions where teaching is outstanding, the content is imaginative and stimulating. The teaching moves along at a brisk pace and is well matched to the needs of all pupils, challenging them to achieve their best. In a minority of lessons pupils' progress is only satisfactory rather than good, despite strengths in the teaching. This occurs when expectations of what the pupils should achieve are insufficiently high. The school is aware of the need to raise expectations and levels of challenge for all learners. The senior leadership team is beginning to establish a strong system for tracking children's progress in class, but this has yet to have a positive impact by ensuring a consistently high challenge for all.

All teachers have very good relationships with their classes and use praise and encouragement well. In return, the pupils' response and their standards of behaviour are good. Adults are good role models for the pupils who, in turn, have positive attitudes to their learning. These are strong features that characterise the school.

Good teaching in Foundation Stage classes, based on learning through practical activities, helps the children to make good progress. The activities are well planned to meet the needs of all children. Teaching assistants are well deployed to make an effective contribution to children's learning.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taught well and included in activities effectively. Pupils in the two HIUs are well supported in class by well-trained and highly effective staff so that they make good progress and are also fully included in what the school has to offer.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provision is satisfactory with some good aspects. It meets statutory requirements.

The school increasingly provides a good range of experiences for pupils by planning activities that enrich the curriculum, such as developing links between subjects, which raises the enjoyment in learning. Residential courses at outdoor pursuit centres and day visits to venues such as Styal Mill add an extra dimension to pupils' experiences. In addition, visitors' contributions and close links with the community enhance learning opportunities.

The use of an external provider to supplement the sport, drama and dance provision has been particularly successful. Many pupils take part in the extensive range of extracurricular activities provided by the school. This serves to augment well their learning experiences and develop their self-confidence.

The curriculum allows pupils to acquire a good range of skills but there is not always enough challenge for pupils in Key Stage 2 in literacy and numeracy.

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage provides good opportunities for children in all areas of learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for. Very good provision is made to meet the learning requirements of the hearing impaired. Effective personal, social and health education has a positive impact on children's personal development and self-esteem, including their understanding of how to stay safe, although healthy eating has yet to be fully embraced in Key Stage 2.

The school's good accommodation and resources, for example the facilities for sports and information and communication technology, contribute well to pupils' learning and enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils. All staff pay good attention to pupils' health, safety and welfare, ensuring that pupils feel safe and secure.

Child protection and health and safety procedures are firmly in place. Pupils report that there is always someone to talk to if they have a problem. The headteacher is a very good role model in this aspect of school life through his knowledge of pupils and their families. The school has developed close links with parents and outside agencies in order to support all pupils.

Guidance for pupils in their academic progress is satisfactory overall. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have clearly defined targets that enable them to build effectively on their previous achievements. While other pupils are generally aware of how well they are doing, targets for improvement are not always shared with them consistently and effectively in order to improve the rate of progress that they make.

Staff praise pupils' efforts and achievements, which are often celebrated in school assemblies. The school effectively promotes the health and well-being of the pupils. It provides them with good opportunities for physical exercise through the curriculum and constructive playtime and lunchtime activities. There are plans to do more to promote healthy eating in Key Stage 2.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school judges leadership and management to be satisfactory overall and inspectors agree. The headteacher is wholly committed to the school and its local community and his determined efforts and dedication have been a driving force in the planning and construction of the new building. He has successfully managed ongoing issues from this, which have only recently been resolved.

This has, however, taken attention away from securing improved standards of achievement for all pupils.

Governors and parents recognise the headteacher's invaluable contribution to the very good ethos of the school, and his commitment to the inclusion, care and development of every pupil. The recently appointed deputy headteacher has brought new expertise in specific areas which the school wishes to develop, and this complements the headteacher's strengths well.

The headteacher and his staff have the overwhelming support of the parents, as reflected in the questionnaires returned to the inspection team. This has evolved as the result of a commitment to working closely with parents as partners in their children's education. Governors are well informed and aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are beginning to take a more strategic role in evaluating the impact of actions to raise standards.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Although the key areas for improvement at that time have not yet been fully addressed, other developments identified as priorities by the school itself have been achieved successfully, not least of which was the new building project. Some areas for development remain. For example, the leadership and management of subjects are not as advanced as they could be. They are not sufficiently focused on the whole school sharing responsibility for raising standards and deciding whether actions make a positive difference to the pupils. Data on pupils' standards and progress is maintained but not utilised well enough to sharpen teaching, raise expectations and make a useful contribution to target-setting. The school is aware of this and is already taking action to remedy the issue. Subject leaders and all staff have the willingness and capability to make good progress in this area.

There is good capacity for further improvement due to the senior leadership team's knowledge and understanding of what needs to be done, and the combined skills and commitment of all staff to see it through.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, inspectors visited your school recently. We liked joining your lessons and were very interested to hear about all the things you do and what you thought about your school.

There are a lot of good things in your school. Here are some of the things we found:

- your behaviour in lessons and around school is very good, and you get on well with each other and with the adults
- your school takes good care of you and you tell us that you feel safe and happy and enjoy learning and helping each other
- you have lots of enjoyable after-school clubs to choose from, and you told us how much you particularly enjoy the 'Multiflex' activities in school time
- your headteacher is very dedicated to the school and everyone who works and learns there. He has worked really hard to get the lovely new building that you are in now
- teaching is good, and you do particularly well in the lessons where you are really challenged to achieve the best you possibly can
- as an Eco-school, you are learning to take good care of the environment. You are also learning to take good care of yourselves, to take exercise and eat healthily, although some of you don't always make good choices about what you eat!

We know that you couldn't really think of any ways in which your school could be improved, you are so happy there! However, we have asked the headteacher and his staff to make sure that you are given challenging targets so that you are expected to learn even more and reach even higher levels, especially those of you in the junior classes. You can help by making sure you know your targets and by working even harder to reach them!

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful.