

Middleton Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124600
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328174
Inspection date	12 February 2009
Reporting inspector	John Paull

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	36
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Painter
Headteacher	Mrs Kath Cook
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Rectory Lane Middleton Saxmundham Suffolk IP17 3NW

Age group	4–9
Inspection date	12 February 2009
Inspection number	328174

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Age group	4-9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Middleton Primary School is much smaller than others of its type. Since 2005, it has collaborated in a federation with a neighbouring school. Older pupils from both schools are taught together for part of the week. The two schools share the same headteacher and their members of staff work as a team to carry out much of their planning. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is available for four to five year olds in a classroom with pupils in Years 1 and 2. The school serves five small villages in the locality, although some pupils travel from further afield. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds and none speaks English as an additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A slightly above average proportion of pupils finds it hard to learn for specific reasons, often associated with language difficulties. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. Assessed over time, attainment on entry is below average, although it varies greatly from year to year.

The school holds an Investor in People (2007) award and is part of an initial training scheme for teachers. It holds an eco-schools silver award and is accredited under the Healthy Schools and ActiveMark schemes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstandingly effective school has benefited strongly from the collaboration with a neighbouring school, brought about by federation. This is because, since the last inspection, outstanding leadership based on the sharing of management responsibilities, expertise and resources across the two schools has produced considerable improvement in what was an already good school. An outstanding curriculum, exceptionally well taught, has produced remarkable learning opportunities for all pupils, who consequently make progress at much faster rates than those usually expected. While standards fluctuate in the school's small year groups, by the time pupils leave in Year 4, their work is usually in excess of expected levels, sometimes significantly, in English, mathematics and science. Considering pupils' starting points, this means that achievement is outstanding and it is further borne out in their current work. In a lesson, together with pupils from the federated school, they learned about the repetition of sounds in words (alliteration). By the end, they understood the idea very effectively, producing some novel examples in their own writing. Improvements, particularly in presentation and spelling, have underscored very rapid progress in pupils' writing, which was an issue previously. Work is also of a high standard in other subjects, such as geography, history and music. Assessments towards the end of Year 2 indicate above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, based on very good progress and outstanding achievement. Pupils who find it harder to learn than others are supported very effectively. Precise individualised plans explain their needs and what should be done to help. Teachers and teaching assistants alike provide careful and exact guidance, so these pupils also make very rapid progress. Often they achieve at least the expected level for their age, despite their difficulties.

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is held back a little because pupils do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of different faiths, cultures and customs in the United Kingdom. That said, pupils' behaviour towards others is excellent. They are helpful, tolerant and unstintingly cooperative, working and playing together very harmoniously. They enjoy school greatly and attendance is outstanding. Their understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and taking exercise is exceptional. The school's much enriched curriculum provides plenty of opportunities for physical activity, exceeding national requirements for time spent in physical education and adding sports clubs and outdoor pursuits through Forest Schools provision. Teaching and learning are exceptional because the headteacher and subject leaders monitor and evaluate its effectiveness frequently. Whenever a need for improvement is observed, it is instantly addressed, because very high morale and teamwork are evident. All arrangements for care, guidance and support are outstandingly effective, meeting pupils' pastoral and academic needs equally strongly. Challenging targets are set, agreed with the local authority and nearly always met or even exceeded.

The headteacher's determination to achieve continuous improvement is remarkable. She is ably supported by staff across the federation and governors who are questioning, knowledgeable and able to provide strong strategic support. The success of this combination to date provides evidence of an outstanding capacity to sustain exceptional performance.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

By the time they leave the Reception year, children achieve exceptionally well. This is because nearly all of them make rapid progress and demonstrate skills close to or a little above expected goals across all areas of learning. The headteacher's extremely effective leadership and management has contributed much to this outstanding performance, accurately identifying what needs to be done to ensure such high achievement and putting it into place. This strong leadership ensures that staff share an entirely consistent approach to valuing each child, their ideas and their learning needs. In this very nurturing environment, children become increasingly sociable and rapidly gain confidence. During the inspection one of the youngest children displayed remarkable self-confidence, demonstrating to the whole class, including pupils in Years 1 and 2, how to make paper strong enough to support a weight. These strengths in relationships, which empower children and enable them to flourish, contribute to their impressive willingness to learn.

The staff are highly skilled at focusing on early literacy and mathematical skills, so children make exceptionally good progress in these areas. Because they have opportunities to develop their individual interests, they use their emerging social and communication skills to voice ideas and to make equally strong progress in exploring their knowledge and understanding of the world. For example, having seen adults using a camera, the children took their own photographs and then became very absorbed in exploring cameras of different vintages in the class 'museum'.

Despite this excellence, no complacency is evident. Instead, the headteacher and staff feel that they can still go further in improving provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is evident that their track record suggests that the capacity to succeed in this is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide pupils with specific opportunities to experience and learn about ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in the United Kingdom.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

By the time they leave in Year 4, nearly all pupils achieve outstandingly well. This is because outstanding teaching has been evident for a number of years, producing consistently rapid progress. Teachers frequently encourage the use of practical and research skills, which pupils thoroughly enjoy, ensuring full concentration and absorption in learning. As a result, progress continues at rates that are often considerably faster than those normally expected. By Year 4, standards in English, mathematics and science are currently well in excess of what are usual at that point. Pupils who find learning harder than others and those with gifts or particular talents receive exactly the correct, targeted support to produce progress at similarly high rates. In subjects such as geography, history and music, standards also often exceed normally expected levels. All these advanced academic skills, allied to their remarkable personal development, mean that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the future. Assessments towards the end of Year 2 indicate above average standards in 2007 and 2008. Subject leaders' tracking of progress and work seen during the inspection indicate that faster than average progress is currently being sustained in all years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils work and play together exceptionally well. Pupils from the two federated schools cooperate with each other in remarkably effective teams, whenever asked. Very harmonious relationships at all times contribute much to high rates of academic progress. They thoroughly enjoy collaborative learning and their attendance is well above average. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good - the first three elements especially so. Pupils know right from wrong and act almost unerringly on this knowledge. Their behaviour is outstanding. They are genuinely excited about the world and amazed at the variety of life that they learn about. While most elements of cultural development are strong, pupils lack opportunities to understand and experience Britain's rich ethnic diversity. Pupils are exceptionally clear and knowledgeable when they explain how to stay fit and healthy. They say that they always feel particularly safe in school, as they know that the adults will 'look after us very well indeed'. Parents confirm this view in questionnaires. Pupils contribute strongly to helping the school to run smoothly. They are always willing to carry out any helpful job for their teacher and involve themselves enthusiastically in causes and charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Highly effective evaluation of teaching, linked to thoroughly established developmental procedures to address any weakness, has resulted in constant improvements since the last inspection. Teaching and learning are now outstanding in all age groups. Innovative approaches and careful planning to meet the needs of individuals typify teaching. This is based on tight, accurate assessment, so what is taught is accurately targeted and provides exactly the correct level of challenge based on high expectations. Very rapid progress results from this. A lesson in the woodland area at the federated school offers an excellent example. Pupils were challenged to find ways of laying an effective trail, involving pupils' own trialling of methods and feeding back their findings. By the end, pupils of all abilities had experienced considerable success. Flexibility in teaching enabled able pupils to develop advanced skills for themselves. They discovered a surveying technique to keep a straight course when they needed it. Plenty of available support for other pupils ensured rapid progress for all. Opportunities for pupils to feedback their methods produced speaking and listening skills of a higher order.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding, with a highly successful emphasis on teaching skills in the context of cross-curricular themes. Personal, social and health education plays an impressive part, contributing highly effectively to pupils' personal development. The staff are highly skilled in planning topics that produce rapid progress across a broad range of subjects. As a result, pupils are often remarkably confident, from the youngest to the oldest, in applying what they know to new situations. Literacy and mathematical skills are prioritised highly effectively. The provision for information and communication technology is good and pupils often use it to support their work and to research information themselves. Enrichment through Forest Schools activities at the federated school, visits, visitors and well attended clubs also adds much to this remarkable curriculum. Many opportunities exist for pupils to play a musical instrument and they reward

the staff with high uptake levels. As one pupil remarked, 'We're doing Snape soon', referring to the school's upcoming performance in a festival at Snape Malting.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents are very complimentary about pastoral care, feeling that the staff look after their children very well indeed. The school's clearly written policies entirely match this confidence. In practice, these policies are closely followed and produce highly effective support to ensure pupils' well-being, so they feel safe and secure. Safeguarding and procedures for child protection meet requirements. Academically, pupils are guided outstandingly well. Marking of work conveys copious information to pupils about how they can make further progress. Systems to track their progress are particularly thorough. Subject leaders use the information to set challenging targets, which are shared with pupils across the federated schools, providing information at individual, school and federation levels. Individualised planning for pupils who struggle with learning is based on firm evidence and results in highly effective support and intervention programmes that produce very rapid progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Highly effective monitoring, evaluation and feedback by staff at all levels have ensured that teaching and learning are outstanding. Thorough tracking of pupils' progress indicates that this teaching results in sustained progress at very rapid rates and exceptional achievement. The federation contributes considerably, allowing more flexible use of expertise and finance than before and providing access to shared resources. This is leading to the achievement of outstanding value for money. The headteacher provides exceptional strategic leadership, working together with governors, to evaluate performance highly effectively and ensuring that everything possible is done to sustain high performance. Links with parents and outside agencies serve pupils very effectively. Expertise is sought and acted upon quickly to support any pupil with any type of barrier to effective learning. The headteacher's ease of communication and openness with parents has helped to secure their full support of the federation, in spite of some initial concerns. Together with willingness to take part in local events, this has helped to create a strong sense of community spirit. Staff are well aware of how this might be carried forward into ways of establishing wider cohesion, regionally and nationally.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

13 February 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Middleton Community Primary School, Middleton, IP17 3NW

Thank you for being so helpful when Mrs Bavin and I inspected your school. We thoroughly enjoyed the time we spent with you, looking at your work. We think that you are achieving outstandingly well. Many of you told us that you think your school is very good and we agree with you. We think that it is an outstanding school. This is because you are making very rapid progress and developing excellent personal and academic skills. We also enjoyed hearing about all the extra things that you do, such as visiting the woodland in your federated school, performing at Snape Malting and going on visits. All of this makes what you are taught interesting and exciting, and you definitely made it sound like that.

Here are some more important things that are exceptional in your school.

- Your work is nearly always at a higher level than that of children of the same age at most other schools.
- Your teachers teach and care for you exceptionally well.
- Your behaviour is outstanding.
- Your headteacher and teachers with management responsibilities have some excellent ideas for making sure that your school stays outstanding.
- What is taught is very rich and varied, providing you with excellent skills for your future.
- You know a tremendous amount about how to stay fit and healthy.

Here is something that we have asked your governors, headteacher and staff to do:

- help you to learn more about different faiths, cultures and customs in the United Kingdom to experience its richness more fully.

You can help by continuing to show how excited you are by learning new things. I wish you well in the future in all that you do.

John W. Paull

Lead inspector