

Middlefield Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110716
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	337553
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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 of pupils on the school roll	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Gill
Headteacher	Susannah Connell
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, which included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school's improvement plan and also pupils' work. In addition, the responses of 83 parents' questionnaires were analysed and their comments taken into account.

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

- the progress of pupils in Key Stage 2 and whether Year 6 pupils are on track to meet their targets
- the key features of teaching that lead to stronger learning
- how well teachers with responsibilities support the school's monitoring and evaluation processes
- the quality of provision in the Early Years' Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

Middlefield Primary School serves the local area. A few pupils come from the surrounding area. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils that have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.

Middlefield has earned Eco-school and Sports Activemark awards. The school provides a breakfast club, which is managed by the governors.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Middlefield is a good school. There have been across-the-board improvements since the previous inspection. The headteacher's inspirational leadership has transformed the school into one where pupils flourish in both their academic and personal development. There is an overwhelming atmosphere of support and high levels of care that help the pupils to develop a love of learning and school. Parents are rightly highly supportive of the school and recognise the improvements made. Their many comments are summarised by the parent who wrote, 'We have a very special school. The school just keeps getting better and better and I think the entire teaching staff should be praised for this.'

The pupils make good progress and achieve well throughout the school. They make particularly good progress in Years 1 and 2 and, as a result, standards in Year 2 assessments are now significantly above average and are exceptionally high in writing. This is because there is a rich curriculum through which pupils are encouraged to learn and play together and the activities provided are exciting and challenging. Pupils' good progress continues in Years 3 to 6 and, even though there is a legacy of some past underachievement, particularly in Years 3 and 4, pupils achieve well and current Year 5 and 6 pupils are on course to attain standards that are above average. The weakness in pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6, which was identified in the previous inspection, has been tackled successfully. Pupils' progress has improved because teachers are clear about what progress is expected from each group of pupils. They are able to do this because they generally make good use of the revised data that tracks all pupils' progress. Although the data helps teachers to set work that is challenging for all groups, it is not consistently the case, particularly in mathematics.

One of the keys to the school's improvement has been the development of teaching. Teachers invariably outline what is to be learned in each lesson. In most lessons, they clearly identify what the pupils have to do to meet lesson objectives. Marking is thorough and supportive, although there is a weakness: teachers' comments do not always relate to the intended outcomes of lessons and hence pupils are not clear about how to improve. Relationships are excellent and classrooms have a calm and purposeful atmosphere in which pupils relish the challenges provided for them.

The school's curriculum has been transformed since the previous inspection. In both wings of the school, the central areas are used exceptionally well for shared learning. Lessons in these areas are skilfully led by support staff and they provide an enticing range of activities that support the pupils' development. Because teaching in the 'Discovery Zone' is in small groups, pupils thrive and produce high quality work. Attainment in art is high and the many displays of high-quality artwork are testament to

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this.

The school is successful and has improved considerably because the headteacher has created an ethos in which all members of staff and pupils are valued and respected. Teamwork amongst the staff is strong and morale is high. School self-evaluation is honest and accurate and, as a result, leaders set appropriately challenging whole-school targets. Governance is satisfactory. In the past, governors have been over-reliant on the headteacher for information and they are only just beginning to find out about the provision for themselves. The new chair of governors shares a determination for the school's continuing improvement. The school's good capacity for further improvement is demonstrated in the improvements in provision and the vigorous way in which leaders are working to good effect to drive up standards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop more consistency in teaching by;
 - ensuring that teachers' plans always provide learning activities that are matched to the pupils' needs, particularly in mathematics
 - focusing teachers' marking on the intended learning outcomes from lessons.
 - Strengthen the role of governors by ensuring that governors regularly visit the school to find out for themselves about provision and attainment.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Progress is good in all year groups. Pupils' thorough enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance. Progress is particularly strong in Years 1 and 2 because pupils have benefited from consistently good teaching and from the many rich opportunities that are provided for them to learn. This they do with high levels of concentration and enjoyment. Pupils collaborate well and teachers provide exciting and challenging tasks. Progress in Years 3 to 6 has not been as strong in the past because there has been a legacy of some underachievement, which has slowed learning, particularly in mathematics. However, this has been overcome and pupils are now progressing well in reading, writing and mathematics. Results in national tests for Year 6 have been at the national average for the past three years. However, the school's monitoring and tracking data suggests that pupils are on track to meet their challenging targets. Many of the Year 6 pupils are already attaining standards that are at the national expectation for pupils at the end of Year 6.

Pupils are proud of their school and of what they achieve. One pupil commented, 'My teacher jokes and makes lessons fun. Everyone in my class helps me if I get stuck. My class is like a family that learns.' Behaviour is outstanding throughout the school and is characterised by general helpfulness, courtesy and good manners. Pupils say that bullying is a thing of the past. By the time that they leave school, Year 6 pupils have become thoughtful, mature and responsible young people who appreciate that they have been part of an inclusive and supportive school.

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Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. They make very sensible choices about what they are going to eat, and participate very enthusiastically in outdoor activities. Outdoor learning is very strong across the whole school and is woven into many lessons, including in Years 3 to 6, and this helps to promote an active lifestyle. Pupils have an outstanding appreciation of staying safe. They understand the importance, for example, of internet safety and pupils regularly undertake good quality risk assessments for different activities and aspects of the school. This is particularly the case with the school farm. The pupils know about keeping chickens and rabbits, and the safety requirements that are associated with this. In addition, the pupils develop a caring understanding for the environment and they proudly talk about protecting the school environment. This is evidenced by the school gaining the Eco School award. Pupils also thrive on the many opportunities for them to take responsibility, such as by being part of the influential school council or being playground buddies at lunchtime.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

An outstanding atmosphere of support and care permeates all the classrooms. There is

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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a very happy working atmosphere. Adults get on very well with pupils and work hard to make learning exciting. Pupils' progress is good because teachers involve pupils well in their learning and help them to become independent. Teachers question pupils well and make good use of ensuing information to challenge and extend learning. Learning is good because teaching is generally pitched at the right level for all pupils. Occasionally, this is not so and work is sometimes too easy which leads to a slowing of learning particularly in mathematics. Hence, learning is good because teaching is generally, although not always, pitched at the right level for all pupils. Learning targets are used well in lessons but this is not always reflected in teachers' marking. Teachers are skilled in their use of information and communication technology (ICT), both in preparing their lessons and in the use of interactive whiteboards as a tool for introducing new learning and demonstrating skills and techniques.

The good curriculum is enriched by a wide range of additional activities that the pupils thoroughly enjoy. Many visitors to the school enliven learning and the outdoor environment is used exceptionally well to enhance many subjects across the curriculum. The school's personal, social and health education is good and has a positive impact on the good outcomes for pupils, particularly in the promotion of courtesy, respect and good citizenship, which is evident throughout the school. Although teachers plan for literacy work across the curriculum, which helps to make learning more meaningful, the task of doing this for ICT and mathematics is at an earlier stage.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress towards their individual targets because there is intensive personalised support for them. The good quality breakfast club makes a significant contribution to the school's care and support systems.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is deeply committed to ensuring that the many recent improvements are maintained and built upon. The headteacher's ambitions and the strong drive for improvement are already firmly embedded and shared by the staff. There is a deep commitment to equal opportunities that is demonstrated in the care taken to involve all pupils in the life of the school and the commitment to accelerating learning for all groups of pupils. Safeguarding arrangements are given due attention and are thorough. Teachers with responsibilities lead and manage their areas well. Systems for evaluating

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school effectiveness involve all members of staff and lead to a high-quality improvement plan. Nonetheless, there is rightly an improvement target to ensure that subject leaders become more involved in the monitoring of teaching.

Prudent financial management and astute targeting of resources have ensured that the school gives good value for money. The school environment is excellent. Much thought and attention has been given to making sure that all the learning spaces are resourced well. Shared areas are particularly well resourced and contribute well to the overall learning environment. The outdoor spaces have also benefitted from careful consideration and are used exceptionally well to enhance learning. Classrooms are bright and colourful and reflect the pupils' high-quality work. There is a very strong sense of cohesion within the school community and careful planning has ensured that community cohesion beyond the school is good. Links have been made with schools in Peterborough and Abu Dhabi and the pupils benefit from being involved in the local church's link with a village in Ghana. Even though the school has had visits from other religious groups such as Sikh and Hindi parents, the staff recognise that there is a need to develop pupils' understanding of other cultures further.

There are good relationships with parents who are provided with a good range of information about their children's progress. A closed 'Facebook' account enables parents to make comments about the school and is serving as an excellent means by which parents and the staff can communicate with each other.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
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The children make a good start in the Reception class, where they are well cared for and where firm foundations are laid for future learning. Children come to school with lower levels of skills than are usual for their age because, for some, aspects of personal and social development and communication and language skills are underdeveloped. They make good progress in all areas of learning, so that almost all of them reach the expected levels by the time they join Year 1. Very good progress is made in developing personal and social skills because of the strong emphasis placed upon this during their first months in school. Children quickly become familiar with daily routines and respond very well to adults. The children are motivated and interested in the tasks on offer, and show confidence in mixing with older pupils in the shared learning areas. The children are happy to take on the role of helpers, and behaviour is very good. They develop an understanding of how to stay safe and healthy because of the emphasis placed upon this by staff who understand children's needs well. The children enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities both indoors and out. For example, during the inspection, one group worked together to make vegetable soup based on the story *The Enormous Turnip*. Others, despite the rain, enjoyed a 'weather walk'. On their return, they excitedly told others about what they had seen, including 'singing drains'. The staff are skilled at promoting positive attitudes to learning, especially during the settling-in period. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that there is a strong focus on children's good progress and promoting their welfare. Recent improvements to outdoor areas have extended the range of experiences for the children, promoting exploration and discovery.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents are overwhelming in their support of the school, with almost all saying that they are happy with their children's school experience. They were unanimous in their support in four areas: their children are making enough progress; teaching is good; the school helps to support their children's learning; and the school meets their children's particular needs. A few parents commented that there is some bullying in the school. However, behaviour was excellent throughout the inspection and pupils themselves said that there is no bullying.

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 83 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 192 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	63	27	33	4	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	62	75	19	23	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	50	60	29	35	4	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	53	64	24	29	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	53	64	25	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	51	61	29	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	65	23	28	2	2	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)	43	52	27	33	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	59	27	33	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	55	26	31	4	5	3	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	47	57	27	33	6	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	57	69	20	24	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	67	22	27	2	2	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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 pupils' 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.



8 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Middlefield Community Primary School, St Neots, PE19 2QE

Thank you for making the other inspectors and I feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. We can understand why you enjoy the 'Discovery Zone' and the role play 'Island' so much because there are always lots of exciting things for you to do there. I am pleased to tell you that you go to a good school. These are some of the things that really stood out:

- your excellent behaviour and the positive way you all work so well together
- the good progress that you make in your learning
- your enjoyment of your learning and the fun activities your teachers plan for you
- the excellent way that the staff support you and look after you
- the excellent job that your headteacher is doing: together with the staff she makes sure that your school runs smoothly and well
- your excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and how to stay safe.

Even in such a good school as yours, there are things which could be improved. I have asked your teachers to make sure that when they mark your work they make some comments about how well you have met success criteria. I have also asked them to make sure that the work they provide for you is consistently challenging. I have also asked your governors to visit you more often in school so that they can see for themselves how well you are doing. You can help by continuing to work hard and to enjoy all the things that your school offers to you.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector

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