



Middlemarch School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125761
Local Authority Warwickshire
Inspection number 293358
Inspection date 21 November 2006
Reporting inspector Alison Grainger

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	College Street
School category	Foundation		Nuneaton
Age range of pupils	7-11		CV10 7BQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	024 76328009
Number on roll (school)	213	Fax number	024 76326293
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Carol Gibson
		Headteacher	Joy Cole
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school draws its pupils from several infant schools in Nuneaton. It also accommodates a local authority speech and language base, with places for up to ten pupils with statements of special educational needs. In the school as a whole, the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly above average. About three-quarters of pupils are White British. A few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Attainment on entry to Year 3 is below average but is improving.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Parents and pupils are right to be pleased with it. It takes a balanced approach to pupils' personal and academic development, seeing each as of equal importance. As a result, pupils not only make good progress but they also enjoy school a lot. The quality of relationships at all levels is a real strength. Effective teamwork among adults keeps the school improving. Positive relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect and result in pupils feeling valued and well cared for. As one pupil commented, 'All children are open with the teachers and the teachers are open with us'.

Good care, guidance and support make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being, which are also good. Pupils behave well and almost all are considerate towards others. They have a good awareness of how to keep fit and healthy and are helped to make sensible decisions about their lifestyles. Even though most pupils attend regularly, the attendance rate is below average, largely because of parents taking pupils out of school for holidays during term time.

Good teaching leads to good achievement. Standards are broadly average when pupils reach the end of Year 6. Pupils' results in the national tests show that they make better gains in relation to their starting points and capabilities in English and science than in mathematics. Within their work in English, they progress equally well in reading and writing, although more pupils reach the higher levels in reading than writing.

The curriculum is good and contributes much to pupils' progress and personal development. Lessons are enriched well by activities such as visits, visitors who broaden pupils' experiences, and clubs. Pupils speak enthusiastically about these opportunities and others that, for example, involve them in making a good contribution to the school and wider community. Provision, including the curriculum, does much to promote pupils' moral and social awareness. The focus on pupils' spiritual and cultural development, although satisfactory, is not as strong. The school recognises the need to give more attention to these areas, for example, through the creative aspects of the curriculum that it is working to develop.

Leadership and management are good. Self-evaluation is effective in identifying the school's strengths and also its areas for development, providing a firm basis for well-considered action. The headteacher, together with other senior staff, provides a strong and clear educational direction for the school. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and the school is well placed to develop further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress in mathematics to match that in English and science and help more pupils to reach the higher levels in writing.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
- Work closely with parents to raise the attendance rate.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. Pupils' achievement is good, and all groups of pupils do well in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Those with learning difficulties and also those at an early stage of learning English make good progress alongside their classmates.

Taking each subject separately, pupils make more progress during their four years in school in English and science than in mathematics. The school has correctly identified the needs to improve pupils' skills in subtraction and division. Nevertheless, progress in mathematics is maintained at a steady rate, with some average and more capable pupils making significant gains. Within their work in English, pupils move on equally well in reading and writing. Even so, not as many get to the higher level in writing as in reading.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils like school a lot. They particularly appreciate the way that the school looks after them, the awards systems such as house points, sports days and residential visits. They have good attitudes to learning and behave well.

Pupils' moral and social development is a significant strength. Almost all pupils are sensitive to the needs of others, form good relationships and enthusiastically contribute to the school community. Pupils in Year 6 do much to make the school a positive environment, for example, by looking after those starting in Year 3 and helping as 'peer mediators' at play times. Pupils enjoy raising funds for charities and activities such as singing to elderly people in a nearby residential home. Although pupils' spiritual and cultural development is at the level expected, it is not as strong as their moral and social development.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy through diet and regular exercise. They make good progress in developing the skills necessary for their future lives. Although most pupils attend school regularly, the attendance rate is declining as a result of parents taking their children out of school for holidays in term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching is the main reason for pupils' good achievement. Lessons are well organised. Teachers know what they want pupils to learn and teaching is focused on the knowledge, skills and understanding to be developed. The purpose of each lesson is explained clearly so that pupils know what they are aiming to achieve. Expectations

of pupils are high and teachers' subject knowledge is secure. These strengths are all evident, for example, as pupils are taught to look for different levels of meaning in the texts they read.

Learning support assistants are well deployed to support individuals and groups. As a result, pupils in the speech and language base are helped to learn at a good rate, as are others with learning difficulties and the few at an early stage of learning English. The school recognises that, to help all pupils' learning to be even more effective, teaching needs to be more finely tuned to their differing needs in some lessons in mathematics. There are also some occasions when whole-class sessions are too long and pupils' learning slows as a result.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets pupils' needs and promotes good progress, particularly in English and science. It also helps many pupils to achieve well in mathematics. The school continually reviews the effectiveness of the learning opportunities in these key subjects. Currently it is increasing its attention to pupils' skills in subtraction and division to help them to achieve better in mathematics.

The good range of activities additional to daily lessons contributes much to pupils' personal development. Opportunities in personal, social and health education help pupils to understand the importance of keeping fit and healthy and of making sensible choices about lifestyles.

Provision in art and design and technology has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection. The school is now starting to increase opportunities for creativity, for pupils to reflect on their experiences and for them to gain awareness of their own and others' cultural traditions. It recognises that these are necessary developments to bring pupils' spiritual and cultural development to the same level as their moral and social awareness.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A high priority is given to pupils' personal welfare and ensuring that pupils feel safe and valued. Pupils in the speech and language base are included well, not only in lessons but in other aspects of the life of the school. Pupils trust the adults and are rightly confident that any incidents of bullying or racism will be dealt with swiftly and effectively.

As one pupil said of the guidance provided about keeping safe and healthy, 'Teachers don't just tell you what not to do. They help you to make decisions.' Good arrangements give pupils a voice in the school, particularly through the school council. The school recognises the need to improve the attendance rate. It does not authorise holidays in term time. The headteacher has been instrumental in setting up a local authority group to look at attendance issues.

Individual targets to support pupils in making progress are effective, reviewed regularly and shared with parents. Teachers' marking is helpful, although it does more to support progress in English than in mathematics. Weaknesses in presentation are not always picked up well enough and not all teachers' handwriting in pupils' books provides pupils with good examples to follow.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have supported the school in improving well and provide it with a secure capacity for further development. Self-evaluation is accurate. It underpins the strong and clear educational direction that the headteacher and senior staff provide for the school.

Senior leadership maintains a balanced approach to pupils' personal and academic development. The whole staff team work well together to make this a school in which every child matters. Pupils appreciate the commitment of everyone in the school to meeting their needs and speak positively, for example, of the tidy classroom awards, in which the caretaker plays a lead role.

Governors are supportive of the school and have a reasonable awareness of its main strengths and weaknesses. They do not, however, play as strong a role in the process of self-evaluation or reviewing their effectiveness as a governing body.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	2
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	2

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?	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	2
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

Thank you for helping me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking with you and finding out about your school. The pupils I met from Years 4 and 6 told me a lot about what you think of the school.

You are right when you say that this is a good school. It prepares you well for your future lives and for the next stage of your education. You told me that you enjoy school and that the adults look after you well. You said that you feel safe at school and trust the adults, who you know will help you should you have any worries. I am pleased that you enjoy school so much and I saw how well everyone cares for you.

You are sensible young people who behave well. You get on well together and show good consideration for others. You told me that bullying is rare and that the school deals quickly with any acts of unkindness. You have a good awareness of the difference between right and wrong. You know a lot about how to keep fit and healthy.

You are making good progress with your school work. This is because the teaching is good. You also have a good range of activities additional to your daily lessons such as visits, visitors and clubs that broaden your experiences.

All the adults in school are working hard together to make the school even better. There are some things that I have asked them to do to help with this. I have asked them to help you to do as well in mathematics as you do in English and science, and also to help more of you to get to the higher level in writing by the end of Year 6. The school will also be looking at how they can give you more opportunities to be creative, reflect on your experiences, and increase your understanding of different cultural traditions.

I noticed that the attendance rate is not as high as in many other primary schools. I have asked the school to improve this. This is something that you and your parents can help with to make sure that each one of you gets the most out of your time at the school.

Keep trying hard with your work. Thank you once again for your help.