

# Middlehurst Special School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124501
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stoke-On-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	340584
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marian Thomas

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	95
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Julie Mellor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Jonathon May
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Turnhurst Road Chell Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6NQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 234612
<b>Fax number</b>	01782 236407
<b>Email address</b>	jmay@sgfl.org.uk

---

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2010

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 14 lessons each taught by a different teacher or higher level teaching assistant. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, teaching staff, and clinical psychologists. The inspection team observed the school's work, and looked at teachers' planning for lessons, school leaders' development plans and samples of pupils' work. They also took into account the views of the nine parents and carers who returned questionnaires to the inspection team.

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

- pupils' work in English, mathematics and science
- how well the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of all learners
- the progress of different groups of pupils
- how well governors support the school.

## Information about the school

Middlehurst is a full service extended school which offers a variety of out-of-school time services including a Saturday morning club. The majority of pupils who attend the school have moderate learning difficulties and a quarter have behavioural difficulties, some of which are severe. A smaller number have autism or speech and language difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The INSPIRE unit, sited within school, makes provision for a small number of pupils, excluded or in danger of exclusion from local primary schools and permanently excluded primary-age pupils from across the city. An outreach support service is also provided by the unit. The school has recently been re-designated by the local authority as providing for pupils with cognition and learning difficulties. Most pupils are of White British origin, but there are a small minority of pupils from other ethnic groups. A small number are in the care of the local authority. There are three children in the Early Years Foundation Stage of their education. In September 2010 the school is to take over the running of another local special school, and as a result will operate from two sites until a new co-located special school is built in 2013. The school has gained the Healthy Schools award.

**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

Middlehurst is a good school. One of its many strengths is the outstanding care, guidance and support which it provides for all pupils and the success with which their complex special needs are met enables them to make good progress both personally and academically. Parents and carers appreciate the work of school staff in supporting their children. One commented: Middlehurst has made an amazing difference to my child. Before he came he was shy and hated school. Now he is happy and confident.'

The headteacher and senior leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure the quality of provision necessary for them to do so. Self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate and rigorous and findings are acted upon to good effect. The school's strength is its ability to recognise and support the diverse needs of all pupils. This ensures barriers to learning are minimised. Since the last inspection, the school has significantly improved aspects of its performance, such as the healthy outcomes achieved by its pupils. All this demonstrates a good capacity to improve further.

Pupils grow in confidence as they move through the school. They thoroughly enjoy school and are exceptionally clear about how to stay healthy. Behaviour is good both within and outside the classroom. Pupils say they feel safe. Excellent links with outside agencies have been developed which support pupils' learning and development significantly. This, coupled with a well developed work experience programme, helps to ensure pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education or training. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the local community. However links to promote their awareness of life in a multi-ethnic society are limited.

Teaching is good in the majority of classrooms and is based on clear assessment of pupils' learning needs. Overall, pupils' progress is good. However, in a small number of lessons the pace is too slow and planning does not accurately reflect the needs of all learners. On these occasions, learning slows down. A detailed assessment system is securely in place. This ensures that monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress towards their targets is effective in most subjects. In science this is less well developed. Teaching assistants provide a high level of support in all lessons. The curriculum is excellent and meets the needs of all learners exceptionally well.

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

- Improve the consistency with which pupils make progress, by:
  - ensuring that planning reflects the needs of all pupils in all lessons

**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

- increasing the pace of learning in some lessons to make the best use of learning time
- refining monitoring and target setting within science lessons.
- Provide further opportunities for pupils to increase their knowledge and understanding of life in a multi-ethnic society.

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

Pupils joining the school settle quickly and respond positively to their individual learning programmes. These enable pupils to work independently and achieve well in most areas of the curriculum. This was demonstrated well in an art lesson within the Inspire unit where a small group of pupils participated exceptionally well, drawing enthusiastically and thinking hard. Given the nature of these pupils' learning needs, this was impressive. Occasionally, learning slows when planned activities do not reflect pupils' needs closely enough.

A small number of pupils in Key Stage 4 do not initially engage as well with learning, but become increasingly motivated so they too make good progress. Most pupils leave with many qualifications and accreditations. Last year's school leavers successfully passed examinations in art, English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education. All groups of pupils, including those on the autistic spectrum and those who are looked after by the local authority, make equally good progress.

Pupils feel safe because they know staff are supportive and help them at all times. Most clearly enjoy school. As one pupil commented, 'It's good here because people understand me.' Pupils recognise the importance of eating well and have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet. The school council feels there has been an improvement in school dinners which are now regarded as 'healthy and tasty'. Many pupils enjoy the wide ranging sporting opportunities offered and appreciate the part these play in a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community both in and outside school by listening to and appreciating the needs of others. For example, pupils are frequently involved in community projects such as singing in the local home for the elderly. Pupils' good overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is seen in the way in which they react to each other and take care of the environment. They do not have a well-developed awareness of communities beyond those represented in the immediate locality.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

**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

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teachers generally use assessment information effectively to set achievable targets for pupils. This is less effective in science. Planning of lessons is conscientious in most classrooms and attention is given to ensuring work is modified to meet the different needs of pupils within the class. However, in a small minority of classrooms the pace of the lesson is too slow and this is reflected in lesson plans. For example, too much time is allowed for particular activities. This reduces the effectiveness of learning for some pupils and slows progress. This occurs more frequently in lessons led by higher level teaching assistants. In most lessons, support staff are well-deployed and work closely and effectively with teachers to meet the needs of all learners.

The excellent curriculum is well organised and is imaginatively enhanced by many visits and activities away from the classroom. Residential visits to a variety of locations help develop pupils' independence. For example a recent visit to an Italian ski resort enabled pupils to put into practice skills learnt during weekly trips to a dry ski slope. This was described by one pupil as: 'The most exciting place I have ever been to'. The range of academic accreditation offered to pupils is very good, as is the quality of work experience and college placements.

As a result of outstanding care, guidance and support, pupils feel there is always someone who will listen and help. A careful and thorough assessment is undertaken when pupils arrive at the school, which is then used to target support effectively. Vulnerable pupils are exceptionally well supported and this is helped by the excellent links with many outside agencies. Attendance has been low in the past. It is currently rising rapidly as a result, for example, of the strong links with the Education Welfare

**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

Service and the clinical psychology team which is based in school. Transition arrangements are securely in place and are well supported by partnerships with 'Connexions' advisors.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The insightful and visionary leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders is moving the school forward well and ensuring good outcomes for pupils. This, coupled with excellent partnerships forged with outside agencies, is driving improvement further. The governing body has implemented strong procedures to ensure the health and well-being of all pupils. The governors offer a good level of support to the school and challenge to senior leaders. Policies and procedures ensure all government safeguarding requirements are met and that practice is of a good standard. The strength and quality of these procedures mean that any safeguarding issues are dealt with effectively by senior leaders. Leaders and managers have ensured that the school is a highly inclusive community. Systems to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination within school are good. The school works hard and successfully to eliminate any gaps in the performance of different groups of pupils. Leaders have built successful links which benefit pupils and the local community. The school readily shares its expertise through its outreach service. Some links with the global community are well established and as a result, pupils exchange letters with an Australian school. However, there are too few links to other communities to improve and develop pupils' understanding of life in a multi-ethnic society. The school makes great efforts to engage all parents and carers. The work of school staff ensures they are kept well informed about their child's successes. Parent education programmes and daily diary links with home are in place and as a result parents and carers appreciate the ongoing work of the school. The school ensures good outcomes for pupils, many of whom have significant needs. It does this on a well-controlled budget and provides good value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the early years of education make good progress because of the good quality of care and welfare which staff provide, supporting children's learning well. Children's personal, social and emotional development is good because staff create warm and positive relationships. They promote children's self-confidence well through the good use of praise and celebration of their achievements. Behaviour is good and children play happily with each other both indoors and in the outdoor play area. Skills to develop independence and choice are promoted by the range of activities on offer. However, activities are not always sufficiently well linked to planning for individual children's needs. Leadership and management are good and closely linked to the school's leadership team. Partnerships with parents and carers are good and those with outside agencies contribute well to the good progress children make.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

Nine responses were received by the inspection team from parents and carers. This represented just 10 percent of the school population and was a low response rate. The majority of questionnaires were wholly positive and supported the work of the school. These matched the views of the inspection team.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Middlehurst Special 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 9 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 95 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	7	78	2	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	6	67	3	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	44	4	44	0	0	1	11
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	78	1	11	1	11	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	5	56	3	33	1	11	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	67	3	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	67	3	33	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)	5	56	3	33	1	11	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	5	56	4	44	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	67	2	22	1	11	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	56	4	44	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	56	4	44	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	6	67	3	33	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



12 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Middlehurst Special School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 6NQ

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. It was lovely to meet you all and to hear how much you enjoy coming to school. We send a special 'thank you' to those of you who gave up your time to talk to us. We agree with those of you that told us that you think your school is good.

These are the things we liked the most:

- the friendly welcome you all give to visitors
- the excellent way in which staff care for you and help you to make future choices
- the way in which you all work hard and achieve a good range of qualifications
- the way in which you help each other and the local community.

In order to make your school even better we have asked your teachers to:

- ensure you all work equally hard and a bit faster in some lessons so you achieve even higher targets
- give you more opportunities to experience other cultures to help you to get a better understanding of how other people live their lives.

Thank you once again for such a lovely welcome and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Marian Thomas

Lead inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**