

Middlestone Moor Academy

Address: Rock Road, Durham, County Durham, DL16 7DA

Unique reference number (URN): 149505

Inspection report: 17 February 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	●
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders ensure that pupils can thrive in school. Staff know pupils extremely well. Any pupils who experience personal challenges are swiftly identified and provided with highly effective pastoral support.

The school has high expectations for pupils to become positive citizens who are confident to speak out in the world. The school's personal development programme, the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum and other learning in the school, is connected through the oracy curriculum. Staff ensure that 'every voice is valued'. The success of this can be seen in the way that pupils behave towards others. Older pupils become confident, resilient and independent individuals. They develop an understanding of difference and have positive attitudes to learning as they move up the school.

The school's PSHE curriculum has been carefully developed to meet pupils' needs. It is taught in conjunction with a wide range of learning and enrichment opportunities. Pupils develop secure and detailed knowledge of how to keep themselves safe in the world beyond the school gate, including online. For example, they can discuss learning in relationships and health education with knowledge and maturity.

Activities and experiences are carefully thought through and well connected to meet the needs of the pupils and the community that they live in. For example, pupils are taught about the diversity of the world and the importance of tolerance and respect for others. Fundamental British values are well understood by pupils, who can give examples of how these are relevant to their lives.

All pupils are given a range of opportunities and experiences to broaden their horizons. These include residential trips, visits to places of learning and a wide range of clubs to enable them to explore their talents and interests. Leaders ensure that any pupils who may have barriers to joining in are identified and supported. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils have experiences that they may not otherwise have access to.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Pupils in key stage 2 achieve well. By the end of Year 6, pupils have the fundamental knowledge and skills that they need to be successful. This is reflected in pupils' achievements in end of key stage tests. Leaders monitor pupils' progress from their starting points. They provide additional support for pupils when necessary. Pupils who join the school in key stage 2 with low starting points or with any disadvantage perform as well as their peers nationally in writing and mathematics. Generally, pupils know and remember more of their learning throughout their time at the school.

Children entering the school in the early years often need swift support to ensure that they are on track for their next stage in learning. A small number of children do not develop their knowledge of phonics and learn to read as well as they could. Leaders have identified this and introduced changes that have begun to have a positive impact.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders work closely with families to stress the importance of pupils attending school regularly. Attendance information is analysed meticulously by leaders. Their careful tracking of absence for individuals and groups of pupils ensures that any issues are swiftly identified and addressed. Leaders use their positive relationships with families to offer support and guidance when necessary. Pupils' persistent absence has reduced and ongoing improvements are celebrated with pupils and their families. Leaders' highly personal, supportive approach with families has led to strong improvements in attendance over time for all groups of pupils.

Staff, using the school systems, ensure that the school is a calm and happy place to be. Staff praise pupils for 'fantastic walking' on corridors. Pupils hold doors open for others and exhibit excellent manners. In key stage 2, pupils focus well in lessons. They listen carefully and show positive attitudes to learning. This is not as routinely the case in key stage 1. When teaching is less effective, pupils do not settle to their learning quickly enough and important learning time is lost.

During social times, pupils enjoy using the extensive school grounds to play together happily. Pupils say bullying is rare, but if it occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff have created a well-designed curriculum. It is ambitious and carefully sequenced across key stages 1 and 2, so that pupils can build knowledge in a range of subjects over time. Typically, staff use their knowledge to teach the curriculum well. In key stage 2 in particular, they construct lessons that build on prior learning and utilise stimulating resources. This engages and interests pupils. Staff consistently promote the essential knowledge and skills of reading, writing and mathematics and use every opportunity for pupils to develop their understanding.

In key stage 1, staff teach phonics and early reading well. Often, teachers support pupils to develop early reading skills successfully. They teach pupils to improve their writing, including the accuracy of their letter formation, which helps pupils to develop their handwriting skills well. Pupils who find learning more difficult receive helpful support to practise and gain the knowledge that they need. However, sometimes, teaching does not help the youngest pupils to develop the accuracy of their reading. This includes pupils who have fallen behind. At times, staff do not ensure that important knowledge is shared clearly or that adaptations to teaching help pupils to learn consistently well.

Leaders have prioritised opportunities to develop pupils' oracy, particularly for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff use well-understood approaches to

help pupils develop the confidence and coherence of their spoken communication. For example, pupils skilfully 'build on' and 'challenge' the answers of their peers.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils' learning. Each staff member takes time to get to know the pupils well. They value them as individuals. If pupils have barriers to learning, such as special educational needs and/or disabilities or disadvantage, staff identify this swiftly and work with leaders to provide extra support. Staff work closely with families and professionals to set out the approaches that will enable pupils to be successful.

Most staff use carefully developed strategies to adapt learning to help pupils succeed. This ensures that pupils can access learning both within the classroom and in other areas, if this is needed. This is especially effective in key stage 2. In key stage 1 and the early years, leaders have not ensured that training has enabled staff to consistently ensure that all pupils engage well with learning.

Leaders monitor pupils' learning closely. They work with external specialists, such as speech and language professionals, to support teachers to adapt lessons and provide resources that help pupils to learn. Pupils who are newly arrived to the United Kingdom and speak English as an additional language are supported to make friends quickly. They are swiftly given the help with learning that they need. Leaders use additional funding and personal education plans effectively to support pupils to learn. Disadvantaged pupils or children in care are given support and encouragement to access the exciting enrichment activities that the school offers.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear vision of how they want the school to positively influence pupils' aspirations for their future. They understand the school's context well and know the range of challenges that some pupils have to overcome to succeed. Leaders are clear about the school's strengths and areas that are not yet reaching their high expectations. They take swift and effective action to improve areas that need development.

The trust works closely with the 'academy council' to provide support and challenge where it is needed. Their aim, to build leadership capacity by empowering the school to make strategic decisions about improvements that firmly hold the pupils' welfare at the heart of them, is realised. Members of the 'academy council' work effectively with leaders and have a realistic and accurate view of the school's effectiveness. They support the school well.

Staff say that they feel valued and that leaders support their wellbeing. Staff appreciate the time provided for teachers and assistants to work together to plan learning. Staff appreciate the professional learning opportunities they are given and the knowledge they develop as a result.

The relationships leaders and staff form with parents and carers are a real strength of the school. These relationships are used to promote learning, keep children safe and include parents in developing a strong sense of community and belonging to the school.

Needs attention

Early years

Needs attention 

Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is sufficiently well enacted in the early years to support children to develop the knowledge and skills they need to be well prepared for the next stage of their educational journey. Leaders have recently started to make improvements, and these improvements are starting to have a positive impact.

The activities children engage with do not consistently build knowledge and skills over time. Many of the planned learning opportunities are not focused well enough on the knowledge that staff intend children to learn. This leads to children being unsure of the purpose of tasks and quickly losing interest in them. At times, there is not a sharp enough focus on securing children's knowledge of sounds, language and communication. In Reception classes, children have daily phonics lessons. Some lessons are not well matched to children's reading ability. At times, staff do not engage children in high-quality conversation that helps them to learn. Therefore, some children do not develop the communication skills they need to progress well.

At times, the school's high expectations for learning are not enacted sufficiently well. Routines are well established, but when children choose not to follow them, staff do not address this effectively. The environment is spacious and bright. The Nursery provision is warm and welcoming. Children are well cared for. They are safe and happy.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are happy and safe at Middlestone Moor Academy. Leaders have a deep understanding of each and every pupil. They use this knowledge to ensure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities, can overcome any barriers to learning and be successful. Staff place pupils' wellbeing at the centre of all the school does.

Every pupil's voice is valued here. The school's well-embedded oracy curriculum enables pupils to build confidence and discuss their learning with eloquence and detail. This is especially successful in key stage 2, where lessons promote curiosity and engagement with learning. Pupils in this key stage recall past learning well. They are well motivated to learn more. Consequently, most children achieve in line with national expectations. When this is not the case, the school puts in bespoke support to help pupils succeed.

Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and considerate. This supports pupils to learn how to respect others. Pupils say behaviour is usually positive and pupils are kind to

each other. They say that if issues arise, including in relation to bullying, they would report them to staff. They are confident that resolutions would be found and problems solved. Pupils attend regularly and most are keen to learn.

Pupils' personal development is the bedrock for all learning. The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education is utilised well to prepare pupils for life beyond the school. Pupils apply learning from these lessons into their own lives. For example, they discuss important issues, such as valuing different cultures and understanding difference, with knowledge and sensitivity.

Most parents say they are confident that the school supports their children well. They value the helpful communication from staff if they have any concerns or require updates on their child's learning.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff fully understand how the early years curriculum enables children to build their knowledge over time. They should support staff to design high-quality learning experiences and purposeful interactions, so that all children are prepared well for key stage 1.
 - Leaders should ensure there is effective support for those pupils in the early years and key stage 1 who need help to behave well, so that no learning opportunities are missed and pupils engage positively with learning.
 - Leaders should ensure pupils consistently benefit from well-designed learning opportunities, especially in phonics and early reading, to enable them to achieve well.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Advance Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kelvin Simpson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alan Boddy.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy and assistant headteachers, governors and representatives from Advance Learning Partnership.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school has a Nursery provision.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Lead inspector:

Andrea Batley, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

James Martin McGrath, Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Chamings, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 17 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

261

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

278

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

40.42%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.07%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

14.56%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		61%	
2024/25 (revised)	71%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	52%	61%	Below
2022/23		60%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		74%	
2024/25 (revised)	75%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	71%	74%	Close to average
2022/23		73%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		72%	
2024/25 (revised)	75%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	68%	72%	Close to average
2022/23		71%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		73%	
2024/25 (revised)	79%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	68%	73%	Close to average
2022/23		73%	

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		46%	
2024/25 (revised)	50%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	43%	46%	Close to average
2022/23		44%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		62%	
2024/25 (revised)	50%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	64%	62%	Close to average
2022/23		60%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		59%	
2024/25 (revised)	60%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	57%	58%	Close to average
2022/23		58%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		60%	
2024/25 (revised)	70%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	57%	59%	Close to average
2022/23		59%	

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		68%	
2024/25 (revised)	50%	69%	-19 pp
2023/24 (final)	43%	67%	-25 pp
2022/23		66%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	50%	81%	-31 pp
2023/24 (final)	64%	80%	-15 pp
2022/23		78%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		78%	
2024/25 (revised)	60%	78%	-18 pp
2023/24 (final)	57%	78%	-20 pp
2022/23		77%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	70%	81%	-11 pp
2023/24 (final)	57%	79%	-22 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23		79%	

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	5.0%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	7.0%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	8.1%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	14.3%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	19.2%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	24.3%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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