

# Middlewich Primary School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	131727
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	328638
Inspection dates	10–11 February
Reporting inspector	John Coleman HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	376
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Thorp
Headteacher	Ms S H La Porta
Date of previous school inspection	December 2005
School address	Park Road Middlewich Cheshire CW10 9BS
Telephone number	01606 738880
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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff, pupils and a representative from the local authority. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence, including school policies and documents, the tracking system used to monitor pupils' progress, the work pupils complete in their books and the questionnaires completed by 125 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the rate and consistency of pupils' progress, especially in writing and for the highest attaining pupils
- the impact of the leadership's monitoring and evaluation on the standards which pupils reach.

## Information about the school

Middlewich Primary School is a two form entry school which is larger than average. There are about 55 pupils in each year group. The first two classes are the Reception classes, and they form the Early Years Foundation Stage. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post for less than 2 years. During this period more than half the teachers have changed. The school is situated close to the town centre. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage. A smaller than average proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals. There are a small number of looked-after children. Very few pupils attend for whom English is not their first language. The school offers specialist provision for pupils with hearing impairment. These pupils spend the majority of school time (70%) in lessons with all the other pupils, and the remainder receive individual teaching in special resource rooms.

## Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

### Main findings

This is a rapidly improving school where pupils are making increasingly good progress in their learning. Pupils enjoy their school life, not least because of the outstanding environment in which they work and play. The leadership, including governors, has successfully developed the school into a bright, attractive and highly motivating place, which encourages pupils to want to learn and improve. The school's evaluation is well informed and accurate. It provides a good basis for improvement planning. While there are opportunities for pupils to contribute to the wider school community, the school recognises that more could be done to include pupils' views in the school's improvement programme. Standards as seen by the most recently available published data are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. However, standards are rising, and quickly, due to the now mostly good quality of teaching and learning observed by inspectors. This demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve. The headteacher manages a dedicated team of staff who gain much from the school's effective programme of staff development. There are a significant number of recently appointed teachers, and they are very well supported by the school's mentoring and induction process. The result is that most lessons are good and some are outstanding. Pupils say that lessons are interesting.

Pupils who spoke to inspectors say that they feel safe in school because all the staff are caring and take notice of what they need. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful, warm and considerate. Efforts to integrate the pupils with hearing impairments are very successful, and they are included in most aspects of school. Specialist teaching for these pupils provides well for their specific needs and there is good liaison with the main class, so that their participation in curriculum activities is enhanced. During the inspection the 'signing choir' performed for a class of visiting pupils from a local primary school. They entertained with joy, great enthusiasm and worked in harmony together, to create a moving and spiritual experience. The choir included a cross section of pupils, including all those with hearing impairments.

There are rigorous systems in place to monitor much of the school's performance. These include senior leaders who regularly observe teaching and middle leaders who check on the quality of teachers' lesson planning and scrutinise the quality of pupils' work. The roles of teachers responsible for English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) are more developed than for other subjects, in that they also make frequent visits to lessons to monitor teaching and evaluate pupils' learning. In other subjects there is a shortage of knowledge about

the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, the senior leaders are not as well informed about performance in these subjects.

Data tracking to monitor pupils' progress is extensive, and provides the senior leaders, teachers and governors with good information about the attainment of the whole school and of different cohorts of pupils. However, the senior team do not sufficiently track the performance of groups such as pupils with learning difficulties or those with English as an additional language. At an individual level and for some groups such as the hearing impaired pupils, teachers collate detailed records so that they are well informed about the progress being made. This is used well to identify underachievement and to provide additional support.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by
  - ensuring that all teaching is consistently good
  - ensuring that all pupils make good progress
  - ensuring that senior leaders evaluate the progress of all groups of pupils to identify and address any potential underachievement
  - increasing the involvement and engagement of pupils in the school's improvement programme by canvassing their views more often.
- Ensure that all coordinators are highly effective in managing their subjects.

## How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

2
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In the majority of lessons observed by inspectors pupils made good progress. They show good attitudes to learning which help them to make the most out of the opportunities provided for them by their teachers. They enjoy lessons and particularly benefit from the many occasions where teachers encourage pupils to discuss their learning and to assess each other's work. Learning from each other is a characteristic of many lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress in lessons, helped and guided by well deployed teaching assistants who know the pupils' needs thoroughly. Pupils with hearing impairments also make good progress. Teaching assistants help them by signing and many other pupils also communicate effectively in this way.

Standards as measured by the most recent Year 6 national tests are broadly average. The school's focus on writing has successfully driven up standards in this subject, and pupils are currently on track to achieve the school's targets for English, mathematics and science in 2009. The higher attaining pupils are now similarly well placed to meet their targets. The school's data show that the progress being made

now by pupils throughout the school is good overall. Standards are rising although there are some small variations between subjects and year groups.

Other key features of pupil outcomes:

- the behaviour of pupils is good in lessons and around the school;
- the pupils enjoy school and their attendance is above average;
- many pupils take on extra responsibilities such as membership of the school council, as play leaders or as eco warriors. This enables them to be involved in the school's wider life and to develop personal and social skills;
- bullying is rare and pupils say that the staff deal with any problems quickly;
- They feel safe and can talk to a member of staff easily if they have any problems. Pupils say they feel listened to and that the school takes notice of what they say; and
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils respond well to the high expectations of the staff who consistently apply the schools' moral code. Opportunities for pupils to reflect and consider the needs of others are regularly provided, and as a result pupils develop considerate and respectful attitudes towards people of other faiths and cultures.
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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

## The quality of the school's work

The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding and most is good. Teachers plan very carefully and in great detail. A particular strength is the effective use of the school's assessments of pupils' attainment. This informs teachers' planning so that learning in lessons is well matched to pupils' needs. Clear objectives are in

<sup>1</sup> Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

place for the learning in each lesson, and these are graded for different groups of pupils. In the best lessons, teachers' delivery is lively and interesting and successfully captures pupils' imagination and secures their concentration. The classroom environment is organised to display many examples of pupils' work, which helps to consolidate their learning and celebrates their achievement. As a result, all classrooms are inviting, encouraging and help to motivate pupils in their work. Where teaching is satisfactory, it is because pupils have to listen for too long so that they lose interest and the pace of their learning slows. Teachers' marking of pupils' literacy work is excellent, and provides helpful feedback so that they know what to do to improve. This is well matched to the pupils' targets so that they are able to make sense of their learning. Pupils are knowledgeable about their targets. Support and guidance for pupils with hearing impairments and/or learning difficulties is good. Teaching assistants care well for these pupils, form good relationships and promote their learning effectively.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is enriched by a range of visits and visitors. There are good partnerships with local schools including the high school that successfully provides some specialist teaching in sport, mathematics, science and ICT. The vicar is a regular presence in school. A recent initiative is to link with a school in Kenya and pupils are beginning to develop ways of exchanging news and learning about this different culture and environment. The pupils appreciate the wide range of sports clubs after school and good numbers of different ages take part.

The support and care provided for pupils is well deployed, especially for those with hearing impairments. Teaching assistants know the pupils' needs well; they form good relationships and pupils express confidence in the guidance they receive.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	2

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has built an effective staff team which shares her strong drive towards improving the school. In partnership with the governors, the senior team has improved the school's provision so that standards are rising. The many teaching staff changes have been well managed through rigorous recruitment procedures. New staff are well supported. Effective monitoring systems are used well to identify areas for improvement. Whole school evaluations are largely accurate, and agree with the inspection's findings. The quality of teaching has been raised due to effective staff development which targets the new skills and knowledge needed by staff. The school improvement plan comprehensively details the areas for improvement drawn out of the school's evaluations. Middle leaders also produce subject plans which are reviewed regularly.

The school effectively promotes equalities, as shown by the inclusive way in which pupils with hearing impairments are enabled to take a full part in the opportunities provided by the school. The inspectors' observations of lessons and examination of pupils' work show that pupils with different learning needs are supported well through varied activities and the effective support of teaching assistants. The school does not, however, sufficiently monitor at a whole school level the progress of all groups of pupils.

The chair of governors is knowledgeable about the school's strengths and relative weaknesses. Governors are well informed by regular reports from the headteacher, senior and middle leaders. They have a range of committees and meet statutory requirements. They are determined and focused in the drive to raise standards and are effective in holding the school to account for its performance. Community cohesion is effectively promoted through pupils' involvement in fundraising, helping with the elderly, links with the church, partnerships with other schools, and through the curriculum which enables pupils to develop respect and understanding of different cultures and religions. Safeguarding procedures are in place and the required checks are made on staff. The school's relationship with parents and carers is good. Regular reports inform parents about their child's progress and newsletters keep them up to date about school events and achievements. The school has a good website which is kept up to date and provides a variety of useful information such as the full school prospectus.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start in their education. The school works closely with a range of pre-school providers to help ensure that children make the transition to the Reception class smoothly. Most children begin with skills and knowledge which are similar to the age related expectations seen nationally. The staff prioritise the development of children's language and communication skills and good progress is made by most children.



Very effective teaching of phonics means that children quickly develop confidence in speaking and make good progress in learning early reading and writing skills. As a result, children enter Year 1 with skills in these areas which are above those expected of this age. In all other areas of learning children have similar skills to those of most other children nationally. The Early Years Foundation Stage environment is a busy, bright and attractive area. Good use is made of the outdoors and the provision successfully includes all of the required areas of learning.

Children are happy and enjoy learning, because the staff prepare interesting and varied activities which include focused play and these ensure children concentrate well. They are well behaved, cooperative and develop good social skills. Assessment procedures make sure that each child's progress is carefully monitored so that their individual needs are well provided for. However, the identification of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is at a very early stage of development. Staff take good care of the children and welfare requirements are met as required.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2

## Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents' responses on the questionnaires are positive and in support of the school. In particular, the school's leadership and that of the headteacher are praised by several parents. Many parents commented on how happy their children are going to school each day. There were some negative responses about the information given to parents about pupils' progress, and about the rate of pupils' progress itself. The school sends out regular information including annual reports and inspectors judge that this is suitable. This report makes clear that some pupils in the school do have a legacy of satisfactory progress, but the inspection judgement is that pupils are now making good progress. A number of replies indicated that parents could be helped more to support learning, and this is in keeping with a small number of concerns about homework. Inspectors judge that the school's homework policy is appropriate and the school acknowledges that more effort is needed to communicate this to parents.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



12 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Middlewich Primary School, Cheshire, CW10 9BS

Thank you for helping us when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed meeting everyone and you welcomed us very well. We judged that your school is a good school and these are the main things we liked.

- Your headteacher and the staff and governors are improving lots of things in the school.
- You have excellent classrooms which are bright and where there are good displays of your work.
- The progress that you make and the standards of your work are improving very quickly.
- Teaching is good and you enjoy lessons and behave well.

Your headteacher and the staff know what needs to be done to make your school even better and are already starting to improve many things. We have said that the school needs to:

- raise the standards which you reach in English, mathematics and science by:
  - continuing the good rate at which you now learn
  - providing you with an increased number of good lessons
  - ensuring that the school's senior leadership measure how much progress different groups of pupils are making
  - involving you more in all the plans which the school has to improve your education and school life
- ensure that all teachers are highly effective in managing their subjects.

Best wishes and good luck in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Coleman  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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