

Midfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101634
Local Authority	Bromley
Inspection number	286132
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Christine Canniff

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs P Baines
Headteacher	Mrs W Seeley
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2005
School address	Grovelands Road Orpington BR5 3EG
Telephone number	020 8300 6161
Fax number	020 8300 0686

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size and has more boys than girls. It is situated in an area of deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. Fewer pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds than in most schools. Of these, not many are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well above average. The school has a Special Opportunities Unit (SOU) for pupils with complex communication difficulties. Children start school with below expected skills, particularly in communication, language and literacy. The number of pupils who leave or join the school part way through their education is much higher than usual. The school holds the Healthy Schools' award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Midfield is an improving school with some good features. It is a welcoming and friendly school where everyone is treated with respect. One parent commented, 'The children come first, which is great. Staff place strong emphasis on improving pupils' language, communication and social skills because they recognise these as crucial to pupils' confidence and success.' Pupils like coming to school and enjoy the wide range of activities provided.. They get on well together and make a good contribution to the school community. Pupils know how to stay safe and say that adults listen to their concerns. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Older children, especially, make good food choices.

Standards at the end of Year 6 are below average. In recent years, the school had to manage significant long-term staff absence and a reduction in the number of pupils on role. This has restricted the school's capacity to improve. The curriculum is good, but some variation in the quality of teaching and learning account for differences in pupils' achievement. Through regular monitoring of teaching, the headteacher is bringing about improvements. As a result, the proportion of good lessons has increased and pupils are now making better progress, particularly in English. Achievement is satisfactory overall. The attainment of the more able pupils is improving and the targets set for these pupils in mathematics and science were exceeded in the 2007 national tests.

The school has developed thorough systems of assessment to track pupils' progress and identify pupils' individual needs. Teachers use these assessments well in meeting the needs of pupils in the Special Opportunities Unit (SOU) and others who learn more slowly, enabling them to make good progress. However, the use of assessment information in planning lessons that match the needs of other pupils is inconsistent.

The headteacher provides clear direction for the school and is strongly committed to its improvement. She is well supported by an enthusiastic staff and effective governors. She has accurately identified the areas requiring improvement and taken action. However, the school does not do enough to improve attendance, which is well below the national average. Subject coordinators are developing their role in monitoring pupils' performance and guiding colleagues, but this is not yet consistent across all subjects. Some of the measures taken to secure improvement have not yet had time to impact, but progress so far indicates that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

A parent of a pupil in the reception class wrote, 'I couldn't be happier with Midfield.' The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. It has improved since the last inspection. Most children now make good progress.

Children's introduction to the nursery is carefully planned and delivered. Even the youngest children feel happy and safe from the start. Teachers assess children's attainment through regular observations, though these are not always sharply focused. Many children's social development and language skills are at a low level when they first start. They make good progress, but do not achieve the goals expected for their age. The school has rightly made communication, language and literacy, along with numeracy priorities in teaching and the curriculum. Teachers plan activities carefully to meet the wide range of needs, including those

of pupils experiencing learning difficulties. All adults provide good teaching of letter sounds and names, and other basic skills. Positive relationships and good opportunities for imaginative play help to stimulate pupils' personal development and communication skills. As a result, most children make good gains in their learning, although at the start of Year 1 many have not reached the expected goals for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science so that more pupils achieve the expected level for their age.
- Achieve greater consistency in the quality of teaching so that all teaching is good or better.
- Improve attendance by making better use of data and raising pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

A small proportion of schools judged satisfactory but with areas of underperformance will be monitored in accordance with the protocol published in November 2006.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Current standards are below average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. In 2007, more Year 2 pupils achieved the expected level for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6. The progress of the few pupils who speak English as an additional language is also satisfactory. In the past, there was some underachievement but the school's tracking shows that progress is now improving. Older pupils still have to overcome some gaps in their learning due to past weaknesses in teaching. In English, pupils find it difficult to structure their writing and sequence ideas. In mathematics and science, pupils' insecure grasp of subject vocabulary limits their capacity to explain the processes they use to solve problems. Recent improvement in monitoring pupils' progress enables teachers to give pupils better targeted support and guidance. This is boosting pupils' confidence but it is too soon to evaluate its impact on performance. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because support is well matched to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' social moral, spiritual and cultural education is satisfactory. Pupils look after each other in the playground, play and work well together. They say that they enjoy school, and that they make good friends and get good support from staff. Despite this, too many pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. The school is not doing enough to involve pupils in improving attendance rates. Pupils say that behaviour has recently improved and is now better. A few pupils need to be reminded of the rules, both in class and in the playground. Any problems are quickly dealt with and pupils feel safe and free from bullying. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong. They take seriously their roles of responsibility, which contribute to their understanding of how to be a good citizen. They appreciate the opportunities to discuss and share issues in circle time. Pupils' satisfactory progress in basic skills and their positive attitudes to learning contribute satisfactorily to their preparation for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers provide a variety of activities and resources to create a good learning environment and make lessons interesting, for example, making pizzas and using the activity to extend Year 2 pupils' vocabulary. In some lessons, the activities are less stimulating. Consequently, pupils are not fully engaged and make less progress. Teachers set out clear learning objectives so that pupils know what they have to achieve. They encourage pupils and warmly praise their efforts. In an outstanding lesson, the teacher made excellent use of assessment and evaluation through paired discussion, using snappy questions to accelerate pupils' learning. However, in some lessons, teachers do not draw sufficiently on their knowledge of pupils' prior learning to plan what they should learn next. Teachers and highly skilled teaching assistants work effectively together. This helps to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides many good and exciting enrichment activities that enhance pupils' learning and broaden their experiences. Pupils enjoy the clubs and activities such as drama and music workshops, and themed weeks. These extend their knowledge and skills and contribute effectively to their personal development. There is strong emphasis on the development of literacy, numeracy and science. The daily reading session is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and raising standards in reading. The curriculum in the SOU provides well for pupils. It is stimulating and well matched to their needs. The school has implemented a good range of support programmes for pupils who may need extra help with their learning. Some challenging activities are provided for more able pupils, but a specific programme is not yet fully established.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school pays close attention to meeting the wide range of pupils' personal needs. Effective initiatives develop and raise self-esteem, promote healthy living and encourage all pupils to contribute as active members of the community. Child protection systems and risk assessments are in place and effective. Clear routines and the well-established sense of order help newly arrived pupils to settle quickly. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is good and supported by effective links without outside agencies. Despite the good quality of teaching and support provided in the SOU, the overall quality of provision here is only satisfactory because it is limited by shortcomings in the accommodation.

Teachers track pupils' progress carefully and set ambitious targets for attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6. Older pupils know their individual targets and are beginning to understand what they need to do to improve. The school is not yet using targets and involving pupils effectively to improve attendance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership of the headteacher is good and is founded upon high aspirations for the school. With support from the deputy, she has established a clear and appropriate direction for school. Well-planned changes to the curriculum have enhanced learning opportunities for pupils and laid a foundation for improved achievement.

The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies its strengths and areas for improvement. Staff and governors are fully involved in school development planning. In most areas, the school improvement plan is thorough and includes appropriate strategies and targets. This has led to satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in the quality of teaching and achievement.

Most subject co-coordinators manage their areas well. The SOU is led well. Teaching in the SOU is good, as it was at the last inspection. The co-ordinator for pupils with learning difficulties has analysed the needs of pupils carefully with a view to improving progress and allocating resources efficiently. This has enabled her to match the skills of support staff to the needs of particular pupils. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the barriers to improvement. They carefully evaluate their past decisions and provide a good balance of support and challenge.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Midfield Primary School, Orpington, BR5 3EG

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed meeting you and it was a pleasure to talk about your work and other activities at the school. This letter is to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection.

We were able to see that yours is a satisfactory school and some things about it are good. You told us that you enjoy school and have good friends. You showed this by the way you worked and played together and the way you joined in the activities. However, too many of you are absent from school more often than you should be and this means that you miss learning new things. You have an important part to play in helping the school raise the level of attendance.

You say that you feel safe in school and that you get good support from staff. If you have a concern you know that you can share this with staff and that they will listen to you.

Adults provide you with lots of interesting things to do and you say that you really enjoy these, particularly activities such as drama and singing. We looked at the progress you have been making and found this to be satisfactory. Your reading skills are improving but we would like to see the level of standards you reach in all subjects to be higher so that you are better prepared for your future lives.

You are aware of your targets. These and the helpful comments some teachers make on your work help you to know what to do to improve. We saw some good lessons but, in a few, we felt that teachers could have matched the work a little better to what you have previously learned. We have asked your teachers to make sure that all lessons are as good as the best ones.

I am sure that you will continue to work hard and wish you success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Christine Canniff

Lead inspector