

Middlewich High School

King Edward Street, Middlewich, Cheshire, CW10 9BU

Inspection dates 9–10 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The quality of teaching in a large majority of lessons is good and sometimes outstanding. This is having a positive impact on progress. As a result, students achieve well.
- Students with a wide range of special educational needs receive targeted support which enables them to achieve well from their starting points.
- The behaviour of students and their attitudes to learning are good. Students are polite and well mannered to each other and adults.
- Students say they feel very safe and this view is supported by the vast majority of parents.
- The curriculum offers a good variety of courses, including college placements, with extensive opportunities for students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Leaders have a clear focus on improving teaching and have made significant changes to ensure that lessons are purposeful and expect the best from students. Consequently, the quality of teaching and students' achievement are improving rapidly.
- The new headteacher has high expectations and is ambitious for the school and its community. All school leaders and governors share a determination to continue improving the school's performance.
- The resourced provision for students with special educational needs is purposefully integrated into the whole school. Students are well supported and so often make exceptional progress.
- This is an inclusive and harmonious school where all students are equally valued and respected as part of the school family.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet consistently good throughout the school and only a small amount is outstanding.
- Students are not always fully aware of how to improve their work from the feedback that they receive.
- Not all heads of subject departments and other middle leaders accurately evaluate performance and make the necessary improvements to raise standards.
- There are missed opportunities for students to find things out for themselves and to take responsibility for their learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 part-lessons taught by 34 different teachers. Joint observations of lessons were also carried out in partnership with two members of the senior leadership team. As both Year 10 and Year 11 were not in school, lesson observations were undertaken only in Key Stage 3 classes.
- Meetings were held with the members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders and heads of subject departments. Inspectors also met with groups of students of differing ages, including some Key Stage 4 students who volunteered to come in to school in order to speak with inspectors. A telephone conversation was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including information and work showing students' progress and attainment, school improvement plans, monitoring documentation and records related to behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account the views expressed by parents in the 28 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Derek Davies, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Blaylock	Additional Inspector
Sheila Kaye	Additional Inspector
Janet Peckett	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Middlewich High School is smaller than the average-size secondary school.
- The school is a designated centre for the hearing impaired and also provides specialist autistic support. Provision for these students is an integrated part of the wider school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is well below the national averages.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion of these supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above national averages.
- The school exceeds the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection. There have also been a number of changes to senior leaders and a new Chair of the Governing Body. Partnership arrangements are being developed with local primary schools and other secondary schools nearby as part of the Chimney House Group.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision but does take part in extended courses with local colleges.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good and more lessons are outstanding in order to raise achievement further by:
 - making lessons challenge all students, developing their knowledge and understanding
 - ensuring that feedback to students about their work always provides them with the guidance they need in order to improve
 - further developing opportunities for students to learn for themselves.
- Further strengthen leadership by:
 - ensuring all subject heads of department and other middle leaders accurately evaluate performance and make the necessary improvements
 - refining evaluating, monitoring and tracking systems relating to attendance and behaviour, to include analysis of all groups.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with standards in English and mathematics that are broadly average, but sometimes a little below. In recent years the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at Grade C or above, including English and mathematics, has been increasing and is now similar to national averages. In all year groups students are now achieving well and making good progress. School data show that by the time students reach the end of Year 9, some have made outstanding progress. Achievement is improving and students leave Year 11 with standards that while broadly average overall are rising strongly.
- The school's reliable and robust data indicate that 70% of students are on course to achieve five grades A* to C (with English and mathematics) in 2013, which would represent a considerable improvement on the 2012 results. These figures show students' attainment is moving rapidly towards being above average. Similarly, progress measures in English and mathematics are improving strongly and are on course to match or exceed the current national average, which represents a significant improvement from previous years.
- The improved overall achievement in 2012 was despite a dip in performance in English. School leaders have rigorously addressed this issue and are justifiably confident that current Year 11 students have made better progress and that achievement is rising strongly towards above average. Leaders have addressed underperformance in science and as a result, performance in this subject is now improving. There are high levels of achievement in the humanities.
- From their starting points, students also achieve particularly well in design and technology, English literature, geography, history, business studies, information and communication technology and statistics.
- The good progress made by students with a special educational need and those who are eligible for pupil premium is similar to other students. The attainment gap for students known to be eligible for free school meals has narrowed considerably over the past three years and is now similar to that found typically elsewhere.
- Students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium receive additional support to develop their literacy and numeracy skills through a nurture group and additional support from the Inclusion Resource Provision in the school. This is helping to support their learning across a range of subjects and ensure rapid progress is being made.
- As a result of effective monitoring and targeted support, achievement for those students with statements for special educational needs is often exceptional and demonstrates the school's values of promoting equality and opportunity for all.
- Early entry in mathematics is used selectively to optimise students' achievements at GCSE grade C and above.
- The school is now much more selective with the qualifications taken outside of school with local college providers, though still recognises the importance of these courses for some students.

The quality of teaching is good

- Typically in lessons observed during the inspection there were high expectations and students were set appropriate and challenging activities that were both engaging and exciting. Many students were able to speak confidently about what they were learning and could identify what they had to do to improve. Teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge and used effective questioning to encourage students to think for themselves. As a result, students in these lessons progress well.
- Some of the lessons observed captured the students' imagination and they were engrossed in their work, such as an art lesson where students worked independently on aboriginal designs with such pride in what they were achieving.
- In most lessons, support staff make a valuable contribution to the learning of students and the

progress that they make. This was seen particularly in physical education lesson where the teaching assistant, through effective questioning and intervention with a group of students, ensured high levels of challenge and engagement.

- In a few lessons, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for students to find things out for themselves. As a result, this does not enable students to fully develop their ability to learn by themselves. Likewise, the level of challenge and pace is too inconsistent in these lessons.
- The school has a highly accurate view of the quality of teaching. During the inspection the judgements of teaching in all joint observations undertaken by senior leaders with inspectors matched with the school's views on strengths and weaknesses.
- Some marking of students' work, such as in English, is very detailed and provides clear and specific comments to inform students what they need to do to improve. However, this good practice is not consistently applied across all subject areas.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are promoted well in many subjects. For example, there is an insistence on students learning key words when approaching new concepts in geography. The majority of teachers are skilled in developing students' speaking and listening skills.
- Students recognise the improvements in teaching and now believe that lessons are more purposeful and often dynamic. The vast majority of parents believe that teaching is good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of students have very positive attitudes to their learning and behave well in lessons. Students are polite and well-mannered and courteous to each other and to adults and visitors. The school is an inclusive community and this is particularly evident in the way in which all students, including those with special educational needs, are valued and respected.
- Students say they feel safe and secure in the school and are made aware of all types of bullying, including being safe online and other issues through the school's life skills programme. The responses from parents indicate that a very large majority of parents agree that students behave well, they are not bullied, and they are well cared for and feel safe at school.
- As a result of explicit sanctions and rewards, students have clear expectations of what is appropriate behaviour.
- The school provides opportunities for students to develop as responsible individuals. Many students make a significant contribution to the school community by taking on positions of responsibility such as prefect or on the school council. Students on the council have recently developed a Learning Charter which has been agreed with students and staff as to what can be expected from everyone in lessons.
- Students play an active role in the community, either through arts events and festivals or through local groups to support charity aid work. The emphasis on participation in wider events ensures that students have the opportunity to develop skills that will make them responsible citizens. International links with schools in Kenya further promote students' appreciation of their role in a wider, global society.
- Attendance has improved slightly in the past three years and is broadly average. The school has clear systems and procedures for managing attendance, including first day contact with home. Attendance of those students known to be eligible for free school meals has improved in the current year.
- Exclusions have reduced further and much is made of the Chimney House Group (a partnership with other local schools) to prevent permanent exclusions. A mentoring programme is used to meet the individual needs of those students who are at risk of exclusion.
- Incident records used by the school to track attendance, exclusion and behaviour logs are in place, though the analysis of the information is not yet fully developed.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a clear vision and is determined to improve the life chances of students at the school. Within a relatively short time he has addressed key areas with a strong sense of urgency and has made improving teaching and learning the priority in the school.
- Along with the headteacher, senior leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and its role within the community. Leaders know their school well and what it will take to ensure sustained success in the future. They have effectively communicated their expectations for what should happen in all lessons which is having an impact on improving the quality of teaching.
- Staff performance is managed effectively. Staff skills are improved by regular training in aspects such as accurately checking on students' progress and setting more challenging targets. The school's tracking system identifies underachievement early and encourages teachers to set more challenging targets. Subject leaders are all involved in checking on the quality of work in their departments and ensuring high standards.
- Senior leaders and most heads of subject departments and other middle leaders have accurate judgements of the school or department and action planning clearly identifies areas for improvement that will make a significant difference. However, this is not yet consistent among all heads of subject departments and other middle leaders.
- The school's systems for observing lessons and checking the quality of teaching and its impact on students' progress are good and provide teachers with accurate feedback on their performance. This information is used well to provide a relevant programme of staff training and to ensure that teacher's pay awards are linked to their performance. Performance management is rigorous and is clearly linked to the new Teacher Standards.
- The curriculum ensures that students of all abilities have the opportunity to be successful on courses which are right for them. This contributes to rising attendance, student motivation and achievement. The school puts strong emphasis on the importance of reading and life skills. The positive atmosphere in school and the wide range of international links, with countries such as Kenya, ensure that students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered effectively.
- The school has a wide range of enrichment activities such as trips, music events, visits and a wide range of clubs which all students say is a clear strength of the school. These provide students with opportunities and experiences to develop their personal and academic skills. For example, students annually take part in planning and enacting a wedding, which involves working with local businesses. These activities, together with the school's other strong links with the local community, also contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The new Chair of the Governing Body, with the support of the headteacher, has refocused the work of the governing body to ensure that governors have a detailed understanding of standards within the school.
 - The governing body has a wide range of expertise and supports and challenges the school very effectively. Governors know the school well through personal visits and frequent contact with the school, including being directly involved in projects to promote citizenship. Governors are involved in all aspects of management and ensure that salary progression of staff is linked to improved performance and that pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium is spent to the best effect to support the students for whom it is intended. The governing body understands how to interpret the data on students' progress and achievement and holds the school to account where there is any underperformance.
 - Safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirement.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	111410
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	412779

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	716
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Gibson
Headteacher	Mr K Simpson
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2009
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