



Middle Barton School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123005
LEA Oxfordshire LEA
Inspection number 281378
Inspection dates 12 June 2006 to 13 June 2006
Reporting inspector Hugh Protherough AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	27 Church Lane
School category	Community		Middle Barton
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Chipping Norton OX7 7BX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01869 340522
Number on roll	145	Fax number	01869 340522
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Hugh Poulton
Date of previous inspection	18 September 2000	Headteacher	Ms Lynn Barnes

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 12 June 2006 - 13 June 2006	Inspection number 281378
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Almost all of the pupils attending this small, five class, village primary school live in Middle Barton. A handful comes from the surrounding area. The overwhelming majority of pupils are of White British ethnicity. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) is below average and there are two pupils with statements of special educational need (SEN). Most children attend the neighbouring pre-school provision before commencing full-time school in the term before their fifth birthday. There have been several recent changes to the staff team including a new and experienced headteacher who started at the school in January 2006. One teacher is on maternity leave and her class is being covered by a temporary teacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overwhelming majority of pupils at Middle Barton School work hard and enjoy their lessons. They are polite, well behaved and make the most of the many opportunities the school provides to help them to develop as fit, healthy and responsible citizens of tomorrow.

Taken overall, the school provides a satisfactory education and pupils are achieving soundly. Children entering the Foundation Stage are well cared for and settle swiftly into the routines of school. By the end of reception most attain the national goals expected of five-year-olds and a few exceed them. By the time pupils in Year 6 transfer to secondary school, standards are above average, but they are achieving better in English than in mathematics. Although past inconsistencies in the teaching of mathematics are being successfully addressed, there remains scope for further improvement; in particular, in teaching calculation skills and establishing higher expectations for the presentation of work. The effective teaching of literacy is reflected in the pupils' love of books and literature and their willingness to write thoughtfully in a variety of styles and settings. Even so, the quality of teachers' marking varies considerably in this and other subjects. Pupils are not being provided consistently with the sorts of detailed commentary and personal targets that will help improve their work to even higher levels. The pupils with LDD and SEN are successfully included within the school community. The careful deployment of teaching assistants supports their learning effectively.

The new headteacher has made a good start. The inspector judges that she has conducted an accurate assessment of the school's current performance and that there is good capacity for further improvement. For instance, her plans to take the school forward are well considered and incorporate the views of both the staff and governors. The new staffing structure has been positively received. Several parents wrote to the inspector in order to commend the positive impact of new leadership since January. One says; '...the school has a sense of purpose and direction again.' However, the leadership and management roles of the staff, though satisfactory, are at an early stage of development. Most of these teachers are new to their responsibilities and have not yet had sufficient time or training in important aspects of their work such as analysing assessment data, sampling pupils' work and monitoring teaching.

The school has successfully addressed the few issues raised by the last inspection. The school's computers are now put to good use and enhance pupils' learning across the curriculum. The school's budget is managed prudently and important new developments, such as the proposed extension to the Foundation Stage outdoor play area, have been carefully planned. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the teaching of mathematics, and in particular the skills of calculation, so that pupils' progress matches that in English
- Ensure that marking tells pupils how they can improve their work

- Develop the leadership roles of staff with curriculum responsibilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children entering the Foundation Stage unit are generally eager and ready for the challenge of full time education. Most have well developed social skills and work and play happily with their peers. The vast majority are coping well with occasional formal lessons where the early building blocks of literacy and numeracy continue to be reinforced. Most pupils recognise two digit numbers and locate their position on a grid. They write their names legibly and have made a good start to learning the sounds of letters.

The school sets, and often exceeds its challenging targets. In the national tests of 2005 standards at the end of Year 6 were significantly better than the national average. Pupils did particularly well in English and science with many high attaining pupils achieving the higher levels. Results in mathematics improved to be slightly above the national average. The profile of the current Year 6 is not as strong, but taken overall the pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Standards in English are above average. Standards in mathematics could be higher as, despite the best efforts of the school, a minority of lower attaining pupils will still not reach the expected levels. However, on the basis of the gains in learning made since taking their Year 2 tests, these pupils have made satisfactory progress. The few pupils with LDD and SEN are effectively supported and make generally good progress towards their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral social and cultural development are good. In their conversations with the inspector pupils expressed great contentment with their school. 'It's good to come to school each day and see your friends,' 'Lessons are fun.' These positive attitudes are reflected in high levels of attendance and good behaviour. The school council, who take their responsibilities seriously, point to a number of initiatives that have benefited both their own community as well as others less fortunate than themselves. The predominant feature of the breaks and lunchtimes observed by the inspector were the harmonious relationships between pupils of all ages. Pupils say that any bad behaviour is dealt with swiftly and successfully. Year 6 take an active role in caring for younger children by acting as play leaders. They also help solve any disputes by working as peer mediators. All pupils keep fit and healthy; joining their teachers in the exercise routines of the "Dorn Chorus" (River Dorn!) first thing each morning, swimming in the school pool and playing lots of sport. Many pupils opt for the healthier options of school lunch and, as a result of their knowledge of the importance of keeping well hydrated, use a water bottle regularly throughout the day. At lunchtimes many pupils sensibly sought shade to avoid the intense heat and glare of the sun. Most had remembered to bring a hat and many were wearing sunscreen.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Taken overall teaching is satisfactory. There is strength in the effective ways that teachers make use of staff such teaching and special needs assistants. These additional adults frequently play a vital role in supporting pupils with LDD or SEN. In the Foundation Stage unit, the partnership between the teacher and nursery nurse enables a blend of activities to be provided that successfully meets the needs of pupils in Reception and Year 1.

In some lessons the teacher's knowledge and expertise leads to rapid learning and excellent achievement. For instance, in an outstanding literacy lesson the teacher's good subject knowledge rapidly increased pupils' confidence in improving spelling. However, not all teaching is as successful. A common weakness, especially in mathematics, is the tendency for some teachers to talk for too long. Although teachers question the pupils, they do not always ask them in a way that encourages an extended response, nor routinely ask to explain their answers to deepen their mathematical thinking. Expectations for the presentation of work are not high always enough.

The use of assessment information to inform the next steps in learning is inconsistent, as is the quality of marking. Although most staff check work and make encouraging remarks there is too little written commentary that relates to previous targets or that tells the pupils how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Taken overall the school provides a broad curriculum that is well matched to the needs and interests of its pupils. Although provision for literacy is stronger than that in numeracy, both subjects benefit from the effective way that teachers are starting to incorporate the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance pupils' learning.

Pupils are swift to inform visitors of the many ways that the school's curriculum is enriched by visits and visitors. At this time of year, good use is made of the school's own swimming pool on a daily basis. Drumming workshops add a cultural breadth to the arts curriculum, whilst the Year 3 and 4 pupils are eagerly awaiting their residential visit to Ivinghoe Beacon. The oldest pupils participate regularly in sporting activities with other schools and many have been enthused by the cricket and tennis coaching offered through local community links. Powerful messages about the need to stay safe were successfully brought home to Year 5 and 6 pupils following a day's programme with Thames Valley Police. There are close and productive links with Chipping Norton School to which the majority of pupils transfer at the age eleven.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Conversations with the pupils reveal that they feel safe and secure at school. This is reflected in their good attendance and punctuality. The school council acknowledges that there are occasional instances of bullying by a tiny minority of pupils, but say that this is dealt with swiftly, either through peer mediation or referral to teachers, who take effective action. The school has good links with a wide variety of external agencies that support the successful integration of those pupils with LDD and SEN. Child protection arrangements are currently under review, but are secure.

The school tracks closely the progress of individual pupils and different groups within the school. However, the information gathered is not used consistently by teachers to plan the next steps of learning. Current approaches to setting pupils' targets for improvement lack sufficient rigour.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher has made rapid and accurate assessment of the school's strengths and has good oversight of the quality of education provided. She has correctly identified a number of important areas that require improvement. Of these, the most significant lies in the development of leadership and management responsibilities across the staff team. These changes are at an early stage of development, but inspection evidence shows that teachers are keen to rise to the challenge and have made a sound start to developing their new roles. For instance the English co-ordinator has carried out some checks on the quality of teaching, whilst her counterpart in mathematics is tracking the development of specific aspects of pupils' skills in calculation. The school is well placed to build on these early successes.

The views of parents are regularly canvassed. Questionnaires returned to the inspector revealed a small but significant concern about the many recent changes to the staff team. However, many more parents and carers took the opportunity to identify 'good teachers' still at the school and to express supportive views about the positive impression created by the new headteacher. The governing body carry out their duties conscientiously and fulfil all of their statutory responsibilities.

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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?	3	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	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	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	2	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?	3	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?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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

Pupils

Many thanks for welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed my two days at Middle Barton and appreciated the helpful way in which you shared your work and views of school. You have a great deal to be proud of. You are polite, work hard for your teachers and generally take good care of each other. The way that Year 6 pupils act as play leaders for the younger children works very well. It was also interesting to hear how some of you act as peer mediators to help sort out arguments.

Even though the weather was incredibly hot I was impressed by the serious way in which so many of you try to stay fit and healthy. The "Dorn Chorus" is a great idea and I like the different music you have each day - I wonder why those mums and dads who stay to watch don't join in as well? You all enjoy your school swimming pool and lots of you take part in competitive sport - it was good to see boys and girls competing at football together at lunchtime. There are a few things that could be better. Some of you need to; * practise your numeracy skills so you get more accurate in solving calculations and word problems * present your work more carefully, especially in mathematics. (You know what a ruler is for; a few of you need to start using one!)

I have asked your teachers to give you more feedback about your work so that you know what to do to improve. I have also suggested that your headteacher continues to build the staff team, so that all the grown-ups share their skills and talents. Once that happens lessons will be even more fun and you will learn even faster. Finally, I'd like to send my best wishes to you all for a happy and successful end to the school year and in particular to the Year 6 pupils who are moving on to 'Chippy' or other secondary schools.

Yours sincerely

Hugh Protherough

Lead Inspector