



Middlefield Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104591
Local Authority Liverpool
Inspection number 286982
Inspection dates 8–9 January 2007
Reporting inspector Kevin Johnson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Alderwood Avenue
School category	Community		Speke, Liverpool
Age range of pupils	3–11		Merseyside L24 2UE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 4864106
Number on roll (school)	312	Fax number	0151 4480982
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs E Hall
		Headteacher	Mrs Paula Judd
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school situated in the southern outskirts of Liverpool. The school's location is recognised by the local authority as one of acute social need. Statistics show it to be an area of multiple deprivation with challenging social and economic circumstances. A very high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school is also resourced to provide 18 places for pupils from across the local authority, who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The number of pupils who start or leave the school at random points throughout the year is very high. An extended school day is provided and there is an Adult Learning Centre on site. The headteacher took up her post in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and satisfactory value for money. The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are satisfactory overall; however, the pastoral care provided, particularly for the most vulnerable, is good. Parents comment appreciatively on the much improved behaviour and pupils say that anti-bullying and anti-racism teaching has made them feel safer in the playground. There are trusting relationships between adults and pupils because voices are seldom raised and pupils are confident that there is always someone to help them when needed. Those who attend the special unit are successfully integrated into the main classes and work happily alongside others. Pupils know how important it is to eat sensibly and they enjoy physical education activities and opportunities after school to take part in sports. Although still significantly below average, attendance has recently improved and there is now vigorous competition between classes for the 'attendance cup'. The school is encouraging links with parents through the adjacent Adult Learning Centre which is also helping to raise the importance of attending regularly. Pupils enjoy school because of the security it offers and the challenge found in lessons. The curriculum has been thoughtfully remodelled to make learning more relevant and enjoyable and there is an increasing drive to provide more first-hand experiences in order to broaden pupils' personal horizons.

Pupils currently make steady progress and achieve satisfactorily overall. Their starting points in the Nursery class are exceptionally low in comparison to national expectations. Their progress is good in the Nursery class but satisfactory in Reception because the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent. Despite satisfactory progress overall, standards in all areas of learning are well below expectations when pupils enter Year 1. Standards attained in the most recent national tests were slightly better at the end of Year 2, as were mathematics standards at the end of Year 6, due to the stronger focus on that subject resulting in more satisfactory achievement. However, standards at both key stages are still too low. Recent improvements in the quality of teaching and target-setting are now having a measurable impact. As a result, standards in English and mathematics are beginning to rise steadily as more pupils progress towards their expected levels.

A crucial decision taken by the new headteacher and governors has been to embrace the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP) provided through the local authority and also to link with other schools in a local network, to support the drive to raise standards. This has brought about a cultural change in the school and set it on its current course by enabling staff and governors to set clear goals, which are moving the school forward. The headteacher has revised the management structure so that all staff now share accountability for standards and achievement. This has raised staff morale because there is more sharing of ideas and good practice, and much stronger teamwork. A major success has been the introduction of a robust system for tracking pupils' progress and setting relevant targets. Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching is becoming more sharply focused on specific learning objectives, driven by regular assessments. Pupils enjoy learning because they have manageable targets and achieve more.

However, it remains inconsistent and particularly in the Foundation Stage. The school's systems for checking the quality of its performance have improved so that prompt action can be taken to deal with any difficulties. The school is better equipped now to take stock of its progress and has accurately evaluated most aspects of its work. Improvements are at an early stage of development and the capacity to improve is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science throughout the school.
- Improve the consistency of the quality of teaching and learning, including in the Foundation Stage.
- Improve levels of attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children start in the Nursery with exceptionally low levels of attainment for their age in all areas of learning. They get off to a good start in the Nursery class but their pace of learning is not maintained throughout the whole Foundation Stage, so that standards are still well below expectations when they enter Year 1. For many, this leaves much ground to make up and has contributed to the well below average standards seen at the end of Year 2. However, standards at the end of Year 2 improved slightly in reading, writing and mathematics between 2005 and 2006, and standards in mathematics improved in Year 6 over the same period. Although the 2006 Year 6 test results in English, mathematics and science were well below the national average, there is strong evidence from the school's assessment data to indicate that standards are continuing to rise, with more pupils throughout the school beginning to work at the level expected for their age.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress in their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance levels are low in spite of the good improvement seen recently. Pupils are attentive in lessons and work hard. Behaviour around the school is satisfactory. Pupils are usually friendly towards adults and each other but they sometimes need support in order to help them settle their differences. They understand that diet and exercise are important factors in keeping to a healthy lifestyle and enjoy the range of sports offered as well as yoga after school. A 'buddy' scheme gives older pupils the chance to take on responsibility for the care of others and several older pupils have gained the St. John's Ambulance qualification in first-aid. Pupils' views are being taken into account more often. For example, a group of pupils decided for themselves on the kind of writing they would like to practice in their special group. As yet, however, there is no school council to encourage a fully active pupil

voice in the running of the school. Although satisfactory, there is still some way to go towards providing all pupils with the basic literacy, numeracy, and ICT skills, which will help secure their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Some good and outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. Pupils respond well in most lessons to lively, active teaching through which they are increasingly challenged to achieve more. Recent training has led to teachers becoming more confident in their approach because they are more skilled at using assessments to plan for the varying needs of pupils. Learning support assistants are a valued part of the teaching team. They are sensitive to pupils' particular needs and contribute significantly to their progress when working with individuals and groups. Relationships in lessons are good. This gives pupils a sense of security and helps to maintain order so that all can achieve as well as possible. Nevertheless, there are still pockets of uneven progress where planning is less effective and where pupils' inattentiveness is not consistently challenged. Occasionally there is a mismatch between teachers' expectations and what pupils can actually achieve so that some find tasks too difficult to complete.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and adequately meets pupils' needs. There is sufficient focus on basic reading, writing and numeracy skills and pupils satisfactorily practise their writing across different subjects. Afternoon sessions are planned thoughtfully, broken down into a selection of 'club' activities whereby pupils receive shorter 'bursts' of history, geography or music. This maintains their interest and increases their enjoyment. Learning is enriched by some specialist teaching through the Sports Partnership with the local high school. Music and French in Year 2 are provided through a Service Level Agreement with the local authority. Visitors help to promote personal development and encourage interest in the arts. A satisfactory range of after school clubs available to pupils in junior classes helps to foster their skills and interests.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support provided are satisfactory overall; however, the pastoral care for pupils is good. Parents recognise this and are appreciative of the way their children are looked after. The most vulnerable pupils often receive exceptional support to help raise their self-esteem and ensure their personal and emotional well-being. This helps them to settle into lessons more easily. Pupils in the unit are also supported well and, as a result, most are successfully integrated into main classes. These are good

examples of the school's inclusiveness. The learning mentor provides strong support for parents and pupils with regard to improving attendance and oversees the smooth running of the breakfast and after school provision. All procedures for the safeguarding of pupils are in place. Some aspects of academic guidance, however, are not as strong as they should be. Although systems for monitoring pupils' progress are sound and used effectively to set targets, some pupils are not always sure what their targets are. At present, teachers' marking does not sufficiently refer to targets or indicate what pupils should do to achieve them. Consequently, marking has too little impact on pupils' work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides strong, clear leadership and is single minded in her desire to improve standards and quality in the school. New management systems have improved communication between staff so that all contribute effectively to the school improvement process. The leadership team is entirely committed to its role and works energetically to ensure that newly agreed procedures become firmly embedded in practice. Governors fulfil their statutory obligations satisfactorily. They manage the budget astutely and are clear about what the school should do to improve further. Nevertheless, their contribution to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance has not been strong. The school's improvement plan gives clear direction but some targets do not identify intended impact clearly enough to enable a really sharp analysis of the school's work.

Although the structures for leading and managing the school are sustainable, they are, nevertheless, recent and their full impact on standards and achievement is still to be seen.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	3

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 behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
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.

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	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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	3
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

As you know Mrs Kenna, Mr Hussain and I visited your school recently. We would like to thank you for your friendliness and the help you gave. You made us all feel very welcome and we enjoyed talking to you.

We were pleased to see how well the adults in school look after you and that you appreciate all that they do for you. Your teachers work very hard to make sure you get work that suits you best and this helps you to make progress. We are glad that you take notice of your teachers and work hard. Your headteacher has some exciting ideas about how to make school even more enjoyable for you.

Although you are making satisfactory progress, we have asked your school to improve your attendance and to make sure you make better progress in English, mathematics and science. We have also asked the school to make sure that the youngest children all do as well as they should. You can help by continuing to work as hard as you can, by making sure you remember what your learning targets are and understand what you must do to reach them.