

# 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>	331610
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 July 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clive Kempton 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 (total)	175
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Roger Timbrell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Frances Burgess
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 June 2008
<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

When the school was inspected in June 2008 it was judged to require significant improvement. It was asked to:

- 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 that 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.

A monitoring visit was carried out by an inspector in March 2009, when the school was judged to be making good progress in addressing these issues. Now, after 12 months, this re-inspection of the school was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and one additional inspector.

## Description of the school

Bilbrook Church of England Middle School is relatively small and its numbers continue to decline due to falling birth rates. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who are learning English as an additional language is lower than the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, 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: 2

Bilbrook Middle is a good school that has improved considerably since it was inspected a year ago. Progress with the specific issues identified at that time has been good. Standards have improved across the school due to the close attention the school has given to improving teachers' use of data to plan work geared to the needs of individual pupils. Middle leaders now monitor and evaluate standards in their subject area rigorously and have ensured that all pupils make good progress. Marking is now consistent across the school. All staff use the same system to mark pupils' work and as a result, pupils understand what they have to do to improve their work. Writing has improved in Key Stage 2 and the same is true of boys' reading in Key Stage 3. In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

All this has happened due to the strong and determined leadership of the headteacher and senior staff who have successfully focused the staff on ensuring all pupils make better progress. One parent commented, 'The school gets the best out of everyone.' The local authority has provided good support to help the school improve as well, such as the appropriate use of subject consultants and the deployment of an attached adviser. Support for science teaching from the local high school in the absence of a science specialist in the school, has had the impact of raising standards in science. There has been a strong focus on improving the quality and consistency of teaching and learning across the school, which is now judged to be good. This notwithstanding, some of the planned activities observed in lessons were mundane and lacked sufficient excitement or challenge. The curriculum is good and involves a wide range of educational visits to support learning as well as a good range of after-school clubs. Leadership and management across the school are therefore judged to be good.

Pupils enter the school with attainment below age-related expectations in Year 5 and make good progress in Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 6 they attain standards broadly in line with the national average. They maintain this good progress in Key Stage 3 and the school's progress data and standards observed in lessons now indicate that students attain above the standards expected by the time they leave the school. This good rate of progress is a significant improvement from the last inspection and as a result, achievement and standards are now judged to be good. As well as the good support provided for pupils' academic progress, the care, guidance and support for all pupils, including the most vulnerable, is also good. Every pupil is valued and teachers and other adults ensure that all pupils get the support they need.

The personal development of pupils is good. They enjoy coming to school and behave well. Attendance has been a persistent issue for a number of years and whilst it is broadly average, has not received the same level of support from the local authority due to frequent personnel changes and the ensuing difficulty in developing relationships with the parents of persistent absentees. Some parents continue to take their children on holiday in term-time despite the schools' advice about the dangers of their child falling behind with their work. Pupils know how to stay healthy and fit and those in need of additional support to keep active are targeted well for additional physical activity.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all lesson activities are more focused on exciting and challenging learning opportunities.

- With support from the local authority, improve attendance and ensure all parents are fully aware of the implications of poor attendance on attainment.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement and standards have improved considerably since the last inspection. Through the careful monitoring and support for individual pupils, the school has been able to set and largely meet challenging targets. The underachievement identified at the last inspection has been eradicated. Able pupils are now attaining higher standards. Currently, these pupils attain higher standards in English than in mathematics, due to their lower starting points in mathematics when they enter the school. Standards in science have improved considerably due to specialist teaching from Codsall High School staff. Pupils really enjoy the practical science lessons where they now have more opportunities to do experiments.

Standards continue to rise as pupils move through the school, and by the time they leave in Year 8, they are attaining higher standards than those typically found in English, mathematics and science as well as information and communication technology (ICT). High standards were also observed in art, religious education and physical education across the school.

All staff are now very secure in their understanding of the progress that pupils should be making, how to record it and use the information well to support those individuals who may be falling behind.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress due to the high quality of the support they receive.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. Good behaviour is consistent across the school and pupils have many opportunities for social and cultural development in the wide range of activities and curriculum visits. Spirituality is also highly valued, not only as part of the school's focus on Christian values but also in the range of opportunities in lessons where children are encouraged to express their feelings and emotions. The outcome is confident, articulate young people who speak with pride about their school, and are willing to engage in conversation with visitors. They develop leadership roles as playground buddies with younger children, members of the school council, and sports leaders. The regular senior citizen luncheons at the school also provide good opportunities for pupils to serve lunches and chat to some local residents. These inter-generational occasions are highly valued by both parties. The development of good social skills along with a range of responsibilities and pupils' good development of basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is preparing them well for their futures.

Pupils know how to stay fit and healthy and the improved school meals and wide range of after-school clubs support a healthy lifestyle. Pupils report that they feel safe in school and there is hardly any bullying, just the rare name-calling which is quickly dealt with by teachers. There is good support for e-safety too, so that pupils know how to protect computer passwords and how to recognise potential concerns.

Attendance is broadly average compared with other middle schools. The majority of pupils attend regularly. Improvement in attendance has been prevented by a few persistent absentees

in this small school; too many parents taking their children on holiday in term-time; and the lack of continuity with local authority education welfare officers (EWOs) attached to the school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching has improved since the last inspection. Effective monitoring of teaching has led to a more consistent approach to raising standards. Staff are much more skilled at assessing pupils' attainment and use this information effectively to monitor their progress and plan a variety of tasks which challenge all pupils. Teachers ensure that pupils understand what they are expected to learn and what they need to do to be successful.

Relationships are strong and effective support is provided by teaching assistants. Resources, for example interactive whiteboards, are used successfully to hold pupils' attention and stimulate discussion. Lessons are well planned to ensure pupils have a variety of things to do and there are some good opportunities for all pupils to get involved in practical tasks. However, in the less successful lessons, not all teachers are planning activities that are sufficiently exciting and challenging to focus pupils' learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school is developing a curriculum which promotes enjoyment particularly through practical activities in subjects such as science, art and physical education. Setting and grouping in English and mathematics ensures that tasks are carefully planned to match most pupils' abilities. Good opportunities are provided to enable pupils to improve their writing skills in other subjects. However, the school is aware of the need to plan even more opportunities for pupils to make links in their learning across subjects. Apart from in science, curriculum links during transition from Year 8 to Year 9 with the feeder high school are not sufficiently developed. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Spiritual development is particularly well planned, for example when pupils were encouraged to express their personal beliefs through the use of symbols in a Year 7 religious education lesson, and through some of the school trips, for example to the Holocaust museum. The personal, social, health, and citizenship education programme effectively supports pupils' personal development through lessons and assemblies, for example, the Year 7 visit to a police station where they were able to experience fingerprinting and a visit to the cells. Extra-curricular opportunities are good and pupils value the wide range of clubs including dance, sport, kick-boxing, and cooking. Through visitors in school and trips out of school, pupils successfully deepen their understanding of the wider world. Pupils commented that the outdoor pursuits residential visit in particular made a real difference to improving their confidence and team skills.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The welfare of the children is at the heart of the school's values and pupils say that the school is like, 'one big family'. Parents and pupils value the high levels of care and concern shown by the school to all pupils and their families, including the most vulnerable. There are effective links with external agencies as well, to support individual pupils and families with particular difficulties. The family learning opportunities are particularly valued by parents.

Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet current government requirements and the school pays good attention to pupils' health and safety.

Pastoral links with the feeder first schools and local high school ensure that the transfer from one stage to another is as smooth as possible. However, older pupils are not given enough guidance on their careers and future options.

Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Helpful individual education plans, effective intervention programmes, adult support in lessons and careful monitoring, all contribute to enabling these pupils to make good progress.

There are good systems in place and used well to track pupils' progress. They are given good information about how well they are doing and the marking policy is effective in ensuring that pupils know their current level of attainment and what they need to do to improve their work. Self- and peer-assessment is successfully developing pupils' understanding of their progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Good leadership and management at all levels have brought about consistency and improved standards and achievement. Managers throughout the school have embraced the challenges set when the school was given a notice to improve last year, and have succeeded together to create a good school where pupils are now making good progress. They have been open to the good advice and support provided by the local authority. Challenges remain, such as succession planning, as some staff are due to retire shortly. There is a need to ensure that the momentum of improvement is maintained.

Middle managers are now much more effective and accountable in their roles. Regular data analysis and monitoring of teaching in their subject informs appropriate support for individual pupils. Departmental reports written for senior staff are now much more evaluative and use data well. Self-evaluation across the school is now embedded and accurate. Management capacity to act on the issues identified by this inspection and raise standards has improved and is now good.

Stakeholders and other professionals associated with the school are well respected by the staff for the contribution they make to supporting individuals and in improving provision in the school. They enjoy coming to the school, and working with the staff and pupils and they have noticed a change of pace of school improvement over the past year. One commented, 'Bilbrook is a clearly improving school with strong leadership from the headteacher', and inspectors agree.

Governance is good. Governors have continued to hold the school to account for standards attained and are now much better informed about whole-school progress due to the higher profile that data now have across the school. Their duty to promote community cohesion is satisfactory and developing. There remains work to do, having now completed the audit, especially in evaluating the impact of their actions on the cohesion of the school's community.

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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 <sup>1</sup> 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

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which 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	2

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

3 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bilbrook CofE (C) Middle School, Codsall, WV8 1EU

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave the other inspector and me when we visited your school in July. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like to know the outcome of the inspection and what the school could do to further improve.

I think your school is good now and has improved a lot since the last inspection. Every one of you and the teachers and helpers have worked very hard to help you make quicker progress this year and attain higher standards. By the time you leave in Year 8 you are attaining standards that are better than those in most middle schools in most subjects. You are polite and well behaved and speak with pride about your school. Your parents too have noticed that the school has improved a lot. You go on lots of trips that help you with your work, and there is a good range of clubs you can go to after school to develop your personal skills and interests. You are given lots of opportunities to develop leadership skills too like sports leaders, playground buddies and members of the school council. These opportunities will help you more and more as you get older. One thing that needs to improve is the attendance of a few of you. If you are away from school, you will get behind with your work and find it harder to catch up.

Your headteacher and senior staff are really good and have made sure that everything is more consistent across the school, like marking, where all the teachers now mark your work in the same way, and the way your progress is now tracked so you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve. If you do not understand something, it is spotted more quickly now and you are given extra help.

In order to make your school even better, I have suggested to your headteacher and the senior staff that they do the following things.

- Make sure lesson activities are more exciting and challenging for all of you.
- Improve the attendance of a few of you and make sure your parents know how it affects your learning if you are away from school.

Yours faithfully

Clive Kempton HMI

Her Majesty's Inspector