

# Bilbrook CofE (C) Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124453
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314934
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Rashida Sharif HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	196
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Giles Job
<b>Headteacher</b>	Frances Burgess
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	Bilbrook Road Codsall Wolverhampton WV8 1EU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01902 434135
<b>Fax number</b>	01902 434141

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one Additional Inspector

## Description of the school

Bilbrook Church of England Middle School is relatively small and its numbers continue to decline. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who are learning English as an additional language is lower than the national average. Attainment on entry is well below age-related expectations. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements, is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has been awarded the National Mentoring scheme and Investors in People awards and holds the Sportsmark. The school has Extended School facilities in conjunction with its main feeder first school that shares the same site.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13(4) 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 therefore is given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards and achievement, particularly in reading, writing and science.

Achievement is inadequate and too many pupils are making unsatisfactory progress. This is shown mostly in science in both Key Stage 2 and 3, in writing in Key Stage 2 and in boys' reading in Key Stage 3. While many pupils attain average standards and some reach standards above the level expected for their age, standards overall vary far too much, and in some year groups are very low. Assessments are not always properly used to guide teachers' planning and as a result, work set for pupils is not matched well enough to their different needs. The headteacher is tackling the weaknesses and some improvements have been made, for example in mathematics. However, there is still too much inconsistency in teachers' planning across the school, particularly in Years 5 and 6. The performance data that the school collects is, at times, overwhelming and unmanageable, particularly in English. The school recognises this and is looking to refine both the collection and the use of data so that all staff understand and use it to inform their planning. Pupils with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the targeted support they receive.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy attending school and play an active role through the school council. They particularly enjoy helping other pupils through, for example, being 'playground buddies' and being available at the 'friendship stop' to help those who may be feeling lonely or in need of a friend. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good even when their work is too easy or too difficult. When they are interested and challenged by their lessons, the pupils show real enjoyment and enthusiasm, for example in an art lesson when they discussed the differences between African and Indonesian masks. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is generally broad and balanced, with a good range of well-attended extra-curricular activities. More than half of the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire are extremely supportive of the school and greatly appreciate the open and welcoming leadership style of the headteacher. Many parents comment how confident they feel in approaching the school should they have any concerns. As one parent noted, 'Bilbrook is a great school. We chose it because the overall feeling was of caring and that it was driven by the pupils' needs rather than results.' The quality of care, support and guidance for the pupils is good. Pastoral support is good, although academic guidance is less effective and pupils do not always have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work further. The school recognises that the quality of marking is inconsistent, and is currently undertaking a review of the marking policy so that all staff are consistent in how they mark pupils' work.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher provides sound leadership and has a good understanding of the school's priorities for improvement. The senior leadership team, who share her vision, has created a positive ethos for learning. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. It is satisfactory overall and some of the teaching is good. Senior leaders agree, however, that the quality of teaching needs to be consistently good or better if standards are to be raised further. The teachers work well as a team and give high prominence to pupils' personal development. This encourages pupils to behave well and become

confident learners. The role of subject leaders in checking standards in their own subjects is underdeveloped.

The governing body carries out its statutory duties satisfactorily and is supportive of the headteacher. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards and achievement for all pupils, particularly in writing in Key Stage 2, boys' reading in Key Stage 3 and in science.
- Use assessment information more precisely to plan work which challenges all pupils and is geared to their individual needs.
- Eliminate the inconsistencies in the quality of marking.
- Develop the role of middle leaders so that they are more rigorous in their monitoring and evaluation of standards in their subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils' progress overall is too slow, particularly in English and science, and their achievement is inadequate. A significant proportion of pupils, including the more able and particularly by the end of Key Stage 2, are falling behind in their work and making unsatisfactory progress. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those pupils entitled to free school meals do not achieve as well as they should in mathematics. However, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Pupils enter the school with standards that are well below average in mathematics, reading and writing. While many pupils attain average standards and some do better than this, standards are currently very low in a number of year groups. Although progress in reading is satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 2, progress in writing is inadequate; as a result, achievement is inadequate overall in English by the end of Key Stage 2.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics but attainment remains below the national expectation. Intervention strategies in mathematics are beginning to have an impact on raising standards. This means that by the end of Year 8, pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics where standards are broadly average. However, boys' attainment in reading is significantly below that of girls by the end of Year 8. Standards and achievement in science remain inadequate throughout the school.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils develop well socially and this is reflected in the good relationships amongst the whole school community. Pupils are generally positive and polite, which contributes to the friendly and orderly atmosphere in the school. There are very few reported incidents of bullying or racist behaviour and pupils say they feel safe. Learners take seriously the opportunities to contribute to both the school and local communities, including fundraising for various charities. The school council makes a good contribution to the life of the school. It has supported various initiatives, for example encouraging, 'playground buddies' and developing the 'friendship stop' where pupils who do not have someone to play with are helped. All pupils

receive physical education and join the many after-school sporting activities. They are aware of healthy eating and are actively involved in the schools bid for the Healthy School Award.

Pupils increase their understanding of different faiths and religions in religious education lessons and they develop their appreciation of other cultures in, for example, art where they study masks from Africa and Indonesia. In personal, social and health education lessons, pupils develop a good understanding of their feelings and they value the opportunities to discuss social, moral and general health issues.

Pupils take pride in their school and are upset about the recent incidents of vandalism. The headteacher reports that no pupils from the school have been involved in such incidents. Pupils, who are subject to sanctions, including temporary exclusions, respond well and generally show improvement in their behaviour through the work of the specialist staff based in the Alpha Base. Pupils enjoy the good range of out-of-hours activities on offer, and many take part in residential and Outward Bound activities. Whilst there are weakness in pupils' literacy skills, pupils' preparation for future economic well-being overall is satisfactory.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and is beginning to deal successfully with a legacy of pupils' underachievement, particularly in mathematics. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and have a positive attitude to their work. Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies to engage them, including group work and drama activities. In lessons where pupils are challenged through questions that are skilfully phrased, they make good progress. Teaching assistants sensitively support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities by using appropriate resources, for example enlarged and coloured sheets to aid children with specific learning needs. Most of the teachers' planning makes clear to pupils what they are going to learn and how their work will be assessed. However, the use of assessment information is inconsistent across subjects and, as a result, some pupils do not always know what level they are working at or what they need to do to improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

Statutory requirements are met and the school succeeds in offering a broad and balanced curriculum, which includes the study of French from Year 5. Personal, social and health education lessons ensure pupils are aware of health and safety issues. Pupils receive at least two hours of physical education per week and are actively encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including martial arts, golf, cookery, young engineers and an environmental group. Pupils enjoy this provision and participation rates are high. The science curriculum has not had enough focus, mainly due to long-term staffing issues. The headteacher reports that this has been resolved in liaison with the local high school for September 2008. Provision in art and information and communication technology (ICT) is particularly good.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The school takes pride in providing a positive and caring environment for learning. Appropriate arrangements for protecting pupils' welfare, safety and security are in place, and all safeguarding procedures meet requirements. The school's behaviour policy sets out systematic and stepped approaches to promote good behaviour. These are well understood by staff and pupils, and most pupils respond well. This is further supported through the work of the full-time inclusion manager based in the Alpha Base. There is good support for pupils with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities by specialist teachers.

Pupils' academic progress is monitored and reviewed regularly and senior staff have begun to identify and act on potential underachievement. The school's assessment systems have been unnecessarily complex and are currently being simplified into one coherent central record to promote better access and use by all staff. Most pupils know their targets and how well they are doing. However, the guidance that they receive through marking and their involvement in reviewing their own work are inconsistent and do not always tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work further. There are, however, strengths in mathematics and in meeting the needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties and/disabilities.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher's dedication and hard work have provided sound leadership through a period of significant change. Pupil numbers have continued to decline considerably over the last four years. She has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Self-evaluation accurately identifies the school's priorities for improvement and strategic planning is satisfactory. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are satisfactory, although important areas for improvement are not always followed up with sufficient urgency. As a result, some weaknesses persist. Nevertheless, there is evidence of the headteacher's monitoring leading to improvements, for example in improving the pace of learning in some lessons at Key Stage 3. She has injected vitality into leadership and management at senior level. She is ably supported by a senior team who have demonstrated the capacity to take on leadership roles which are becoming more tightly focused on pupils' progress. However, subject leaders do not have a consistent and rigorous approach to checking their own work or that of pupils. This is evident in subject self-evaluations, where there is not enough emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning to raise standards.

Performance data is extensive but not always clear enough to help the school move forward. Although the school sets ambitious targets, they are not always realistic. The school recognises this and aims to simplify the collection and sharing of data so that teachers can use it more effectively. Governance is satisfactory.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bilbrook Church of England Middle School, Wolverhampton WV8 1EU

Thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school and for being so friendly and helpful. We particularly want to thank the members of the school council who gave up their lunchtime to speak with us. We really enjoyed talking to you all and visiting your school. You are very polite and helpful and I can see why you like coming to school. We were very pleased to see how well you got on with each other, in lessons and on the playground. We were particularly impressed with the help you gave to each other through your work as playground buddies. You get on very well with each other and the adults who look after you. Thank you for sharing your many ideas and your work with us and telling us what you enjoy about your school and things that you would like to see improve even more.

Your school does many good things for you, such as keeping you safe and by giving you lots of after-school clubs to enjoy. However, we think that your school can help you do even better, particularly with your writing and science. To make your school even better, we have asked Mrs Burgess and your governors to:

- improve the teaching of English and science so that you make better progress;
- use assessment more precisely to set work which challenges all of you and is geared to your individual needs and make sure that the marking in your books tell you what you need to do to further improve your work;
- help the teachers who look after the various subjects to be more rigorous in their checking of how well you are doing.

We have been told that the school should soon be getting a new teacher to help you with your science. You can help by continuing to attend school regularly and by telling the teachers when you do not understand the work.

Thank you again for being so welcoming and friendly.

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif Her Majesty's Inspector.