

Middleton Cheney Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121846
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314118
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	376
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Randall
Headteacher	Philip Percival
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2003
School address	Main Road Middleton Cheney Banbury OX17 2PD
Telephone number	01295 710218
Fax number	01295 710218

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most pupils live in the village of Middleton Cheney, although some come from other nearby communities. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. In most years, children's attainment when they start school in the Reception classes is broadly in line with the expected levels for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This satisfactory school is taking the right steps to tackle a recent decline in standards. Intensive support from the local authority, as well as a greater focus within the school on ensuring that all pupils are doing well enough, is having a positive effect in bringing about the school's improvement. For example, standards have improved over the last year and are now broadly average by the end of Year 6. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, although progress across the school is not yet even. This is because there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Whilst most teaching is now satisfactory and some is good, there are occasions when teachers do not expect enough of the pupils, which is slowing the pace of their learning.

Children make a satisfactory start in the Reception classes, but standards in writing lag behind other areas of learning. This weakness continues as pupils move through the school. The school has rightly identified that the lack of structure in teaching some of the basic skills, such as spelling, is limiting pupils' progress. Academic support is satisfactory and the school has worked hard to improve the quality of marking. This is now good. However, most teachers do not set targets to help pupils take greater responsibility for improving their own work. Leaders of the school are now helping it to move in the right direction although, until relatively recently the pace of change was too slow. They are now working together more effectively than in the past and they have improved systems for checking how well the school is doing. This means that there is a clearer understanding of what still needs improving. Members of staff are becoming increasingly reflective about their own practice and they support each other well. Recent developments demonstrate that the school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. Senior managers know that they now need to concentrate on rigorously monitoring the impact of recent developments and on ensuring that they address the remaining pockets of underachievement.

Good rates of attendance reflect the fact that pupils are generally happy at school. They particularly enjoy the exciting range of activities that are offered outside lessons. Sporting provision contributes especially well to pupils' good understanding of the importance of living healthily. Pupils like talking to visitors and show good concern for the needs of others by raising funds for charities. They are rarely able to contribute to the school community by taking responsibility in other ways.

There are good links with other schools and outside agencies, as well as with parents, most of whom are pleased that their children come to this school. They are right when they say that teachers are kind and look after their children well. One parent summed up the views of many by writing, 'Both my children are very happy at school and one, being in Year 6, has enjoyed his time and grown in confidence as he has got older'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Sensitive support from adults helps to ensure that children settle quickly in the Foundation Stage (Reception Year). Children make satisfactory progress and, by the start of Year 1, most are working at the expected levels for their age. Children make the best progress in developing personal and social skills due to the clear expectations of staff. Progress in writing is slower, because children do not get enough opportunities to write purposefully. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and teachers plan a range of interesting activities. However, there is not always

enough challenge for the more able. The new Foundation Stage co-ordinator has a good understanding of what needs improving and is rightly focusing on ensuring that work always builds on what children have already learned.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve standards in writing by ensuring that there is a better structure to the teaching of basic skills, particularly in spelling
- check that recent developments are having an impact on improving pupils' achievement and are being consistently applied across the school
- increase the amount of good teaching by ensuring that teachers always expect enough of pupils
- help pupils to develop a greater sense of responsibility by setting academic targets and providing ways for them to contribute to the school community.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards have begun to rise after a period of decline, especially at the end of Year 6. They are now broadly average overall by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. In English, standards are lower in writing than in reading. A lack of structure in the teaching of basic writing skills means that pupils make too many errors in their written work. For example, they often spell inaccurately.

Most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are now making satisfactory overall progress, although there remain some small pockets of underachievement across the school. This is because teaching is not always pitched at the right level for all pupils, and limits the amount of progress they can make.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are keen to come to school and they have generally positive attitudes towards learning, responding with enthusiasm and excitement when teaching is good. As one pupil in a good numeracy lesson in Year 5 said, 'This is fun because we are finding things out for ourselves.' Although behaviour is satisfactory, some pupils behave less well when tasks do not challenge or excite them. At lunchtime, play is sometimes a little boisterous because very little is provided for pupils to do.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils take good care of each other in lessons and understand clearly the difference between right and wrong. They respond positively to rewards and understand the consequences of 'stepping over the line'. They make a satisfactory contribution to the community, for example by putting on a talent show for villagers. Pupils get few opportunities to take responsibility or show initiative, which limits the opportunities for them to develop their independence. Nevertheless, pupils make generally sound progress in developing basic skills and they are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Pupils' good knowledge of a healthy diet is reflected in their lunchboxes, which provide a good balance of food for an active day. Most pupils feel safe in school and they know how to deal with everyday dangers; for example, older pupils learn how to look after somebody if they are injured.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are some good features to teaching across the school. Adults have good relationships with the pupils and they use praise well to boost self-esteem. The good use of resources, including interactive whiteboards, helps pupils to take an interest in their work but there are occasions when a lack of urgency in lessons results in the pace of learning being too slow. Teachers do not always plan closely enough for the wide range of needs in each class. When pupils are not challenged to do work that is sufficiently difficult, they become less involved and progress slows. Teaching assistants have a good effect on learning, especially when supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school is beginning to link work in different subjects in order to make learning more purposeful. At the moment, this is in the early stages of development and so for example, pupils are not yet given enough opportunities to practise their skills in information and communication technology across the curriculum.

Enrichment of the curriculum is good and has a positive impact on pupils' learning. There is a good range of additional activities such as drama productions, sport, music and residential visits and these give pupils many opportunities to learn new skills such as abseiling. Close links with the police and St John's Ambulance Brigade help to enhance pupils' personal and social development by extending their awareness of how to stay safe.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This is a happy school where adults care well for pupils. Most pupils are pleased with the way that adults listen to them if they are worried, and they feel that occasional instances of bullying are generally dealt with quickly. The school has good links with outside agencies that safeguard pupils' well-being, especially for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Academic guidance has improved significantly over the last year and is now satisfactory. Information about pupils' progress is detailed but is not always used well enough to plan the next stage of learning. Good marking helps pupils understand how to improve their work but most teachers do not set targets for pupils to aim at. This is a missed opportunity to help pupils to make more progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

This is a school that is moving forward with a renewed sense of purpose after a period of relative stagnation. Teachers are now gathering a wealth of information about pupils' progress and this is helping senior managers to understand that not all pupils do as well as they could. There have also been many other useful recent initiatives such as strengthening the role of the management team and focusing on improving the quality of teaching. These initiatives have already had a positive impact on pupils' learning.

The school is tackling remaining underachievement with determination. With the support of the local authority, senior managers have improved systems for evaluating the school's performance and these are now satisfactory. This means that there is a clearer picture of what still needs improving. Senior managers and subject leaders know that they now need to do more to deal with the remaining inconsistencies in teaching across the school, and to check that recent initiatives continue to improve pupils' achievement.

Governance is satisfactory. In the last year, governors have taken greater responsibility for holding the school to account and ensuring that the right things are being done to improve provision.

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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	3
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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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.

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	3
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

3 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Middleton Cheney Community Primary School, Banbury, OX17 2PD

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work. We enjoyed talking to you about what you do in school and what you think about it. You are getting a satisfactory education, which means that we found some good things in the school and also other aspects that could be improved.

Some of the things we found out about your school:

- Satisfactory teaching means that you make steady progress as you move through the school. However, some of you should be doing even better, particularly in writing.
- You are happy at school and work hard in most lessons. You are keen to take responsibility but the school could give you more opportunities to do so.
- All adults in school are kind and caring and they provide you with many exciting things to do outside lessons.
- The school garden is great, and it is good that you have such a clear understanding of how to stay healthy.
- Most of your parents and carers are pleased that you come to this school.
- The leaders of your school know what needs improving and they are working hard to make sure that you learn more quickly.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- help you to do better in writing by ensuring that you are taught the right skills, such as how to spell correctly
- check that all the recent developments are helping each one of you to make the progress of which you are capable
- make sure that all your teachers always expect enough of you so that you can produce your best work
- give you more opportunities to take responsibility for things around school and for your learning, especially by giving you clear targets to help you to understand how to improve your work.

We wish you well for the future. We hope you continue to help your teachers by always working hard and trying to reach the targets that you are given. Yours sincerely Mr M Capper Lead Inspector

Annex B



3 October 2007

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Middleton Cheney Community Primary School,
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Yours sincerely
Mr M Capper
Lead Inspector