

# Oundle and King's Cliffe Middle School

Cotterstock Road, Oundle, Peterborough, PE8 5HA

**Inspection dates** 24–25 April 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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

- There is not enough good and outstanding teaching. Work given to pupils is not always sufficiently demanding.
- Pupils start in Year 5 with standards that are above average. Standards are also above average when they leave at the end of Year 8, but achievement varies between subjects and they have the ability to be doing better.
- Pupils' progress in English lags behind that in mathematics, and their thinking skills are underdeveloped.
- Actions taken by leaders to improve the quality of teaching and improve progress have not yet resulted in good achievement for all pupils.
- Teaching assistants are not always used effectively to support learning.
- The quality of subject leadership is not consistently good. Consequently, good or better teaching and learning are not yet secure across all subjects.

### The school has the following strengths

- The actions taken since the school was given a notice to improve have led to measurable improvements. The quality of leadership and management is no longer inadequate.
- Pupils in Year 8 are making good progress in mathematics; this is an improvement from previous years when progress was only adequate.
- The executive headteacher is taking a firm lead in steering improvements, based on leaders' accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- There has been a considerable improvement in pupils' behaviour, particularly this year, and it is now typically good. Pupils say they feel safe in school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 29 lessons across all year groups, observing 29 teachers and some other adults. Three lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils, teachers, the interim executive headteacher, other senior leaders, members of the governing body and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents including the school improvement plan, data on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for checking and judging the performance of teachers, a range of policies and the arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils. They also examined the work in pupils' books and heard some pupils read.
- The views of 145 parents were analysed through the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also took account of the views of staff, including those expressed in 43 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Dilip Kadodwala, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clive Allen

Additional Inspector

Julie Griffiths

Additional Inspector

Sally Lane

Additional Inspector

## Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

### Information about this 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 education for the full age range.
- The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium) is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- All the pupils are educated on the school sites. There is no alternative off-site provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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

- Raise pupils' achievement by making teaching consistently good or outstanding, by:
  - demanding more of pupils by setting harder work
  - giving pupils regular opportunities to work on their own and to think for themselves
  - making consistently good use of teaching assistants to support pupils who have additional needs, so that these pupils' progress is good or better.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing, particularly in Years 7 and 8.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - making sure that all subject leaders carry out their responsibilities for securing good or better teaching within their departments, so that pupils' achievement is consistently good or better across all subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' overall achievement requires improvement because their progress is not consistently good enough in all year groups to reach the standards they are capable of.
- Pupils join the school in Year 5 with standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are above average. Following a sharp decline in 2011, the 2012 national test results for Year 6 returned to above average. Results in mathematics were a little better than those in English, especially in terms of the proportion of pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum Level 6.
- Improved tracking of pupils' progress, external moderation of data and close monitoring by leaders are making sure that the legacy of underachievement is being tackled thoroughly and effectively. School records show that pupils are now making good progress in mathematics in Years 7 and 8.
- In reading and writing, pupils' previous inadequate progress in Years 5 and 6 is being tackled through better teaching. Although improving, pupils' progress in English, particularly in writing, is not yet good enough in Years 7 and 8.
- Pupils read competently. Those with weaker skills are supported well, including through use of the pupil premium funding, so that they quickly gain the skills they need.
- Opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills across different subjects are inconsistent. The English department is now leading a drive to improve this weakness.
- Pupils have good mathematical skills, but rarely have the opportunity to apply these skills in other subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. Their needs are identified well enough and support from teachers is mostly tailored at the right level. Not all pupils who have particular learning needs make good progress. This is because the use of teaching assistants is not as good as it should be.
- The use of the pupil premium funding, for example to run catch-up sessions in reading and writing, is making sure that these pupils do not fall behind. Last year, by the end of Year 6, the attainment in English and mathematics of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was much closer to that of other pupils in the school, as shown by their average point scores (a measure used to compare standards in English and mathematics). The gap is continuing to close for pupils currently in Years 7 and 8 in both subjects.

### The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has risen over the last year but still requires improvement because it varies too much in lessons. Not enough is good or outstanding. Around a quarter of the parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) rightly show that they do not feel their child is taught well or makes good progress.
- Typically, in lessons that are not good enough, teachers do not demand enough from pupils in the work they set. Pupils have few opportunities to tackle work on their own or to develop

higher-order thinking skills. Pupils also do not make the progress of which they are capable because they become too reliant on teachers.

- The use of teaching assistants varies too much. They make a good contribution to pupils' learning when they provide a balance of support with time for pupils to work things out for themselves. They understand pupils' specific learning needs well, but are sometimes passive for too long and do not take the initiative in supporting pupils.
- Where teaching is successful, pupils are inspired and motivated to learn. For instance, in a Year 8 English introductory lesson on the poetry of Wilfred Owen, the teacher's skilful use of questioning, well-timed tasks and opportunities for pupils to think for themselves made sure that pupils made good progress during the lesson. The teacher's question, 'How would your appreciation of Owen's poetry be different now, knowing that he died a week before the end of the war?' gave pupils much food for thought.
- Other common strengths of the most effective teaching include good checking of how well pupils are doing, and involving pupils themselves in the process. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, pupils were set interesting work on solving equations. They were required to check their work and that of their classmates, to spot errors and suggest corrections. The teacher also made sure that common misconceptions were tackled well.
- In some lessons pupils are encouraged to think imaginatively, to be self-aware, and to be open to others' ideas. This was obviously planned for and carried out in a Year 8 art lesson on developing composition ideas. Planned opportunities in lessons to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are limited.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They arrive on time to school and lessons. They treat each other with respect and are polite to visitors.
- Pupils know right from wrong and are confident to share any worries they may have with their teachers.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school sites is good. A new behaviour policy was introduced at the start of the academic year. Pupils, especially those in Year 8, told inspectors that there has been a marked improvement in behaviour over time. Pupils usually show self-discipline and understand the consequences of unacceptable behaviour.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. The majority of responses to the online questionnaire show that parents agree too. Pupils know about different forms of bullying and sensibly discuss what bullying means.
- The school's personal and social education programme makes a good contribution to pupils' understanding of risks, including those posed potentially by social networking websites. Pupils' understanding is reinforced by assemblies and teaching in other subjects.
- Attendance is improving year on year and is above average.

**The leadership and management requires improvement**

- The interim executive headteacher, ably supported by governors, is providing determined leadership. However, leaders and managers have not had sufficient impact over time to ensure that the school provides a consistently good education.
- Leadership and management are no longer inadequate. Although there are still inconsistencies in teaching and in the quality of subject leadership the considerable gains secured over this year, demonstrate the interim executive headteacher's capacity to secure further improvement.
- The interim executive headteacher's clear direction and the work of the senior leaders in charge of improving teaching are resulting in a steady increase of good teaching and in making sure that there is no inadequate teaching. When observing lessons, these leaders focus sharply on how well pupils learn and give helpful pointers to teachers for further improvement.
- Leaders are not complacent, and are getting on with raising the quality of teaching that requires improvement and increasing the proportion that is outstanding. Previously weak procedures for monitoring and improving staff performance have been replaced by an effective system. This ensures that only teachers who perform well and achieve good results are rewarded financially.
- Visits to schools where teaching is consistently good and outstanding, and using the best teaching as a model for others within the school, are helping teachers to improve their practice.
- Leaders' accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses is gathered from regular meetings to check pupils' progress, and frequent checking of teachers' planning and pupils' work. Good analysis of the action taken to address the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection has helped identify the next priorities.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity carefully. Any pupils who are not performing as they should are identified quickly because of more frequent checks and suitable action is taken to make sure that all have a chance to succeed.
- Pupil premium funding is used to pay for additional staff and support in reading and writing to enable pupils to catch up. This is having a marked impact on closing the gap between these pupils' attainment and that of their classmates.
- Since the previous inspection, when the school's engagement with parents was judged to be weak, considerable improvements have been made to foster better relationships. Concerns expressed by parents are followed up and usually resolved in good time.
- Leaders recognise that the current curriculum in Years 5 and 6 does not meet pupils' needs well. This is set to change from September 2013 with the introduction of the international primary curriculum. In Years 7 and 8, the curriculum is broad enough to engage pupils' interests. There is a good range of sport and additional clubs and activities for all age groups, and these are much enjoyed by the pupils.
- Additional activities such as trips and visits complement what is provided in assemblies and tutor times to promote and enrich pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school's leaders and governing body have responded well to the effective support and guidance provided by the local authority. This has secured improvements to teaching and to checking how well pupils are doing since the previous school inspection. The responses to the staff survey show that most staff think leaders are helping and supporting the development of

their professional skills.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Changes to the governing body membership since the previous inspection have increased its capacity and expertise. Suitable committees look carefully at the work of leaders and teachers. Along with visits that individual governors make to the school, this gives the governing body a good view of the quality of teaching and how well pupils are progressing across the whole school. Governors ask the right questions, making effective use of training in understanding pupil performance data and the comprehensive information provided by school leaders. Governors keep a close check on the budget and know how additional income, including the pupil premium, is spent on improving achievement for eligible pupils. They make sure that the performance targets set for the executive headteacher are challenging and pay rises for teachers are suitably based on their performance. Governors are diligent in making sure that all safeguarding and child protection policies and practices meet national requirements so that staff and pupils work within a safe environment.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	122089
<b>Local authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	408857

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	593
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Acting Chair</b>	John Grinnell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Janet McMurdo
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 May 2012
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