

Middlefield Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104591
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	336335
Inspection dates	26–27 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Sheila Nolan

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	292
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Wilson
Headteacher	Mrs Paula Judd
Date of previous school inspection	8 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 17 lessons taught by 16 teachers. They held meetings with the headteacher, senior leadership team, teaching staff, governors and pupils and met informally with parents and carers at the start of the school day. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' written work in lessons, the school's documents including its improvement plan, systems for tracking the pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation and school policies. They also considered the views of staff expressed in 16 questionnaires and those of 61 parents and carers in their responses to questionnaires. Inspectors also took account of the 48 responses from pupils in Key Stage 2.

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

- whether the current quality of teaching and learning is sufficient to ensure improvements in pupils' attainment
- how well the school is using assessment data to secure improvement for all groups of pupils, including those in the unit for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, for boys and for the most able pupils
- the steps the school is taking to improve attendance and how successful these have been
- the success of the school's leaders in raising expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Information about the school

Middlefield Community School mainly serves families from its immediate locality. The school roll has declined from its high in 2002 because of a reduction in the overall population in the area. Few pupils come from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. Over half of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well above that found nationally as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These special educational needs and/or disabilities relate to a range of barriers to learning, mainly behavioural, emotional and social difficulties as well as moderate learning difficulties. The school also hosts an 18-place unit for pupils who have severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. More pupils join or leave the school throughout the year than is found in schools nationally. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award and the advanced level Inclusion Charter Mark among its range of accreditation.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The most important feature of Middlefield is that it provides its pupils with a satisfactory education in a climate that makes every child feel included. 'The teachers made a difference. I am very grateful to them for giving me a chance.' This comment from a pupil in the unit sums up the views of the overwhelming majority of pupils and of many parents and carers. A real strength of the school is its good care and support for pupils and their families, built upon strong partnerships with other agencies.

Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 is average and has remained broadly similar to that at the time of the previous inspection in 2007, despite the school closing the gap between the attainment of boys and girls. The school's current information on pupils' attainment indicates that there is a trend of improvement in all year groups. Pupils are gradually improving their reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2, for example. Boys' writing remains a particular weakness. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress over their time in the school.

The headteacher and her team have improved teaching and learning by tackling inadequate and satisfactory practice. Teaching remains satisfactory overall and there is still not enough good teaching. Professional development has been especially effective in Years 5 and 6 where pupils make the fastest progress and teaching is good. These improvements have taken time and teaching in these year groups has had to help children catch up on previous underachievement. Children make a sound start in the Early Years Foundation Stage where they make satisfactory progress in most areas of learning.

The clear and purposeful leadership of the headteacher is making a difference. All staff understand that academic performance must rise and most senior leaders have an accurate and realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Attendance has improved significantly. Systems to track pupils' performance are in place, although these do not yet chart accurately enough the progress of groups of pupils based on their particular needs. Initiatives to develop the curriculum, for example by increasing the focus on science, are underway as are plans to help leaders at all levels develop their management skills. The school has clearly demonstrated its sound capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that a majority is good in order to accelerate the rate of pupils' progress by July 2011 through:

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- using consistent strategies across subjects to enable boys to improve their writing skills
- ensuring that marking and feedback always help pupils to improve their work
- making sure that lessons regularly build solidly on previous learning.
- Develop the curriculum in order to enhance pupils' experiences by:
 - ensuring that there is continuity between Reception and Year 1
 - giving more prominence to science and subjects other than English and mathematics in the planned themed curriculum.
- Develop the skills of leaders at all levels to drive up attainment through their use of assessment information to chart pupils' progress.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The quality of learning and progress in lessons is satisfactory overall but good in Years 5 and 6. This was particularly evident in a mixed-age literacy lesson for these pupils where they enjoyed the role play as super heroes and made fast progress in their oral and writing skills because of the imaginative planning and resources for the session. These able pupils enjoyed the challenge of extending their vocabulary and of sharing with a partner their biography of a super hero. Generally, pupils with previous behavioural, emotional and social difficulties cooperate well in class because of the warm working relationships between pupils and staff. The latter unfailingly model good attitudes to collaborative working and this has a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. Pupils in some year groups, however, lose enthusiasm in lessons when they have to listen for too lengthy periods, particularly when seated on the carpet. In a few lessons seen, some found it difficult to maintain concentration because the teacher's explanation was too challenging for them. These features explain why pupils' rate of progress, although improving, remains satisfactory overall. Pupils enrolled in the unit for those with severe, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties make good progress in their social skills but their academic progress is broadly similar to that of other pupils. Attainment in science, however, has declined because the school has focused mainly on literacy and numeracy in its drive to improve pupils' performance. Able pupils still do less well than their peers nationally in science.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school, although a few confuse their disagreements with bullying. They show their pride in Middlefield in their good behaviour and in their unfailing courtesy to each other and adults on the corridors. They do their best to contribute to their school community. Pupils in Years 5 and 6, for example, are keen to give their support for the infants and adhere well to their agreed code of conduct for helping staff and children alike. Pupils' moral, social and spiritual development is good but their understanding of different cultures is limited. The majority of pupils attend regularly although there are still a small number of families whose circumstances have

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made them hard to reach who have not yet responded to efforts to support them. Pupils' improving basic skills and positive attitudes to learning indicate that they are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. They have a good sense of how to stay healthy and are keen participants in sport.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Pupils whose circumstances make them most vulnerable benefit greatly from the school's strong links with external agencies and the good care, guidance and support which is at the centre of the school's work. Middlefield's compassionate approach to their needs allows those with troubled histories to feel secure. The support for families, led by learning mentors, has had an impressive impact on pupils' attendance, for example. The curriculum has previously had a narrow focus on literacy and numeracy, with insufficient attention paid to subjects such as science. It is increasingly related thoughtfully to widening pupils' experiences and interests. The enrichment opportunities outside of the timetable are now planned to coincide with topics in classroom work. The school understands, however, that there is more to do to smooth the transition for

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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pupils from the Reception classes into Year 1 as many pupils find it difficult to cope with the change.

The school has efficient systems to evaluate accurately the quality of teaching. Although there have been improvements made to teaching, there is still work to be done to improve it further and more quickly. There are examples of good and outstanding teaching in some year groups but, equally, much that is satisfactory.

In a good mathematics lesson for Years 5 and 6, pupils worked very well independently, motivated by beating the clock and their previous scores as well as by the effective use of rewards and recognition. Teachers generally have very good relationships with their classes and this underpins pupils' positive attitudes to learning and the consequent improvements in their rates of progress. Those pupils who have particular learning barriers are supported well because teaching assistants focus sharply on their needs when working with them in groups.

Despite these positive features, lengthy explanations and too little space for reflection detract from learning in some classes. Teachers routinely make the purpose of lessons clear to pupils but do not always ensure that new work builds securely on previous learning. The marking of pupils' work is regular but it does not consistently set pupils helpful targets on how to improve their work. Until very recently, not all staff have paid enough attention to ensuring that boys have effective opportunities to extend their writing skills.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

On taking over the leadership of the school, the headteacher quickly identified the actions needed to bring about improvements. Most pressing was the need to improve the quality of teaching, pupils' performance in basic skills, their attendance and their behaviour. Consistently high expectations, since the last inspection, have led to the school now being a purposeful place for children to enjoy learning. The school is very inclusive, committed to promoting equal opportunities and to eradicating any discrimination. The realisation of this ambition is currently satisfactory because it is not yet translated into consistently good progress for pupils. There is still underachievement among able pupils, particularly in science and to a lesser extent in mathematics. Nevertheless, some senior and middle leaders are beginning to use performance data well to hold staff to account for the progress of their pupils. This is helping to identify

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and close gaps in the performance of different groups of pupils. For example, boys at the end of Year 2 have closed the gap with girls in all but writing. Governors support the school well and are gradually growing in confidence to challenge it about its performance.

All requirements in relation to the safeguarding of children are in line with recommended good practice. The school has been successful in forging strong partnerships with a wide range of external agencies to promote pupils' welfare. It has been effective, too, in developing the way parents and carers engage with the school's work. The school is a harmonious community and makes a strong contribution to the promotion of community cohesion within the local area. Its strategy at the national and international levels, however, is at an early stage of development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the school with a wide range of skills and understanding but they are often below average overall. They make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and the Reception classes but by the time they begin Year 1 their skills typically are still below the expectations for their age. Children are safe, happy and get along with one another. Warm relationships pervade the unit and the welfare of children is a high priority. Support for children whose circumstances make them vulnerable is excellent. Partnerships with parents and carers, and external agencies are used well to provide specialist help when needed.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory.

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Adults have an adequate knowledge and understanding of this stage but staffing turbulence means that inexperienced staff, currently, have only limited guidance on how to make the best use of the school's new exciting environment. Children enjoy the indoor and outdoor play areas but staff do not always have a sufficient focus on why certain activities are planned. Staff are developing useful assessment and observation procedures and these are gradually making an impact on how future activities are planned.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

All of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaires are very supportive of the school. There are minor concerns expressed by the few about the size of the school gate, which they see as too narrow. Inspectors did not share this concern as this gate is carefully managed to ensure pupils' safety. Inspectors agree with parents and carers that the school cares well for their children. However, they judge that pupils' progress and the quality of teaching are satisfactory overall and not good, as parents and carers believe.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Middlefield Community Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 292 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	62	22	36	0	0	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	42	69	19	31	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	42	69	17	28	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	74	15	25	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	67	20	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	66	21	34	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	62	22	36	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	36	59	24	39	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	61	24	39	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	59	24	39	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	56	26	43	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	39	64	22	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	75	14	23	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Middlefield Community Primary School, Liverpool, L24 2UE

Thank you very much for your courtesy and kindness to us when we visited your school recently. We found that you were helpful and well behaved almost all of the time. We were really pleased to see that you treat each other with respect both in the playground and around the school. Thank you to those of you who took the time from your busy day to speak to us.

Your teachers have worked really hard to provide you with a satisfactory education. Above all, they really care about you and make sure you are well looked after. Your work in lessons is improving because you are working well together with the staff to make sure you do well in English and mathematics. Your attendance has improved because the school has worked hard with your families to emphasise that you cannot learn if you are not present.

We have asked the staff to do a number of things to help the school improve even further. We would like teachers to teach well as often as they can. We also want staff not only to mark your books regularly but to give you more help on how to improve your work. We have asked that they especially focus on helping the boys to improve their writing, on giving you even richer experiences than you already get in lessons and on making sure that they track your progress ever more thoroughly.

For your part, you can help by keeping up your present efforts in lessons and by making sure you try as hard as possible not to take time off. We hope that you will show the same very good manners outside of school as we have seen within Middlefield.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Nolan

Lead inspector

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