

Middlefield Community Primary School

Alderwood Avenue, Speke, Liverpool, Merseyside, L24 2UE

Inspection dates 17–18 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although pupils' attainment and progress is improving, achievement in mathematics is still not as good as it could be.
- Teaching is improving but there is still not enough that is good or better.
- Teachers often talk for too long and pupils do not get enough opportunities to work things out for themselves.
- Pupils who are more able are often given work that is too easy.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of mathematics through the use of real life problem solving.
- It is only in the past year that school leaders have started to rigorously check the quality of teaching and hold teachers to account for pupils' achievement. This has led to the recent improvement in standards.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards in English have greatly improved in the past year. Pupils are now doing as well as similar pupils across the country.
- As a result of the school's own initiatives, such as 'Chatterbox' and 'Forest School', pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The large numbers of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium do at least as well as other pupils because of the effective way the school has used their funding.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they have positive attitudes to learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 23 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 15 teachers. A joint observation was undertaken with the assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' exercise books.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, senior leaders, the learning mentors and other staff and pupils.
- Inspectors looked at the school's documentation for gaining an accurate view of its performance, safeguarding information, the school's development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, behaviour records and displays around the school.
- Inspectors looked at ways in which the school checks on the progress of pupils.
- Inspectors analysed four responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The inspectors spoke to parents informally, read two letters from parents and checked 18 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Desmond Stubbs, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jean O'Neill

Additional Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- There is a specially resourced unit for 10 pupils with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has a well attended breakfast club.
- The school has achieved the advanced level Inclusion Charter Mark and the silver award for 'Sing Up'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better in all lessons by:
 - using the information which the school has about pupils' attainment when planning lessons so that work is not too easy or too difficult
 - teachers talking less and giving pupils more opportunities earlier in lessons to be active and work things out for themselves.
- Improve standards in mathematics by teachers providing challenging problem solving activities in real-life situations.
- Improve the impact of school leaders by:
 - having more precise information about the attainment and progress of the different pupil groups so that appropriate help and support can be organised at the earliest opportunity
 - governors more rigorously holding the school to account for its work, in particular pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching in the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in English and mathematics varies between classes. This was evident in the lessons observed and pupils' work in exercise books. However, the information held about pupils' attainment and progress shows an improving picture overall, in particular in reading and writing.
- Children join the school with skills in communication, language and literacy that are below those expected for their age. By the end of the Reception Year, children's skills have improved but they are still below those expected for their age. However, the rate of improvement so far this year is more rapid now than it has been in previous years.
- The success of teaching pupils letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is reflected in the results of the national reading test in Year 1, which were above the national average.
- In the past three years, pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1 has not been good enough. This academic year however, it has improved and more pupils are now working at levels expected for their age. Pupils are making more rapid progress.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils make expected progress in English and the attainment of pupils is similar to that of pupils nationally. In mathematics, however, not enough pupils are making the expected progress and the achievement of some pupils in lessons, in particular the more able, is not good enough.
- The school allocates the pupil premium funding effectively, in particular to providing both additional small group work and a wide variety of additional learning activities. This enables these pupils to perform much better in English than similar pupils nationally.
- Pupils in the resourced unit mix well with the other pupils and make progress similar to that of the other pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have previously not made as good progress as they should. These pupils currently, however, are making better progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although there are examples of good teaching, in particular in English, teaching in mathematics is not doing enough to ensure pupils of all abilities make the required improvement.
- Teachers do not use the information they have about pupils' attainment to provide work at the correct level.
- In some lessons, pupils do not make as much progress as they should because the teacher spends too much time explaining the work and what has to be done. Consequently, pupils have less time to practise their skills and not enough opportunities to think for themselves.
- Pupils who are more able are often given work which is too easy. In teaching groups where all the more able pupils are together, the same activity with the same degree of difficulty is provided for the whole group, rather than there being different levels of challenge to suit the needs of each pupil in the group.
- In mathematics, teachers' knowledge of what makes an effective and challenging problem is weak and pupils are not provided with enough work set in a real-life context.
- Teaching assistants give pupils good support during group activities and when helping those from the unit to concentrate and behave appropriately. At the beginning of lessons, however, these adults are not used effectively, for example, to work with a small group of pupils so they are better challenged.
- The quality of teaching by newly qualified teachers is good. They have settled well into the school. Their lessons are well planned and the work provided is well matched to pupils' abilities.
- Pupils enjoy lessons, especially those that begin with a game, 'It's work but it's fun!' Pupils are very enthusiastic about the creative curriculum and enjoy topics such as 'Pirates' and 'Ancient Egypt'. They like school so much that some did not want to go home early even when school

had to close due to the snow!

- Pupils know their targets and understand their purpose. They know that teachers mark their work with two comments, 'Something that is good and something to improve on.' Inspectors found marking in literacy books to be better than that found in mathematics books, where work was well corrected but did not make the next steps in learning clear.
- Parents speak positively about the quality of teaching across the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attitudes to learning throughout the school are very positive. Pupils are keen to learn and do their best.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils are polite and step aside for adults to go through doors and are always willing to help. One pupil commented 'everyone is kind and helpful to each other'.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly at the beginning of the day and clearly feel secure. They join in happily with adults and get on well with each other.
- Pupils enjoy the many responsibilities they are given. The 'buddy' system, whereby older pupils help younger pupils with their work and reading, is particularly effective for all involved.
- The behaviour records show that any incidents are well managed and pupils say that incidents of bullying and racism are rare and 'quickly dealt with'. There have been some fixed-term exclusions but these are all pupils from the unit who have behavioural, social or emotional difficulties.
- Parents are happy with the behaviour of pupils.
- Pupils feel safe and they have a good understanding of internet safety and cyber bullying. They enjoy the many visitors who come into school to talk to them, for example, about road and fire safety.
- Attendance is low, but this figure is affected by a few persistent absentees. The school has a wide range of strategies that they use and attendance is improving.
- The learning mentors work very effectively with both parents and pupils. They lend much emotional support to many children in the 'Quiet Room'. Parents are enthusiastic about the 'Incredible Years' parenting course and one parent wrote, 'They should be extremely proud of themselves for the fabulous work they do in extremely difficult and at times upsetting circumstances.'

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Progress since the last inspection has been slow and it is only recently that improvements have been evident.
- The improvements have been as a result of the intensive support from the local authority. The school's work in the Intensifying Support Programme now means that the school has a clear view of where it needs to be and has precise plans of action on how this will be achieved. Leadership at all levels is now more effective and the school has the capacity to improve.
- Systems to manage the performance of teachers are in place. Teachers' performance is checked against how much progress their pupils make and how well they fulfil their duties. The outcome of this affects how teachers progress up the pay scale. However, the new Teachers Standards are not yet being used to help to identify the strengths and weakness of each teacher, so precise support can be put in place.
- A highly rigorous system for checking on the quality of teaching is now in place and teaching has improved as a result.
- The attainment of individual pupils is carefully checked. However, the school does not yet gather

enough information about how the different pupil groups are progressing, in particular pupils with special educational needs, in order that resources can be allocated at the earliest opportunity.

- The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy the 'Creative Curriculum' and the school provides a wide range of educational visits and visitors, much of which is funded from the pupil premium allocation. The school's own initiatives of 'Chatterbox' and 'Forest School' contribute much to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is good.
 - The school's work with parents is good. The parenting courses run by the learning mentors are very well received and parents have many opportunities to come into school and share learning experiences with their children.
 - The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Members understand how well the school is performing compared to other schools. However, governors do not challenge the school sufficiently about what is being done to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching. Governors lack rigour in the checks made on all areas of the school's performance. The school budget is very well managed and in particular, the pupil premium funding is allocated well to ensure the pupils eligible are receiving appropriate support and making good progress. The governors have received training on safeguarding and health and safety.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104591
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	400725

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	292
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Wilson
Headteacher	Paula Judd
Date of previous school inspection	26 May 2010
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