

# Middlewich High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111410
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire East
<b>Inspection number</b>	337682
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael McLachlan

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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	691
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr M Finney
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Martin Forster
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	King Edward Street Middlewich Cheshire CW10 9BU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01606 288170
<b>Fax number</b>	01606 738260
<b>Email address</b>	admin@middlewichhigh.cheshire.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 30 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of students and the local authority link officer. They observed the school's work, and looked at assessment data and the systems for tracking students' progress, school policies, the development plan, the school prospectus, 92 questionnaires returned from students, 233 questionnaires from parents and carers and 51 questionnaires from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress made by students in Years 7–11 and particularly those who start school with below average attainment
- the quality of teaching and learning and the ways in which the school is seeking to improve current practice
- the school's provision for care and guidance, particularly in supporting vulnerable students and promoting inclusion
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in raising standards and monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning

## Information about the school

Middlewich High School is smaller than average. Most students live in the locality and the neighbouring town of Winsford. Around 1 in 15 of the students is entitled to free school meals and most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average although the number of students with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average. The school is a designated centre for the hearing impaired and also provides specialist autistic support. The school is a designated specialist college for mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and science. The school holds the Inclusion Quality Mark (2006), Investors in People (2006), Sportsmark (2007 and 2008), The Intermediate International School Award (2008) and is in the process of applying for Eco School Status and the National Healthy Schools Award.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

This is a good school that offers outstanding care for its students in an exceptionally safe environment. Consequently, students attain above average results in examinations and make good progress. This year the school achieved its best examination results and the proportion of students who achieve five good grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is now well above the national average. Students enjoy and are proud of their school. This is evidenced in outstanding attendance, their good behaviour and their very positive contribution to the school, for example through the impressive and highly valued self-support team for students.

The headteacher, new at the time of the last inspection, was determined to move the school from its position of 'satisfactory with good features' to one which was at least 'good with outstanding features'. This has been achieved. Accurate self-evaluation and a robust response to emerging issues have led to significant improvements, particularly in examination outcomes. This has been achieved by good support from the governors, the senior and middle leadership teams and effective use of additional resources through the specialist college provision. Targets are ambitious and supported by regular, robust and detailed tracking and analyses of individual and group performance. This strategy, combined with a responsive and flexible curriculum, and good teaching, ensures that all students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other potentially vulnerable groups, such as the Traveller community, achieve well.

Outstanding care and guidance systems, combined with good partnerships with support agencies and local providers, ensure that all students feel very safe and that their particular needs are met. A range of courses is offered to match students' aspirations and compensate for significant personal difficulties. Consequently, outcomes for the more vulnerable students are good and sometimes outstanding. For example, individual students, who in other circumstances may have fallen out of education, are now doing well at college and have real and achievable ambitions for their future employment. The school is deservedly proud of these achievements alongside its growing academic success.

The school rightly has a high reputation in the community and with its parents and carers who show very high levels of satisfaction in all that it offers for their children. The school is well led by the headteacher, the governors and staff. They have ambitions for Middlewich High to become an outstanding school. They recognise that to achieve this they must raise their game in teaching and learning to secure even higher attainment and progress. Monitoring systems are not yet sufficiently precise to identify what individual staff need to do to move their teaching from good to outstanding. In addition, the use of assessment in lessons to support students' learning is only satisfactory as

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students are not always clear on what they need to do to improve. Given the successes since the last inspection, the school has good capacity to improve these aspects further and reach its goal.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- To achieve its ambition to become outstanding by continuing to raising attainment, the school should over the next year:
  - ensure that students are given sufficient guidance in lessons so that they know what to do to improve their work and become consistently good or better learners
  - ensure that the evaluation of teaching and learning is more frequent and refined so that it identifies, for individual staff, precisely what skills are required for their teaching to become consistently good and more often outstanding.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Students' learning is good and is a significant factor in the improving outcomes at GCSE. Students show mature and responsive attitudes to their teachers and each other in lessons. They are particularly enthusiastic and attentive when faced with challenging material, for example, Year 7 students worked with excitement and very successfully on GCSE-level algebra.

Results at GCSE are improving rapidly and are above national averages, as are results in English and mathematics. The very challenging targets set in 2009 were exceeded. These results place the school in the top 10% when compared with schools with similar attainment on entry. Specialist college targets in mathematics, science and ICT are met which, combined with high attendance, secure good outcomes for students in terms of workplace skills. Detailed analysis of outcomes and progress for individuals and groups is used well to identify underperformance and to target specific support. For example, in 2008 some boys with low attainment on entry did not achieve as well as expected. A robust response to this issue has resulted in the similar cohort reaching, or in some cases exceeding, their targets in 2009.

Students say they feel exceptionally safe because of the support from adults and the very positive ethos of the school. They particularly value the support provided by other students, for example, those who are members of the school's excellent Middlewich Youth Support Team (MYST) group.

Outstanding care, guidance and support systems enable the more vulnerable students, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those in the specialist provision to achieve well. Students are proud of the way the school helps everyone succeed. Students have a good attitude towards healthy lifestyles and have contributed to improving school meals. Involvement in sporting activity is good. Students' spiritual, moral and social development is good. However, the school recognises that, in order to build on these good experiences, students need more first-hand opportunities to meet a

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greater range of different cultures and more explicitly planned opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

The majority of lessons seen were good with around one third outstanding. A small minority were satisfactory with very few inadequate. The evaluation of teaching by the school was in close alignment with inspectors' observations. A significant feature of nearly all lessons is the strength in relationships between staff and students and between students themselves. The vast majority of students take a keen interest in their work, show very positive responses to the good questioning by their teachers and are enthused by what they are expected to do. The most effective lessons give opportunities for students to develop their own ideas through active and challenging learning activities. Where teaching is less effective, planning is weak, tasks are too mundane and time for learning is limited because of too much direction by the teacher. Consequently, students make little or no progress. A robust system of assessing students' progress each half term ensures that students are informed of where they are in relation to their

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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targets and what is needed to move forward in their examination work. However, the use of assessment to support learning during lessons, and to develop more sophisticated learning skills such as students' self- assessment, is not consistently applied by all staff. Consequently, the provision for assessment to support learning is satisfactory.

The school provides an inclusive curriculum which is well matched to students' needs. Good partnerships with local providers and colleges enable the school to secure a personalised curriculum in the upper school. This has been particularly successful with some students who were in danger of disengaging with school. The school provides well for this vulnerable group by increasing opportunities for these students to take additional qualifications, particularly in literacy and numeracy. A testimony to the success of this approach is the very low figure, only 1%, of students not going into employment or training when they leave school. The spiritual dimension of the curriculum has been enhanced since the last inspection by the introduction of GCSE philosophy and ethics for all students. Opportunities for extra-curricular provision are good, particularly in sport and music. Diversity days and enterprise activities enrich the curriculum. Workplace skills are enhanced by strong outcomes in literacy, numeracy and ICT courses. Consolidation of these skills through all subjects is less well developed.

The flagship of the school's provision is the outstanding care and guidance offered to students. Many examples of this exist, including support for students in lessons and in form time by the considerable number of learning mentors and teaching assistants. The particularly sensitive and very well-managed support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those in the hearing impaired and autistic specialist provision is outstanding, as is the work with the local Travellers' community. Staff give readily of their time to organise the Free Spirit Club, an after-school youth club designed to aid the integration of Travellers and the local community. This outstanding support enables these groups of students to access all that the school offers and achieve well. Excellent links with external support networks and strong leadership provide students with a very secure environment in which all students feel very safe and thrive. As one older student so eloquently and passionately wrote on their questionnaire; 'I cannot stress enough how much this school helps everybody to achieve success. I am very proud that I am a student here and will be sad to leave.'

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

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The headteacher has embedded his vision that the school has the potential to become outstanding and has made significant strides on this journey. The setting of ambitious targets for the school, groups and individuals, the changes to the curriculum and outstanding care and guidance enable all students to have equal opportunities to succeed. The school has exemplary systems for securing effective safeguarding procedures and effective training ensures that staff are well briefed and kept up to date. The school's engagement with parents and carers is outstanding. The very high level of satisfaction shown in the questionnaires returned from parents and carers is testimony to this. They are regularly kept informed through the students' journal, tutor days and first day absence response. Work with the local community is strong, as evidenced by the support provided for the local Traveller community, the access to the school for adult and community learning, and specialist college work in the primary school. This school is genuinely at 'the heart' of its community. However, it also recognises that, to become outstanding, it needs to reach out beyond its local community to provide additional opportunities for students to develop a more multicultural and global understanding. The impact of the specialist college on outcomes and provision has been strong, particularly in establishing robust systems from tracking students' progress, supporting additional mentoring, expanding the curriculum in science and ICT, and in funding physical and technological resources across the school.

The headteacher, governors and staff are now joined in an ambition to become outstanding and all recognise that the key to success is to raise the bar in teaching and learning. A teaching and learning group has been established, with fortnightly meetings held between senior leaders and middle leaders. A programme of department monitoring and review has been effective in increasing the number of good lessons. However, the evaluations these systems provide do not currently identify specific developments for individual teachers to support them in improving their current practice to the next level. The school has recognised this and has developed actions to address this issue.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>



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<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## **Views of parents and carers**

An overwhelming majority of parents and carers expressed very positive support for the school and what it does for their children. Support for all aspects of the school's work was very high and particularly for the way the school keeps students safe and for the support provided for the more vulnerable students.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Middlewich High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 233 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 691 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	117	39	164	55	10	3	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	120	41	164	56	5	2	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	109	37	175	60	4	1	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	94	32	182	63	11	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	107	36	179	61	5	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	94	33	172	60	15	5	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	80	28	186	65	14	5	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	98	35	171	62	4	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	107	36	177	60	8	3	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	97	34	171	61	10	4	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	84	31	168	62	16	6	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	114	39	166	57	6	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	128	43	159	53	5	2	5	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



Inspection of Middlewich High School, Middlewich, CW10 9BU

I would like to thank you for the way in which you welcomed the inspection team when we visited your school. You are rightly proud of your school. As one of you wrote in the questionnaire, 'I think this school is awesome – because as well as a superb environment, the morale of staff and pupils is brilliant.'

You attend a good school which has some outstanding features. You make good progress and achieve success above what might be expected in examinations. This is because you are taught well and are keen to learn. You behave well, attend school regularly and enjoy all that the school offers. You say you like the range of subjects you study and we saw that the staff work hard to ensure that courses are matched to your individual needs. Consequently, last year virtually all Year 11 students left school and went on to college or work.

We were particularly impressed by the outstanding care, guidance and support you receive. You told us how exceptionally safe you feel and how impressed you are with MYST, which enables you to support each other. We agree with you that the school is well led. The headteacher and his staff have high ambitions for the school to become outstanding. In order to reach this goal, they have identified that the best practice seen in teaching and in your learning needs to be more widespread.

To achieve this, we have suggested that staff should work together to identify how each of them can improve their teaching to be consistently outstanding. We have also asked them to work with you so that you know how well you are doing in each lesson and understand how to become outstanding learners. We have suggested that this work needs to be evaluated regularly over the next year to ensure that these improvements are made quickly. We are confident that, with your continued efforts, the ambition for the school to become outstanding is achievable.

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