

Oundle and King's Cliffe Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122089
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	327635
Inspection date	5 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Cartwright HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	677
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Liz Holland
Headteacher	Barbara Reseigh
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2005
School address	Cotterstock Road Oundle Peterborough PE8 5HA
Telephone number	01832 272256
Fax number	01832 274348

Age group	9–11
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Introduction

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

The Inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards, teaching and learning, and assessment, gathering evidence from school documentation, discussions with governors, staff and pupils, and first-hand observations of lessons. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This school occupies two sites separated by eight miles, at Oundle and the village of King's Cliffe. Both sites provide for the full age range of pupils, and the same full-range curriculum. The pupils come from relatively favourable areas in terms of socio-economic background, and this is evident in the very low proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are from a White heritage background.

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 is a good school with some outstanding features that provides an effective all-round education to pupils on both of its sites. The personal development of pupils is outstanding. The taught curriculum is rich and varied, with easy access for both pupils and staff to advice from the specialist teachers of subjects in addition to English and mathematics. This is of particular benefit to pupils in Years 5 and 6 compared to equivalent pupils in primary schools. Most pupils also enjoy taking part in the very wide range of lunchtime and after school additional activities and off-site trips. In combination, these elements create an outstanding curriculum. This is one reason why pupils show a remarkably good attitude to their learning. Older pupils in Years 7 and 8 maintain their natural inquisitiveness, and the school actively cultivates this ethos by encouraging pupils to ask questions and carry out independent research. For example, two Year 7 pupils were thrilled to explain their findings, assisted by a local sixth form science student, on the recently activated large hadron collider (LHC) near Geneva. They even knew why it had broken down! There is much high quality work of the pupils, proudly displayed all over both school sites. Pupils and staff on both sites share the same enthusiasm, positive attitudes and pride in the good outcomes.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent and their attendance is very good. Pupils confidently say they feel safe and know how to raise any concerns they may have with staff. Parents are overwhelmingly positive and supportive of the work of the school. The school council is effective at helping to improve social facilities, and has been instrumental in establishing a popular healthy tuck shop. Pupils enjoy over two hours of scheduled physical activity a week, and overall, they experience a very healthy lifestyle in school.

Teaching is good and the school is accurate in its judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. School records show that outstanding practice is common in all subjects, but that there is also a minority of satisfactory lessons. A strong characteristic of all lessons is very good teacher-pupil relationships, confirmed by pupils, who appreciate the praise and rewards they receive for good work. Teachers love their subjects and their own enthusiasm for learning and high expectations of themselves rub off on their pupils. This is another reason why pupils retain a positive approach to learning. Teachers know their pupils very well and, in the majority of lessons, are good at ensuring pupils have suitably challenging tasks matched to their abilities. One teacher remarked to her pupils, 'You are working much better now that you are getting stuck now and then': clear evidence that work challenged pupils at the limit of their potential. However, some lesson plans do not always show how tasks are matched to pupils' differing abilities. Teachers are reflective and analytical about how lessons actually succeeded in terms of achieving the planned outcomes. Their professional notes contain numerous examples of changes to 'pre-prepared' lessons in order to accommodate the results of their assessment of pupils' learning from the previous lesson. Marking is thorough, with plenty of good written advice on how to improve. Most pupils know what they need to improve from memory, and all have this information to hand in their folders. Pupils are not yet in the habit of responding in writing to their teachers' written suggestions. This means that pupils sometimes miss these opportunities to learn from a mistake, or to consolidate learning to a higher level.

Achievement is good and standards are above average. The school has information from its feeder schools that shows standards on entry to Year 5 are slightly above expectations. National tests taken by Year 6 pupils in 2007 showed standards to be even further above the national average, demonstrating good progress in Key Stage 2. Good progress continues in Year 7

through to Year 8. Pupils leave school with high standards in almost all of their subjects and they are very well prepared for their next stage in education. The care, guidance and support for pupils are good. The new headteacher, upon her appointment in September 2007, identified weaknesses of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and made this area her first priority for improvement. Provision is now good for these pupils, and they achieve as well as their peers.

Leadership and management are both good. The headteacher has set new expectations for a rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation at all levels. She has introduced accurate analysis of progress in all subjects and year groups. This data is providing very good information to help inform target setting and intervention to support pupils who look to be slipping behind. Subject leaders welcome this new approach and share the headteacher's clear vision for further improvement. The school did not previously set challenging targets, although students' achievement did not suffer, thanks to the intrinsically secure quality of teaching. Now, subject leaders prepare well-analysed reviews of the past year that include clear reference to the quality of teaching and learning.

Governance is satisfactory. The newly appointed chair of governors is addressing some historical inefficiency in budget management. She also recognises the need for evaluating the impact of statutory policies, particularly those relating to equality of opportunity. Although the school does not yet have a formal policy on how it intends to promote community cohesion, its excellent links with local communities in both locations do ensure pupils get good opportunities to participate in local activities. However, there is scope to widen the opportunities for pupils to learn more about the multicultural life of Britain and their place in the wider world context. The headteacher has already begun to work with her local cluster of schools in developing this aspect.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide time for pupils to respond to the good comments and suggestions for development that teachers write when marking day-to-day work.
- Make sure teachers consistently plan lesson activities that are well matched to the different abilities and prior knowledge of pupils in all classes.
- Ensure the statutory policies mentioned above are fully implemented and evaluated.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

6 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Oundle and King's Cliffe Middle School, Oundle, PE8 5HA

Thank you for the lively and enthusiastic conversations I had with you as part of my inspection of your school. You are fortunate in attending a good school that is successful in maintaining your natural inquisitiveness and love of learning.

It does this in two ways: the school provides an excellent curriculum that is further enriched by the wide range of additional clubs, trips and activities that you all enjoy. Second, your teachers are equally enthusiastic about their own subjects, they know your strengths and weaknesses very well, and can quickly intervene to help you when you are stuck. Indeed, 'getting stuck' every now and then is quite important, because it means you are learning at the very limit of your talents, and so will be making the most of your potential. As a result, you make good progress and are well prepared for your next steps in life. I was particularly pleased to see examples of work that you were proud of, and appreciate that your teachers had recognised these. I enjoyed seeing a great deal of your high quality work on display around the school.

Some things could make this school even better. Teachers should make sure that all of the tasks they plan for you to complete really do match your abilities. They mark your work well, and often leave you with extra questions or suggestions, but you do not always respond to those questions in writing. You can help by spending some time reading your teachers' suggestions, and then carrying them out. I have also asked the school to check that all of its policies are in place and working properly.

Best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright Her Majesty's Inspector