

Middleton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134071
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	328818
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	415
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 Samantha Summers
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Miller
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Noon Layer Drive Middleton Milton Keynes MK10 9EN
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Middleton is larger than most primary schools. About three quarters of the pupils are of White British heritage and there are a few from a wide range of other minority ethnic groups. None are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, though the proportion of those having statements of special educational need is double the national average. Most of these pupils have specific learning difficulties. The school has gained the Investors in People and Healthy School Awards. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two Reception classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Middleton is a good school. It has made across-the-board improvements in both its provision and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection. The care and welfare of the pupils are at the heart of all that the staff do, so pupils feel safe, confident and at ease at school. As one parent commented, 'My son has been with the school since the day it opened and he has just about enjoyed every day. Everyone looks after the children so well and he has grown into a young person who has had his confidence, self-esteem and knowledge developed really well by the school.' The inspection confirms this parent's views.

Personal development and well-being are excellent. Pupils behave exceptionally well, and thoroughly enjoy school and learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of most aspects of the school. However, a number said that their views were not sought and acted upon. These areas were investigated as part of the inspection. The school's procedures are satisfactory and are similar to those commonly found. Communication is good because there is a regular and steady flow of newsletters. Opportunities for parents to meet with teachers on a formal basis to discuss their children's progress are similar to other schools. However, due to the steadily growing size of the school, parents are not able easily to meet with staff before school because parking is now severely limited. Parents do not enter the school in the morning, which speeds the movement of cars. These arrangements are appropriate now the school has grown to its current size. The school plans to compensate for this by providing regular times for staff to meet with parents after school.

Pupils' progress has been accelerated since the previous inspection. Children enter the Reception classes with skills that are broadly similar to those typically found and they make good progress, so that a large majority attain the expected goals in all areas of learning. Although progress in the past has been satisfactory in most year groups, this is not now the case. Progress is now good in all year groups and pupils currently in Year 6 have attained standards that are well above average in English and mathematics. However, standards in science remain at the national average because too few pupils reach the higher level at the end of Year 6. These standards mark good achievement from their average starting points.

The overall strengthening of achievement is due to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. This is now good and teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have been lifted. Most lessons move at a brisk pace and ensure that pupils are productive. Classrooms present as calm and purposeful places in which pupils enjoy working together because teachers' behaviour management is excellent and results in strong relationships. Pupils are often very well involved in their learning through strategies such as 'talking partners' and evaluating their own and others' work. However, this is not consistently the case across all classes. Senior staff are keenly aware of the need to ensure that pupils clearly understand what they are expected to learn and how they can improve their work in order to meet lesson objectives.

The improvements have been due to a strong and appropriate focus on raising standards, particularly in English and mathematics, driven by the headteacher. Her leadership and management are outstanding. She has a clear vision for the school, has raised morale and has very effectively developed teamwork, because all members of staff know that their contributions are invited and valued. She is ably assisted by senior staff and has introduced excellent systems to check pupils' progress that enable any pupils that are in danger of falling behind to be quickly

spotted. The resulting data are used exceptionally well to target future teaching and learning for all groups of pupils. This rigour and regular reviewing ensures that teachers are clear about the rates of progress that are expected and they meet the challenging targets that permeate classroom work.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in the Reception classes because the teaching is consistently good. Almost all attain the expected goals and many exceed them. Children's personal, social and emotional development is outstanding and this is reflected in almost all children gaining the expected goals in this area. Children are happy and settled due to the strong emphasis placed on building positive relationships with children and their parents. One parent's comment that 'the school is exceptional in dealing with children's needs as they enter the school for the first time' reflected the general view and confirms inspection evidence that provision for children's welfare is outstanding.

Children offer suggestions about what they want to learn next in their topics during the Friday 'planning meetings' with their teachers, and activities the following week are prepared around their ideas. In learning about families, for example, children were planning a 'wedding'. This involved writing invitations and sending replies, making paper flowers, baking play dough cakes, and getting ready to act out the ceremony. Such involvement gives meaning and purpose to the learning and promotes children's social and language skills will. It also promotes their creative development. A stimulating range of indoor and outdoor resources capture children's interest and contribute much to their social and physical development. Alongside activities initiated by the children, teachers systematically introduce them to letters and sounds and numbers. A strong focus on early writing and calculation skills has led to improved standards. However, staff are rightly sustaining the drive to help children achieve as well in these areas as they do in others.

Outstanding leadership and management ensure that the provision is reviewed regularly. Meticulous recording of children's progress across all areas of learning enables staff to identify and plan for the next stages of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress in science and lift the proportion of pupils gaining the higher level (Level 5).
- Develop the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers consistently enable pupils to understand what they have to do to meet lesson objectives.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good throughout the school. Although in the past standards have been at the national average at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, because progress has been boosted, this is not now the case. In consequence, pupils currently in Year 2 have attained standards that are above expected levels in reading and writing and are at the national level in mathematics. Achievement is good in Years 3 and 4 and accelerates in Years 5 and 6 and results in significantly above-average standards at the end of Year 6. The school has been particularly successful in raising the proportion of pupils who gain the higher level at the end of Year 6 in English and

mathematics, though not in science. This is because work is carefully tailored to meet the needs of all groups of pupils and is particularly the case for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who make very good progress towards their individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are very enthusiastic about learning and are extremely well mannered, friendly and relaxed. Spiritual development is particularly strong because assemblies and other aspects of the school such as the 'Kaleidoscope' room, which is a multi-sensory room, provide opportunities for pupils to think and reflect. Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to school and this is reflected in excellent attendance. They get on exceptionally well together and very willingly take responsibility, such as being playground buddies and mentors for new pupils into the school. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the need to lead a healthy lifestyle and also to stay safe. The school council take their role seriously. They are very proud of their achievements and the contributions that they are making to make the school a safer and healthier place. This includes the gaining of the Healthy School Award. Pupils comment on how keen they are to learn about different cultures and speak confidently about their experience of 'multicultural weeks'. They are well prepared for later life. This was seen strongly in the Year 6 production of *Olivia* when pupils' leadership, group working and speaking and listening skills were used very well to ensure a successful performance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers forge excellent relationships with their pupils. They manage them well, have high expectations of behaviour and deal firmly and sensitively with the rare incidences of unacceptable conduct. Lessons are planned carefully with good quality activities that interest and engage pupils. Tasks are now much better tailored to meet the varying needs of the pupils in the class. Tasks are clearly explained and lesson objectives invariably shared. However, the identified success criteria are not always referred to during lessons. This limits pupils' understanding of what is expected of them and progress slows. Nonetheless, there are some outstanding examples of this in the very best lessons. For example, in a Year 3 literacy lesson pupils developed key characteristics of the genre of podcasting, and the teacher then cleverly used these as success criteria for the pupils' own podcast writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There has been an improvement in the curriculum since the previous inspection and it is now good. Teachers increasingly provide activities that make links between subjects. This enhances pupils' enthusiasm for learning and enjoyment of lessons. For example, when studying Roman Britain, Year 3 pupils developed their writing skills, producing information sheets about Roman schools, baths and food. Their secure understanding of the conditions under which Roman soldiers lived was evident in pupils' imaginative 'Letters home from Britain'. There are some good opportunities for pupils to practise and consolidate their numeracy and computer skills across the curriculum. This is embedded well in Years 1 and 2, though there are inconsistencies in Key Stage 2.

Rather than base their planning on specific content to be learned, teachers frequently determine what pupils already know about a subject and ask them what they would like to find out. This gives their learning real meaning and relevance, at the same time ensuring the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. Art, music and drama play a significant part in the life of the school and contribute much to pupils' cultural development. Pupils take full advantage of the wide range of after school activities available to them. Residential visits promote pupils' independence and social skills very well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides an extremely calm, orderly and safe environment. The warmth and friendliness of the school is a reflection of the excellent pastoral care. This is particularly beneficial for vulnerable pupils who are included in the wide range of activities provided. The school is rightly proud of its very caring ethos. The procedures to ensure that pupils are safe are very well established and fully meet requirements. There is a sense of belonging in the community and the school works extremely well to engage families from different ethnic backgrounds. The school uses external agencies very well when necessary. The learning mentor plays a significant role in supporting pupils when they are faced with difficult family circumstances. Pupils' academic performance is very carefully monitored through a rigorous system of pupil tracking and progress meetings for mathematics and English. This has been instrumental in improving standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior leaders work closely as a team and have ensured that provision has strengthened and that achievement has improved since the previous inspection. Management is good and is reflected in the school gaining the Investors in People Award. High-quality performance management arrangements ensure that teachers receive additional training and support when it is needed. Subject leaders take a lead in checking standards and they monitor provision well. All members of staff share their determination to ensure that the improvement to standards is maintained. This has been achieved through the excellent school-wide evaluation processes and the outstanding use that is made of targets resulting from the analysis of needs. Development planning is of good quality and focuses on a few important priorities. Progress towards the success criteria is checked regularly by both staff and governors to maintain the drive for improvement. The improvements made since the previous inspection demonstrate a good capacity for further improvement.

The school is rightly proud of its inclusive nature. All pupils, whatever their background, are included in activities. Community cohesion is of good quality. The school promotes a good partnership with the local community. For example, the school council meets with the local Parish Council to gain their views on local issues. It is strong in the way it promotes tolerance. Partnerships with a wide range of outside professionals ensure that pupils gain an appreciation of other faiths and cultures and they are consequently prepared well for life in a multicultural Britain. However, links with communities globally are at an early stage of development.

Governance is good. Governors support the school well and are deeply committed to its further improvement. They are now much more involved in the monitoring of the school's provision

and are much less reliant on the headteacher for information than they were previously. They fulfil their role of providing challenge to the school well.

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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?	2
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	1

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 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	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	2
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**

04 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Middleton Primary School, Milton Keynes, MK10 9EN

We enjoyed meeting with you and listening to what you had to say about your school. We thought that the production of Olivia was wonderful! We see that you go to a good school. We can understand why you enjoy your learning so much.

This letter is to tell you what we found when we came to your school.

- Both you and your parents told us that you feel safe in school. This is because all the adults look after you so exceptionally well and make sure that you are happy and safe and that you thoroughly enjoy your time at school.
- Your teachers teach you well and help you to learn lots of interesting new things and they take care to make sure that your lessons are exciting and just hard enough to make you think.
- You work hard, behave outstandingly well, and are kind to each other.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy. You told us about what you like to eat and the sports you like to play.

Even in such a good school like yours there are things which could be improved and we have asked your headteacher and the staff to do two things. First, we want them to make sure that you do as well in science at the end of Year 6 as you do in English and mathematics. Second, we want your teachers to make sure that you always know what you have to do to meet the lesson objectives.

I hope that you will all keep on working hard and enjoy your time at school.

Yours faithfully

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector