

Oundle and King's Cliffe Middle School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	122089
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	380399
Inspection dates	29–30 May 2012
Lead inspector	Judith Matharu HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	614
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Merrina Wilson
Headteacher	Barbara Reseigh
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2008
School address	Cotterstock Road Oundle Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE8 5HA
Telephone number	01832 272256
Fax number	01832 274348
Email address	admin@okcms.co.uk

Age group	9–13
Inspection date(s)	29–30 May 2012
Inspection number	380399



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.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 assesses 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 0300 123 4234, or email 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 information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

Judith Matharu	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christine Turner	Additional Inspector
Paul Delbridge-Smith	Additional Inspector
Hermione Horn	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 34 lessons, taught by the same number of teachers, including four joint observations undertaken with members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with school leaders, members of the governing body, the executive headteacher – who has yet to take up this post – and groups of pupils from all year groups. Informal discussions were also held with pupils. Inspectors spoke with parents and carers who had contacted them by telephone. They observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of documentation, including data on pupils' progress, improvement plans and procedures and systems to safeguard pupils. Inspectors took account of responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection. They also considered 190 questionnaires from parents and carers, 37 from staff and 100 from pupils.

Information about the school

This larger-than-average middle school occupies two sites separated by eight miles at Oundle and the village of King's Cliffe. Both sites provide the same curriculum for the full range of pupils. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is just above the national average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage; very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school meets the current floor standards, the minimum standards expected by the government at the end of Key Stage 2.

At the time of the inspection, the substantive headteacher was absent from the school. Two substantive deputy headteachers have held the position of acting headteacher at different times during the past year, including one acting as headteacher at the time of the inspection. An executive headteacher has recently been appointed and will take up this post in early June. The current Chair of the Governing Body is also new in post, having taken up this position in April this year.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	4

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to leadership and management.
- The school is not satisfactory because the effectiveness of leaders at all levels, including that of the governing body, has been inadequate in driving and sustaining improvements in raising pupils' achievement in recent years. This is mostly because of a lack of impact in improving teaching to a consistently good level and weaknesses in the whole-school system to monitor pupils' progress. Notable gaps in staff expertise, for example in covering the English curriculum, have been acknowledged but not tackled. The promotion of positive relationships with parents and carers has not been given due priority.
- Pupils' achievement is currently broadly satisfactory for all groups of pupils. However, this varies between key stages and the level of challenge for some pupils, particularly the more able, is too variable at present, thus hindering rapid progress.
- The school is a welcoming place. Pupils' attendance is above average with many displaying positive attitudes and a real enthusiasm to do well. However, for a significant minority, their enjoyment of school is hampered by anxieties about whether instances of misbehaviour, including bullying, are dealt with effectively. Some pupils find lessons dull, reflecting the staid nature of some of the current curriculum.
- The best teaching is inspirational, promoting good learning and rapid progress. Skilful questioning prompts thoughtful reflections from pupils. However, most teaching is satisfactory, with considerable variation in its impact and

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

effectiveness. Insufficient attention is paid to ensuring that all teachers understand and routinely use assessment information well enough to inform lesson planning and monitor pupils' progress. Routine monitoring of teaching has not identified the need for a more appropriate balance of teacher and pupil activity, nor placed sufficient emphasis on sharing best practice, either within the school or externally.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, particularly of more-able pupils, by:
 - ensuring that assessment data are accurate and systematically used, at whole-school level by school leaders to monitor pupils' progress and at classroom level to inform teachers' planning and target-setting
 - ensuring all lessons provide consistently high levels of challenge for all groups of pupils
 - ensuring that pupils are more actively involved in their learning.
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring all teachers are confident in the use of data to plan activities that meet the varying needs of all groups of pupils, including those who are more able, the disabled and those with special educational needs
 - ensuring an appropriate balance of teacher-talk and direct teaching, with pupil-talk and independent activity
 - developing teachers' questioning skills to extend pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding
 - facilitating opportunities for teachers to learn from best practice, both within and beyond the school.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all staff are robustly held to account for pupils' outcomes
 - paying rigorous attention to the systematic implementation of the school's behaviour policies, particularly in terms of bullying incidents
 - strengthening the school's capacity to deliver effective teaching and learning in the core subjects, particularly in English
 - developing the curriculum to include more imaginative, stimulating activities that promote pupils' interest and enjoyment in learning
 - strengthening and developing communication with parents and carers, in particular, ensuring that any concerns raised are investigated and the findings reported to them.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Since the previous inspection, achievement has declined from good to broadly satisfactory overall for all groups of pupils. Pupils enter the school with attainment

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

that is just above average. Their attainment at the end of Year 8 is also just above average, notably in English and mathematics. This represents satisfactory progress overall.

Pupils' reading skills are above average by Year 6. Their reading skills are developed well and a range of useful strategies are in place to support weaker readers. However, too few pupils achieve the higher levels they are capable of at both key stages; for instance in 2011, fewer than expected gained a Level 5 in English at Key Stage 2, due particularly to weak performance in writing. Efforts have been made to address this issue through staff training and providing pupils with strategies to improve writing skills, with good impact evident. Some successful writing was noted during the inspection, with pupils demonstrating good literary skills and clear understanding of how to achieve a higher level. But there is still some way to go to ensure that more-able pupils are consistently challenged to achieve higher levels and, in particular, that progress does not slow unnecessarily at Key Stage 2. Lack of good progress at Key Stage 2 results in pressure at Key Stage 3 to catch up and limits progress overall. Too much passive learning is evident across the school and this is further limiting pupils' achievement. A number of parents and carers understandably expressed reasonable concerns about this.

The achievement of those pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. This is due to a range of effective support programmes, including one-to-one mentoring and targeted, individual support. Some of these pupils make good progress, showing what is achievable when provision is well matched to individual needs, but overall the picture remains variable.

The monitoring of pupils' progress by senior leaders is not rigorous enough, and there is too much variation in the quality and use of data on pupils' performance by teachers in grouping pupils and in their lesson planning. Some teachers use data well, but an overarching whole-school policy for monitoring pupils' progress is not implemented efficiently.

Quality of teaching

Inspection findings were endorsed by a significant number of parents and carers and a number of pupils who suggested the quality of teaching is variable and, overall, satisfactory. At best, it is lively and imaginative, inspiring pupils with a love of learning and promoting the desire to succeed. For example, the level of intellectual and emotional challenge posed to Year 8 pupils in art was exceptional. They responded with work of an excellent quality, basing their responses on the styles of renowned artists they have studied, with some pupils concealing secrets about themselves within their mood compositions. This added to an air of intrigue about the subject matter and prompted excellent reflections on the theme. Excellent progress was observed with pupils totally engrossed in learning. Generally, pupils enjoy positive relationships with their teachers and give of their best. In successful lessons, teachers are confident experts in their subject matter and select a suitable

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

variety of learning activities to engage pupils. Pair and group opportunities are used for pupils to reflect on their learning, skilfully prompted by thoughtful questioning from their teachers. Pupils are able to critically review their own and others' work as they have a clear understanding of the success criteria for effective learning. However, these features are not present in enough lessons.

Too many teachers are required to teach outside of their specialist subject areas, for example in English, which hinders improvement, particularly at Key Stage 3 and makes effective leadership of the subject particularly challenging. Sometimes, lessons are dominated by teacher-talk and resources are uninspiring. The excellent skills many pupils demonstrate in manipulating and applying technology are not widely used to good effect in supporting learning. Most importantly, teachers do not consistently provide appropriate activities for pupils of differing abilities to enable all to work at a suitable level, which limits progress, particularly for the more able.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Pupils are typically polite, kind and cooperative, responding well at social times to the positive atmosphere in school. They report that they feel well cared for and the majority indicate that they enjoy most aspects of school life. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and a mature grasp of how to resist different types of bullying. In particular, they are very positive about the school's efforts to educate them about the prevention of cyber bullying. Despite this, a significant number of pupils expressed concern that, although not a frequent occurrence, when bullying does occur it is not always followed up consistently or to a level that reassures them the issue has been resolved. This concern was echoed by a number of parents and carers. Inspectors investigated this and, while it is clear that the school does record such incidents and makes efforts to resolve them suitably, they are not systematically recorded in sufficient detail, neither are the outcomes consistently reported to parents and carers.

The vast majority of pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and are eager to succeed. In successful lessons where there are opportunities to take an active role and make decisions about their learning, pupils seize these with enthusiasm and make positive contributions. However, when learning is satisfactory, it is frequently because the lesson is too one-dimensional. On these occasions, too much time is spent listening to the teacher with only a few pupils responding individually to the teacher's questioning. Consequently, a significant number of pupils are not involved; they become bored and sit passively, without engaging in the learning. As a result, overall, behaviour for learning is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Since the previous inspection, leadership and management have been inadequate overall. School self-evaluation has been overly generous. Important issues have not been tackled swiftly enough, particularly in addressing the decline in pupils'

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

achievement, notably in English in recent years. Most recently, some successful work has been instigated to improve teaching, with some impact evident in English, particularly at Key Stage 2. However, overall, insufficient attention has been paid to raising achievement through securing teaching at a consistently good level across the school. Further, there has been insufficient rigour in monitoring pupils' progress and identifying where inconsistencies exist.

Since the previous inspection, the governing body has not properly held the school to account through challenging aspects of underperformance. Members of the current governing body, under the leadership of the recently appointed Chair, recognise that changes to systems and structures are needed. There is increasing clarity about the school's performance with the resolve to maintain an open, honest dialogue with senior leaders about the school's strengths and areas for development. Action has recently been taken to secure the appointment of an experienced leader as executive headteacher, to take the school forward. There is improved, shared understanding of the priorities for action and determination to bring about the rapid improvement required.

The school meets its statutory responsibilities to safeguard pupils with appropriate procedures in place. Suitable attention is paid to ensuring that equality is promoted, so that all pupils, regardless of their aptitude or circumstances, have the opportunity to achieve. There is no discrimination in this school.

Curriculum provision is broadly satisfactory, with some notable enrichment and extension activities, such as the excellent 'Living History, Tudor Day'. However, in its entirety, the curriculum does not make every-day learning experiences memorable enough for pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2. Further, although suitable emphasis on moral development is evident, curricular opportunities for pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development are more limited. Pupils' understanding of cultural identity and diversity in modern Britain is underdeveloped.

Recent turbulence in the school's leadership has concerned a significant number of parents and carers and led to some unrest within school. Members of the school community acknowledged, through comments made during the inspection, the acting headteachers' sterling efforts to maintain the school's positive ethos and raise morale. Their efforts are reflected in the welcoming and positive atmosphere that has been sustained. The school's strategies for engaging with parents and carers are weak at present. A significant number of parents and carers expressed dissatisfaction with various aspects of the school's work. This includes the variability of teaching, lack of challenge resulting in a lack of progress for their children and inconsistencies in school policies and procedures, for example, in responding to parental concerns. These concerns were followed up and a number were substantiated.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

11 June 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Oundle and King's Cliffe Middle School, Peterborough, PE8 5HA

Thank you for your warm welcome when the inspection team visited your school recently. We were impressed by your confident readiness to talk with us and share your thoughts. We took careful note of your comments and those of your parents and carers.

Yours is a friendly, caring school where you generally work well in lessons and are making satisfactory progress in your learning overall. However, we feel this should be improved as some of you are capable of achieving more. You told us that some lessons are more enjoyable and interesting than others and we found this to be true. At times, although teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good, we feel the challenges posed to many of you could be greater. You are well cared for and behaviour in lessons and around school is often good but many of you told us that, although not a frequent occurrence, when bullying does occur it is not always followed up consistently, and this concerns you.

We think there are some important things to be done to improve several aspects of your school, which is why we have given the school a notice to improve. We have asked the school to improve the quality of teaching to accelerate your progress and to track this very carefully. We want teachers to use this progress information to plan lessons to challenge you through suitably interesting activities and ensure that those who need additional help receive it. We have also requested that the curriculum is reviewed and some amendments made to make this more interesting for you. The school has also been asked to develop better communications with your parents and carers, keep them informed about any concerns and seek their views more regularly.

Your new headteacher, Mrs McMurdo, will have taken up her post when you receive this letter and we know that she and other leaders are determined to improve things quickly. Inspectors will visit again to check on improvements.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Matharu
Her Majesty's 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. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**