



# Middlehurst Special School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 124501  
**Local Authority** Stoke-On-Trent  
**Inspection number** 293014  
**Inspection date** 24 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Arnalena Bee

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Turnhurst Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Chell
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-16		Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6NQ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 234612
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	85	<b>Fax number</b>	01782 236407
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Julie Mellor
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Jonathon May
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 January 2003		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The majority of pupils who attend Middlehurst have moderate learning difficulties. A few have severe behavioural difficulties and a very small number have autism, and speech and language difficulties. All pupils have statements of special educational need. Most pupils are of White British origin but there are a small minority of pupils from other ethnic groups. Pupils' social backgrounds are mixed but include high levels of disadvantage. There are two children in the Foundation Stage.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Middlehurst is a good school. Parents and pupils agree that the school is a wonderful place to learn. There are many reasons for this. The good curriculum, for example, has an impressive selection of enrichment activities such as the chance to learn to ski. These enable pupils to take part in activities that suit them best. For a few, this may mean spending time learning in a local school; for others it may mean learning how to identify letter sounds and putting them together to read simple words. The curriculum provides well for the youngest children in the Foundation Stage and enables them to get off to a good start. There are good levels of care, guidance and support for pupils' specialised needs, which ensure that their personal development is good. Through well adapted activities, when pupils work in small groups such as the 'nurture' and 'socialites' group, there is clear focus on developing the skills needed to cope better in the outside world. Pupils get on well with each other and develop trusting and warm relationships with the adults who work with them. Although the school has satisfactory systems in place to encourage pupils to live a healthy lifestyle this is not having the impact it should on encouraging pupils to lead healthier lives. This is evident in the choices they make at snack time and the fact that a few older pupils, despite knowing the dangers of smoking, still decide to smoke.

Pupils are obviously happy at the school; they work hard in lessons and respond positively to the activities they are given. One of the older boys said, 'I like it here because the teachers help us to become independent.' Teaching is good and because of this most pupils achieve well. Despite standards being low compared to schools nationally, by the time pupils leave at the age of 16, they are well prepared for college or the world of work. As a result of the good leadership and management, leaders and managers are developing the school effectively and have an accurate idea of how it is doing. Despite this, the school development plan does not clearly explain how it is going to address its improvement priorities. It is not easy for staff and governors to see if identified issues have been successfully addressed. Nevertheless the school has made good improvement since the previous inspection and is well placed to develop further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve planning for developments so that staff and governors have a clear understanding about the progress being made in improving the school.
- Increase pupils' understanding of the importance of eating healthily and of the dangers of smoking cigarettes.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

All pupils, regardless of their special educational needs, make good progress because their specific needs are well catered for. This includes the few pupils from ethnic minority groups and those who are looked after. Attainment on entry in the Foundation

Stage is low, as are standards throughout the school because of the nature of pupils' special educational needs. In the past two years, a few pupils have not done as well as expected in number and reading. However, this has been addressed through new improved systems that check pupils' progress more regularly and which alert teachers quickly to any underperformance. Intervention strategies, such as giving pupils who have underperformed an even more-tailor made programme to work to, is now allowing them to make the expected good progress.

The oldest pupils in the school achieve well in entry level subjects and a few take GCSE mathematics. As a result, all of the Year 11 pupils last year successfully moved on to either work placements or college.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. This is evident in the way that they all get on so well with each other and with the adults who work with them. Pupils really enjoy learning, especially when they are given practical activities. They say they particularly like the 'good learner' sheets because they help them 'get independent'. Despite pupils knowing that they should adopt a healthy lifestyle, a few admit to not always eating healthily and some choose to smoke. Attendance is satisfactory and most pupils come to school regularly because they enjoy what is on offer. One boy said, 'School is the best place to be.' Pupils are aware of how to keep safe. Many of them have helped their parents and carers devise a fire plan at home. They are confident of approaching adults in school if they are unhappy and know not to speak to strangers. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to their community. Older pupils look after younger pupils and talk enthusiastically about helping to develop school rules. At other times, they are given responsibility to handle money and look after simple budgets. Pupils talk enthusiastically about visiting the local church at Christmas and singing to the senior citizens.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers use information collected on individuals to carefully plan lessons so that all pupils are able to make good progress whatever their level of understanding or ability. They make particularly good use of teaching assistants who contribute significantly to the good learning that goes on in lessons. Classes are well managed and any challenging behaviour is dealt with in a consistent and kindly manner. Classroom areas are colourful and stimulating and contribute to the pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Teachers value what pupils have to say and so most of them feel confident to answer questions that are directed at them or their class. The marking of pupils' work, although

supportive, does not always inform pupils what they need to do to get better and so enable them to improve their work further.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is well matched to the needs of the pupils and aids enjoyment and the development of literacy, numeracy and personal skills. The children in the Foundation Stage have good learning opportunities and the curriculum for the pupils in Years 1 to 6 is well focused on their individual needs. Older pupils have opportunities to select options for entry level, GCSE and other vocational courses. The 'nurture' group for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 and the 'socialites' group, for Key Stage 3 pupils who are less socially able, successfully focus on the development of personal and social skills. A few pupils have the opportunity to work with classmates in mainstream schools. The curriculum is further enriched by a good selection of activities that reinforce and develop learning in many curriculum areas. Many focus on physical education, which promotes the importance of exercise.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The good level of care, guidance and support provided for the pupils is an important factor in the success of the school. Adults are highly committed to pupils' welfare and safety. As a result, pupils feel safe in this supportive environment which enables them to develop well both academically and personally. Child protection arrangements are effective. The school works well with the family worker who focuses on attendance and supports a large number of families. In addition, there are good links with parents and other agencies to support pupils. The very good system that tracks pupils' personal and academic progress allows the senior leaders to clearly see how each pupil is doing. This enables them to give additional support to those few pupils who at times, do not do as well as expected. Pupils know they have targets to help them to make better progress but not all teachers ensure that all pupils know what they are.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher leads the school well. He is very well supported by his two newly appointed deputy headteachers. As a result of this strong team approach, behaviour has improved since the previous inspection report. In addition, the system that shows how well pupils are doing has been developed and progress is now checked more frequently. This has resulted in any underperformance being tackled. Subject leaders have had input into monitoring and developing teaching and learning within their subjects. However, whilst some of their subject action plans are soundly thought out, others do not focus well enough on the key aspects that need improving. There is not enough clear focus on developing achievement further. Similarly, the school development plan, although focused in the right areas, does not provide staff and

governors with a clear enough picture of how and when they are going to achieve improvement for the areas identified. Governors are supportive, but many are new to the role and recognise that they are not confident enough to ask probing questions. The school goes out of its way to support parents and carers and develop their confidence through courses and other activities. They really appreciate the way personal and family issues are supported by the school, which ensures they are better able to support their children's learning.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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	2
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**

You may remember that we came to visit your school, a few weeks ago, to see how well you were doing. Thank you for being so friendly and talking to us about the interesting things that you do. We thought that you all behaved well.

I am writing to let you know what we found out about your school:

- The people who look after you at home think you go to a good school and so do we.
- All the adults are good at helping you to do your best and they teach you well.
- You clearly enjoy school and everyone who works with you is good at showing you how to become more grown up and learn how to do things on your own. They all care for you well.
- By the time you leave you are well prepared for college or the world of work.
- We think that the school is well led and managed.

To make the school even better we have asked your teachers to:

- Improve the way they plan for the future so that you all do even better.
- Make sure there is more focus on the dangers of smoking cigarettes and the need to eat healthily so that you can make the right choices about how to stay healthy.

Keep working hard and having fun.