



Oundle and King's Cliffe Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122089
LEA Northamptonshire
Inspection number 281166
Inspection dates 7 December 2005 to 8 December 2005
Reporting inspector Champak Chauhan HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Cotterstock Road
School category	Community		Oundle
Age range of pupils	9 to 13		Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE8 5HA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01832 272256
Number on roll	692	Fax number	01832 274348
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Monica Crosby
Date of previous inspection	13 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Neil Underwood

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Oundle and King's Cliffe Middle School is a relatively large mixed middle school with 693 pupils on roll. Pupils start at age nine and most transfer at age 13 to a nearby upper school. The school is situated on two sites which are eight miles apart. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and only a handful speak English as an additional language. Pupils come from relatively advantaged backgrounds and the proportion eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. When they enter school at age nine, the pupils' attainment is above average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Oundle and King's Cliffe Middle School provides a good quality of education for its pupils, with some outstanding features. The school has a generally accurate view of its provision but it does not readily identify some of the more outstanding features. The pupils' attainment in recent national tests is above average, although their performance in mathematics is uneven and has dipped in the last two years. The pupils' personal development and well-being are particular strengths of the school. Most pupils behave in an exemplary manner, are polite and courteous to visitors, to staff and to each other. They have very good attitudes to their learning and maintain their concentration for sustained periods. Many pupils have a thirst for learning. Attendance and punctuality are good. The range of extra-curricular activities offered is outstanding. The pupils are cared for well by all staff, including non-teaching staff. The good teaching that pupils experience leads to their good progress across the years. Some of the teaching observed was outstanding. However, the pupils are not enabled to make better progress in some subjects because of relative weaknesses in teachers' short-term planning, marking, assessment and target setting.

The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and two deputy headteachers. Their work is made more difficult by managing two sites but they do this well. Subject leaders have a generally good understanding of provision in their subjects. The checking of the school's work and its impact on pupils is generally strong but procedures are sometimes informal and have not readily picked up the weaknesses already identified above. Parents are supportive of the school. However, some believe, with some justification, that the school could improve its communication with them and be more mindful of their views. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and it provides good value for money. It has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics.
- Ensure that pupils' progress is monitored more rigorously and that marking, assessment and target setting are routinely undertaken in all subjects.
- Ensure that the work of the school is more rigorously checked by senior leaders and subject co-ordinators and that the existing good practice is more widely shared.
- Ensure that communications with parents are more systematic and that their concerns are taken more into account.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils in Year 6 reach standards in English, mathematics and science that are above the national average. Girls do significantly better than boys in all three subjects. Standards in science have been well above average for the past three years and pupils regularly achieve challenging targets. In English, pupils' writing is relatively weaker and the school has identified this as an area for improvement. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress towards their targets because of the

good support they receive. Pupils make good progress in English and science in all years. However, the weaker area of achievement for both boys and girls is in mathematics where the results, although still above the national average, have not improved as much as in English and science. In Years 7 and 8, pupils' progress in lessons and in their written work over time is good. They show interest and enthusiasm for their studies and reach above-average standards in their work. Pupils make good progress in developing their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) over the four years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good because teachers' expectations are clear and there is a system of rewards and sanctions which pupils understand and respond to. Pupils enjoy coming to school, their attendance is good and they are enthusiastic about their learning. They report very few instances of bullying or racism in school. When such incidents occur, they are confident that these are quickly and effectively dealt with by the school. Pupils have good awareness of safe and healthy lifestyles, and there are a number of opportunities for all pupils to take part in physical activity.

There are excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills and moral awareness. Pupils accept considerable responsibilities within school. Their views are sought through the school councils, and their ideas have contributed towards improvements, for example, the introduction of additional pegs in the changing rooms. Pupils show their concern for others through raising substantial amounts of money for charity. Charity day involves a number of activities which contribute well to the development of their skills in enterprise and finance. Art, music and religious education make a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development and to their preparation for life in an ethnically diverse society. Good opportunities for reflection are provided in assemblies, contributing well to the pupils' spiritual development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good, with some examples of outstanding practice. Very good working relationships provide a supportive learning environment for pupils in lessons. Teachers have secure knowledge of their subjects and any non-specialists are generally helped well. Pupils appreciate the support they receive in lessons and are highly motivated to learn. In the most effective lessons, good planning ensures that work is well matched to pupils' needs and that they make good progress. A wide range of methods is used which engage and motivate pupils, and the pace of learning is very good. Where there are relative weaknesses, the pupils' progress is not always sufficiently brisk, or their behaviour is not always properly managed.

Subject leaders coordinate curriculum planning between the two sites well. However, planning is not of a consistent quality across all subjects and it lacks a common format across the school. Staff training and support are beginning to improve the overall quality and use of assessment. However, assessment is not yet sufficiently rigorous or consistently used across all subjects to track pupils' progress, to set appropriate targets or to help them understand how to improve their work. There is some exemplary planning and use of assessment in science that is used to set challenging targets and it involves pupils in assessing their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, offering a broad and balanced provision on both sites. The school has built effective links with its primary and secondary partners to ensure that there is a continuity of experience for pupils. There are good plans for most subjects but planning for mathematics and personal, social and health education is not fully developed, so that the quality of provision is not consistent for all pupils. The development of pupils' skills in ICT is well planned and teaching is supported by good resources. The two libraries are well resourced and they make a good contribution to the development of pupils' skills in reading and ICT. The programme of extra-curricular activities is outstanding, offering a wide range of clubs and activities for pupils that add to their enjoyment and promote achievement in, for example, art, music and sport. Many pupils participate in these activities. Links with local organisations give pupils the opportunity to develop their talents further. Enthusiasm for learning is further promoted across the curriculum by field trips, educational visits and the use of external speakers and experts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a healthy and safe environment on both its sites. Health and safety matters are taken seriously and appropriate risk assessments are carried out. However, arrangements for the supervision of girls and boys during physical education and games lessons are not robust enough at the moment. Child protection arrangements are good and pupils are confident that they can turn to trusted adults within the school if they have a problem. There are effective partnerships with other agencies to ensure that pupils, including those at risk, receive the help they need. The school has improved its arrangements to assess those pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities and provide them with extra help. Pupils identified as being more able are given opportunities to attend workshops and summer schools. The good links with other schools are used effectively to ensure that pupils transfer smoothly into Year 5 and that they are well prepared for transfer to Year 9.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides clear leadership and direction to the work of the school. He and the two deputy headteachers work effectively as a team; they have enhanced provision and they have a good capacity to further improve the school. The work of the senior leaders is made more difficult by managing two sites eight miles apart but they meet this challenge well. The senior leaders have successfully focused on continuously raising standards and improving the quality of provision for the pupils on both sites. They have a generally good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through, for example, the regular observation of lessons and the scrutiny of pupils' work. Subject co-ordinators are rightly made accountable for their subjects and they monitor teachers' planning and observe lessons on both sites. These activities have led to improvements in teaching and learning. However, the system is sometimes too informal and not rigorous enough. It has not, for instance, picked up some weaknesses in marking and assessment procedures and in teachers' planning.

The school's self-evaluation is good and it is generally accurate. Its formulation involved all key staff, governors and members of the local authority. The views of pupils and parents, however, are not yet fully reflected in it. Parents are very supportive of the school. However, some believe, with some justification, that the school should improve its communication with them and should be more mindful of their views and concerns.

The governing body has good oversight of the work of the school. It holds the school to account through its committee structure and through routine visits by governors. The chair of the governing body and the chair of finance have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Oundle and King's Cliffe Middle School Cotterstock Road Oundle Peterborough PE8 5HA

9 December 2005

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school. We enjoyed speaking to many of you and looking at your work. This is what we thought.

What the school does well

- The school gives you a good – and in some respects outstanding – education. I know some of you said this to us as well.
- You do better in the Year 6 tests than most pupils in England.
- Your behaviour is outstanding and you have very good attitudes to your learning.
- The teachers teach you well and in some cases exceptionally well.
- The variety of extra-curricular activities you are offered is outstanding.
- Mr Underwood and the two deputy headteachers run the school well.
- Most of your parents like the school and are pleased with what it does.

What the school could do better

- Your SATs results in mathematics are good but they are not as good as in English and science and the school needs to help you improve in this.
- Teachers need to check your work more regularly and set targets for you in all subjects. Please ask them to do this for you because it will help you to make better progress.
- The senior staff need to check the work of the school even more thoroughly and share the good practice they find.

- Some of your parents are not always happy with the way the school communicates with them and this needs further improvement.

With very best wishes for the future,

Mr C Chauhan Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools