

Middlestone Moor Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131886
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	341242
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Clive Petts

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	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs K Moore
Headteacher	Mrs H Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 12 lessons and observed all 10 class teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They analysed 52 questionnaire responses from parents and carers and looked at questionnaires from staff and pupils. The team also looked at pupils' progress data, documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils, school policies, procedures and practice; scrutinised pupils' current and past work; and spoke to the School Improvement Partner to discuss his reports.

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

- the current achievement, progress and attainment in basic skills for all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those more able and talented and those from challenging circumstances.
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in evaluating their actions to tackle any relative weaknesses, boost achievement and continue to sustain improvements.

Information about the school

Middlestone Moor is an average-sized primary school serving a former mining community. All pupils are from a White British heritage. The school is part of a national pilot scheme which enables all pupils to access free school meals. A higher than average number of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although this does vary from year group to year group. The Early Years Foundation Stage is provided for in a 26-place Nursery and a Reception class with all children regularly learning and playing together. The school has gained the UNICEF Rights Respecting and International School awards.

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

This is a good school. A number of aspects of the school's work are outstanding. The school cares exceptionally well for its pupils, who thrive in the nurturing family environment where they feel very safe. At the heart of the school's continued good progress is the headteacher's excellent vision and drive. All staff share her ambition. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly satisfied with the quality of provision. Two comments from parents sum up the views of nearly all: 'The school is focused on wanting the best education for each child,' and, 'This is a lovely learning school.'

Children start with skills at levels well below those expected for their age, frequently with weaknesses in speech, language and calculating. By the time they leave Year 6 standards are average. This represents good progress from their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar good progress and in some individual cases progress is excellent. Initiatives employed by the school have significantly improved writing skills and these are no longer a weakness. Teaching is mostly good. In lessons where progress is slower, tasks are not always sufficiently engaging to boost pupils' interest and to help them to think for themselves. Assessment information is used effectively to identify pupils who need additional support and help. Such interventions are accurately targeted and closely monitored. Although marking is regular and encouraging, the next steps for pupils to take are not clearly and consistently identified to boost achievement even further. Variable use is made of peer assessment and self-assessment to enhance pupils' learning.

The school is a vibrant, stimulating and secure learning environment. Pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning and each other. Attendance is above average and persistent absence is low. A thoughtfully designed curriculum provides for pupils' personal development and basic skills really well; for example pupils have an excellent grasp of how to stay healthy. It successfully broadens the experiences of the many who have limited experiences beyond their local community.

Expectations of what pupils can achieve are normally high and realistic but there are times when the demands to promote still more understanding are not sufficiently challenging.

The leadership team has an accurate view of school's strengths and areas which need further development. The impact of the concerted action taken can be seen in the continuous improvement in achievement, attainment and attendance. Governors are committed and supportive. Excellent partnerships with parents, carers, support agencies and local schools enhance provision. Consequently, the school has a good capacity for continuing improvement.

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

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further boost the achievement of pupils of all ages and abilities by:
 - pinpointing exactly what pupils need to do to improve
 - summarising the next steps for improvement more clearly
 - embedding peer assessment and self-assessment.
- Sharpen approaches to increase the proportion of inspiring teaching by:
 - ensuring that work is engaging and stimulating for pupils
 - extending opportunities for pupils to think for themselves
 - increasing the demands made of pupils to enrich their knowledge and understanding further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils really enjoy their learning and make good progress in nearly all lessons. When activities are taxing, pupils take pleasure in the opportunities provided to contribute to their own learning, such as discussing their own views and ideas with a partner. They respond well to thought-provoking questions; for example, when considering the informal language used in a video clip with a partner, pupils' answers to each other were thoughtful and revealing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least the same good progress as their peers because their needs have been accurately identified and intervention and support well matched.

The school's average standards and good achievement at the end of Year 6 demonstrate the significant progress since the last inspection. Positive action is successfully improving pupils' problem-solving skills. Despite cohort variations, current school information shows that attainment and achievement are on course to continue to rise.

Pupils' very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in the quality of their relationships with each other and staff. Pupils are well behaved and show respect and kindness. They sensibly listen and exchange opinions and ideas.

Younger pupils benefit from the family-grouping system which allows them to learn and play with considerate, helpful older pupils. Pupils understand the benefits of eating a balanced diet, of keeping fit and indulging themselves in moderation. They enjoy the responsibilities they are given and the opportunities they have to think and take action about Third World issues, for example by raising money for children in earthquake-damaged Haiti. This helps prepare them well for the next stage in their learning.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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' 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	2
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?

The quality of teaching is good. Staff create a very positive climate for learning. They are hard working, enthusiastic and display secure subject knowledge. In the most effective lessons, first-hand, active learning captures pupils' interest well and they are encouraged to reason and explain their ideas or solutions to problems. In those lessons where progress slows a little, tasks are not always sufficiently enlivened to boost interest and push pupils to think for themselves. Robust assessment systems ensure that progress is regularly checked and any difficulties quickly identified and addressed. Oral feedback given by teachers is informative but there are occasions when the consistency and usefulness of written feedback in pupils' books is limited.

The curriculum places strong emphasis on the acquisition of basic skills and pupils' personal development. Subjects are increasingly linked together to provide more interesting opportunities to maximise learning. This includes the ongoing development of outdoor learning to enhance the achievement and enjoyment of all pupils, for example by using the newly established allotment. The introduction of 'thinking maps' is helping pupils apply their skills to solve problems and challenges more effectively. A wide range of well-attended clubs adds to their interests, skills and experience.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and this helps all pupils to achieve success. This includes those potentially vulnerable or those who face challenging circumstances. Parents and carers are especially appreciative of the high quality of care, pupils' enjoyment and the sense of belonging that the school provides. Pupils report that staff are very quick to identify any inappropriate behaviour or concerns and worries pupils may have. Staff are highly skilled at supporting individual pupils and their families.

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Highly effective partnerships with specialist support agencies enable pupils to join all activities with their classmates.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and has established a very positive and distinctive vision for the school with the UNICEF Rights Respecting initiative permeating all aspects of school life. All the staff are fully committed to the high aspirations that have been established. Leadership capacity is being systematically strengthened and subject leaders demonstrate growing confidence evaluating the impact of their actions on pupils' learning. Excellent relationships with parents, carers and the local community make an important contribution to the continual drive to raise achievement. Robust monitoring and evaluation is reflective and self-critical.

Consequently, self-evaluation judgements are accurate. Assessment practice is being systematically strengthened. The whole building provides rich, friendly and calm surroundings in which pupils' learning and development can flourish.

Governors make a good contribution to the drive and direction of the school. They challenge and hold the school to account in positive ways. Good procedures are in place to safeguard its pupils. These all meet government requirements and child protection is especially robust. Management of risk, for example e-safety, is well established in the curriculum. Concerted action has been taken to ensure that pupils of all backgrounds make the same good progress and achievement. As a result, a pattern of good progress and rising achievement has emerged and is being sustained, confirming the school's commitment to equal opportunities. Community cohesion is positively promoted. A variety of links provide pupils with an insight into the diversity of cultures and beliefs in the wider community, nationally and globally.

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	2

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	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

Children enter Nursery with skills at levels well below those expected for their age, particularly in their communication and calculation skills. They settle quickly, happily and confidently into routines to make consistently good progress. By the time they enter Year 1 nearly all are working towards the goals expected of them for their age with a small number exceeding their targets. Children interact well with one another and behaviour is very good. They feel safe in the welcoming, friendly and secure learning areas. Excellent relationships with staff enable parents and carers to talk freely about their children's interest and share any concerns. Intervention and support is effective and encourages children to be independent and active learners.

As children move confidently between indoor and outdoor spaces, questions are skilfully used by staff to prompt the next steps in learning, for example in solving the problem of fixing sheeting to the railings to construct a 'den'. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children are happy to take turns, help each other and share equipment. Groups are brought together effectively, for example to learn about linking sounds and letters, listen to a story or learn how to write a letter. 'Learning journey' folders detail children's progress with observations and assessments with developing consistency and accuracy. The provision is very well led and astutely managed. Staff work as an impressive team. All activities are inclusive and good provision is made for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they enjoy all the experiences on offer and make equally good progress.

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

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

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Views of parents and carers

Almost one quarter of parents and carers returned the questionnaire outlining their views of the school. The overwhelming majority of those were extremely positive about all aspects of its work. Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed overall. Parents and carers might find it helpful to know that in relation to the very few concerns received, inspectors found that these issues were being effectively addressed and managed by the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Middlestone Moor 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 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 248 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	60	20	38	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	65	15	29	3	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	52	25	48	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	54	21	40	3	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	48	25	48	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	50	25	48	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	46	28	54	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)	24	46	28	54	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	48	25	48	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	56	19	37	3	6	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	44	28	54	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	52	25	48	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	56	19	37	3	6	1	2

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 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.



26 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Middlestone Moor Primary School, Spennymoor, DL16 7DA

I want to thank you all for the very friendly welcome that you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our time with you. I would particularly like to thank those of you who came to talk to us and your parents and carers for completing the questionnaire.

We agree with you and your parents and carers. Middlestone Moor is a good school with some excellent features. You have a right to feel proud. Your talented headteacher and all the staff work extremely hard to make sure that you come to school regularly, do your best and behave well. Good teaching and support enable you to reach standards by the end of Year 6 that are in line with the national average. Well done! We think it is important for you to be given activities that make your learning livelier, are even more demanding, involve you in thinking for yourselves and you are given clear advice as to how you can improve.

We have asked your headteacher, the staff and governors to do these things.

- Make it clearer in your exercise books what you need to do to improve.
- Push you to judge the quality of your own work and that of your friends.
- Provide you with more lively learning experiences which are inspiring and more demanding.

Best of luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Clive Petts

Lead inspector

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