



Middleton Technology School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105842
Local Authority Rochdale
Inspection number 287347
Inspection dates 8–9 November 2006
Reporting inspector Ian Thompson

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Kenyon Lane
School category	Community		Middleton, Manchester
Age range of pupils	11–16		Lancashire M24 2GT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 6435116
Number on roll (school)	1043	Fax number	0161 6546024
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs T Fitzsimons
		Headteacher	Miss Allison Crompton
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2003		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size school serves an urban area of social and economic deprivation. The great majority of students are from White British backgrounds and none is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. The school has specialist designation for technology, vocational education and Raising Achievement Transforming Learning (RATL) through which this school works to support underperforming schools. The school also has a Leading Aspect Award for its work with gifted and talented students. A third of the staffing in the school has changed over the last two years. The headteacher has been in post since September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. A visitor is immediately struck by the atmosphere of purposeful enthusiasm that has been created by the headteacher, staff and students, which characterises all aspects of its work. All staff accept that they have a role to play in management and are accountable for their own and their students' performance. The rigorous system for checking the school's performance means that the school's strengths are known and built upon while weaknesses are identified and tackled. Targets for improvement are negotiated in all areas. This extends to students and the effectiveness of assessment, target-setting and review can be seen in outstanding achievement throughout the school. The school does particularly well to promote boys' progress so that they achieve better than boys nationally. Overall, students' progress from when they enter the school to the end of Year 9, put Middleton in the top 5% of schools nationally in 2005; progress from entry to the end of Year 11, put the school in the top 1%. Provisional results for 2006 show continued improvement, particularly in the proportion of students reaching the higher levels, and exceeded the targets set for the school. Current standards match these results.

The school's success in developing its students' confidence is reflected in their outstanding personal development and well-being. Students say how they enjoy learning and feel safe in their school. They strive to succeed in the 'Reach Your Goal' scheme, an initiative aimed at making sure that all students achieve their full personal and academic best. Behaviour is consistently good and very often excellent. Students' positive relationships with their teachers and each other are a significant reason for the high levels of achievement. Students here are very well prepared for their future.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Rigorous checking of how well students are learning, by senior staff and curriculum leaders, is closely linked to staff training and development to maintain high quality. Detailed and continuous assessment enables teachers to match work and teaching methods closely to students' needs. In many lessons, teachers make learning fun so that students are absorbed in their work and enjoy learning. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well integrated and supported so that they make the same excellent progress as their classmates.

The curriculum is excellent. A strong focus in all areas on information and communication technology reflects the school's specialist status. The curriculum is particularly well planned in Years 10 and 11, where it is enriched by innovative vocational courses that are provided through a collaborative partnership with two other schools. The school's successful development of these and other courses has been recognised by the Learning and Skills Council, which identified Middleton as a leading pre-16 school for vocational education.

The provision for the care, guidance and support of the students is outstanding. Students are treated as individuals and this allows them to thrive. They appreciate how well they are cared for and are excellent ambassadors for the school. Tracking

students' progress provides reliable evidence to promote the achievement of challenging targets.

The school has made great progress since the last inspection and, not least because of the systems developed to enable all staff to contribute ideas for improvement, has an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

The school is aware of all areas for improvement and has plans to tackle them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement throughout the school is outstanding in relation to students' starting points and their standards when they begin their GCSE courses. Students enter the school with below average standards. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average. By the end of Year 11, standards are well above average. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls, contrary to the national trend. Boys' results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2005, were slightly higher in relation to their national average than those of girls. These results show the positive impact of the school's efforts to raise boys' achievement. Mathematics and design and technology are particular strengths; in these subjects students reach very high standards. Students with additional learning difficulties do particularly well because of the support they receive. High standards have been maintained for the last four years. Results in national tests and GCSE examinations have improved at a much faster rate than the national trend. The only apparent weakness in an otherwise extremely positive picture is in the lower than average proportions of students reaching the highest A* and A grades at GCSE. However, this reflects the lower than average proportion of higher attaining students in the school's intake. In 2006, the great majority of students reached the levels predicted on the basis of their earlier standards and many exceeded them. One of the main reasons for students doing so well is that their progress is rigorously checked so that any falling off is swiftly identified and remedied. Very few students leave this school without any qualifications.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding, though the school was modest in its evaluation. The new Life Education programme is developing positive citizenship and informed views on moral, social and personal health issues. An imminent Healthy Schools Award shows how well students respond to the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. Students are very well prepared for the world of work, through enterprise projects, good careers and finance advice and the acquisition of key skills. The way teachers and learning mentors sensitively deal with personal issues, which can result in poor attendance, are testimony to the effective pastoral systems in place. The

inclusion unit and student support facilities also play an important role in these and other issues, in integrating vulnerable students into school life and improving their confidence and self-esteem. Students are proud to take on additional responsibilities. 'Guardian Angels' effectively mentor younger students and the school council actively promotes the 'Four Rights' system that makes a positive contribution to the school's feeling of community. Students' sense of community is very strong as seen in the large number who take part in competitions, school charity events and extended curriculum activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Focused staff training and assiduous monitoring of classroom performance sustain the exceptionally high quality of teaching and learning. Teachers have superlative subject knowledge and excellent class management skills. Their positive relations with students underpin outstanding work in class and impressive examination results.

Stimulating lessons realise challenging learning objectives, which teachers discuss and summarise with students. Teaching is carefully balanced to provide clear presentations, complemented by intensive and well-supported independent, paired or group work. Teachers set students sharp individual targets based on accumulated data, referring to National Curriculum levels and examination grades. They are skilled in the use of computers and interactive whiteboards, using them frequently and to powerful effect. Students respond enthusiastically to stimulating tasks requiring independent or collaborative effort. They make valuable contributions and sensibly seek assistance when required. Even when presentations are lengthy or, very occasionally, dry, students' cooperative attitudes and lively responses add sparkle and variety.

Students have impressive powers of concentration, so time is used intensively. Teachers make substantial and valuable use of homework to extend and link learning in class. Particular talents are nurtured in many enrichment activities. Learning is maximised by teachers' continuous assessment, where progress is tracked and fresh targets continuously set. Teachers are adept in exploiting this crucially important aid to achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's excellent curriculum provision more than meets statutory requirements, adding numerous extra classes and learning opportunities to a busy 25-hour week. An emphasis on information and communication technology throughout the school convincingly reflects the specialist status designation. An imaginative life education course ingeniously blended with humanities amply covers citizenship, as well as personal, social and health education. In Years 7 to 9, provision is well balanced, with course and lesson content consciously modified or extended to challenge students of

all abilities. In Years 10 and 11, students choose from a wide selection of academic, technological and vocational options offering a close match with their preferences and aspirations. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive carefully managed support, which includes them in all aspects of provision. The very few students at risk of disaffection benefit from work-based provision specially tailored to their needs. Many pupils, including the most able, benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which extend and complement their considerable achievements in class.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school, and particularly the City Learning Centre, provides an outstandingly stimulating environment for its students. All students are clear about who they can turn to when they are concerned or troubled and the school knows its students very well. The school has appropriate procedures for child protection and for safeguarding its students. The school nurse, the 'Pyramid Club', and a school therapist are examples of the high levels of care available to the students. Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with exceptional support. All students are treated as equals. Sensitive and comprehensive transition arrangements successfully prepare students for both joining and leaving the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. One of the key elements in the school's success is the focus on improvement. There is no complacency. Staff development is closely linked to the rigorous programme of performance management. The headteacher has created an atmosphere in the school in which ideas for improvement are sought and welcomed. As a result, teachers' enthusiasm and creativity are harnessed to develop initiatives across the school. A good example is in the links that have been developed between subjects by forming staff into small working groups. The headteacher has successfully communicated her vision for the school's development so that it is shared by all staff. The result is a unity of purpose aimed at developing students' self-confidence and enabling them to achieve as well as they can. The school improvement plan is deceptively simple, based on an extremely clear view of the school and its potential for development. With great clarity, it lays out what needs doing, who will do it, by when they will do it and what positive impact will be shown. The school discharges its wider responsibilities as a specialist school exceptionally well. Full advantage is taken of the additional opportunities that arise from the school's specialist status, for example, in developing the vocational curriculum in partnership with other schools and in work done with partner primary schools. The governing body supports the school well and brings professional expertise to its work in holding it to account for its performance. Plans to extend the school's provision beyond the age of 16 are well advanced and show the commitment to improvement and development

by the headteacher and governors. Financial management is excellent and resources are matched very well to students' needs. The school provides exceptional value for money as was recognised by its inclusion last year in the Department for Education and Skills Economic Unit's top 30 most effective schools.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1

¹ 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, a team of inspectors visited your school to find out if it is giving you the quality of education you should receive.

Thank you very much for the way in which you welcomed us to Middleton and thanks to all of you who spoke to us about your life in the school.

I am delighted to say that your school is outstanding. The particularly good things are:

- your school is outstandingly well run
- together with your teachers, you help to create an exceptional atmosphere for learning
- you behave very well and get on really well with one another
- you are happy in the school and rightly proud of it
- when you are given the opportunity, you are good at taking on responsibilities
- teaching is excellent so that you enjoy learning and make outstanding progress
- the school provides high quality care for you all
- the wide variety of activities you are offered, particularly the vocational courses for older students, provide very well for your interests and help you learn.

Unusually, we have not asked Mrs Crompton and your teachers to do anything to improve your school. This is because they already know what needs doing and how to do it.

We wish you well for the future and hope that you will continue to take pride in your school, work hard and play your part in maintaining its outstanding quality.