

John Buchan Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132396
Local Authority	Service Children's Education
Inspection number	382119
Inspection dates	15–17 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Bradley Simmons HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Ministry of Defence
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	297
Appropriate authority	Service Children's Education
Chair	Lt Col Tom Copinger-Symes
Headteacher	Karen Jones
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 December 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors. Inspectors carried out 21 lesson observations covering 20 teachers. They met with senior leaders, staff, students from each year group and two members of the school governance committee. They examined students' exercise books, home school planners, school data about students' attainment and progress, monitoring records, safeguarding and child protection documentation and the school operational plan. They considered 90 parental questionnaires as well as questionnaires returned by the majority of students and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The strategies implemented by the school to improve boys' writing, both within English lessons and across the curriculum.
- Whether teachers' expectations are sufficiently high to enable students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and boys to make up lost ground during Key Stage 2 and capitalise on improved basic skills within Key Stage 3.
- The steps taken by leaders and managers to improve learning, progress and attainment in mathematics and weaker foundation subjects.
- The reliability and efficacy of systems designed to track the performance and well-being of each student, regardless of age, in order that students receive the mentoring and care they require to flourish, academically and socially.
- The extent to which middle leaders understand and undertake their role in setting benchmarks, raising colleagues' expectations and improving provision.

Information about the school

John Buchan is now unique in that it is the only middle school remaining within the Service Children's Education (SCE) family of schools. It serves children within the British military community in Sennelager and Paderborn in Germany. Many of its students are drawn from three SCE first schools in the area, although levels of mobility are exceptional; during the past two years around 67 per cent of the school's students have joined or left the school. The proportion of John Buchan's students who have a parent on deployment is unusually high even by SCE standards.

The school is slightly smaller than most middle schools in England. The proportion of students with special educational needs and / or disabilities is lower than normally found. Most of these have specific difficulties with literacy or other learning difficulties. Students from minority ethnic groups account for around ten per cent of the school roll.

The school holds a Silver Artsmark from the Arts' Council and has recently been awarded the Gold Science Quality Mark.

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

'The truth is that this school deserves top praise' wrote one parent. John Buchan Middle School has indeed improved since its last inspection. It is now a good school and is as effective as the typical middle school in England. Students make good progress and attain standards which are above those normally expected by the time they leave Year 8. This gives them a strong platform for further success; over three-quarters of John Buchan's leavers in 2008 went on to attain five good GCSEs including English and mathematics in 2011.

The capacity of the school to improve has been, and remains, rooted in the ability of senior leaders to evaluate its performance accurately and to take action to improve less strong facets of the school's performance. As a result, teaching at this school is a marked success story, with some teaching that is of spine-tingling quality. In addition, students' performance in English has strengthened because of successful teaching strategies, more accurate assessment and curricular innovations which inspire boys to write. Senior leaders have acted quickly to shore up leadership and teaching in mathematics. However, the lack of permanent skilled leadership in this department is the prime reason that students' performance in mathematics is comparatively weaker. At times, individual teachers digress from the planned curriculum in mathematics. Additionally, students require more expert guidance in this subject on what they need to do in order to make swifter progress.

Leadership beyond the senior team was weak at the time of the previous inspection. This is no longer the case. Work to improve the contribution of middle leaders has been well directed. They now play a key role in leading improvements in their subjects and are generally effectively focused on improving outcomes for students. However, their work to promote students' literacy skills across the curriculum in order to support improvements achieved by the English department is not yet sufficiently strategic.

Good behaviour contributes particularly well to good learning and progress during lessons. A high attendance rate also underpins students' good progress and is evidence that students enjoy their work and opportunities for leisure. Overall, John Buchan prepares its students well for the next stage in their lives, although some Year 8 students rightly pointed out that they do not have systematic access to careers advice. Beyond this, care, guidance and support for students is good and has some outstanding features. There is a high level of support for those students who have a parent on deployment. School systems are effectively directed to ensure that

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students get the care they need to flourish, academically and socially.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics by
 - securing expert leadership that focuses relentlessly on enskilling teachers to deliver consistently effective lessons
 - ensuring that students know what they have to do to improve
 - checking that the planned curriculum is taught effectively.
- Promote literacy across the curriculum to underpin improvements in English by:
 - ensuring that all departments plan strategically to promote literacy and to develop oracy routinely
 - embedding a thorough use of students' writing targets in all curriculum subjects.
- Ensure every Year 8 students has access to clear and pertinent careers advice.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The attainment on entry to the school of successive cohorts of students varies year by year but, over time, it is just below that expected for students of nine years of age. Students now make good progress in the first two years at the school to attain standards broadly in line with national average at the end of Key Stage 2. Their English results are stronger than their mathematics results. Historically, good progress has continued during Key Stage 3 so students' attainment is above that usually expected for Year 8 students by the time they leave the school, although performance in mathematics and modern foreign languages is less strong. Historically, girls have outstripped boys academically, but evidence demonstrates the gap is now closing.

During lessons, inspectors observed students making good progress overall. Typically students meet the expectations of staff and contribute to their own progress through their interest and zeal for learning. They concentrate effectively to surmount problems and tackle and grasp new concepts. Work in exercise books demonstrates clearly that students' progress over time is good and occasionally outstanding. Boys relish learning when innovative themes and lively teaching inspire them. They are sometimes less enthusiastic about writing but nonetheless they make progress in line with other groups overall. Students with special educational needs and disabilities make more progress than usually expected for this group; they respond well to judicious praise and display confidence in their ability to succeed. Students from minority ethnic groups make progress at least in line with others and are very much an integral part of the John Buchan community.

Students feel safe and secure at the school. They feel that instances of bullying are dealt with appropriately and that students are encouraged to speak out if they feel

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there is problem. Students show sensitivity to the needs of others and provide mutual support when parents are deployed. Students have a high level of respect for Germany as host nation and are developing a mature and necessary understanding of differing faiths and cultures through, for example, Afghanistan Day.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching at John Buchan has improved demonstrably since the previous inspection and is now good. The best lessons are characterised by an infectious energy on the part of teachers who are expert in, and have a genuine enthusiasm for, their subject. Tasks are very accurately matched to students' abilities and teachers use a full range of questioning skills to probe and extend students' understanding. Additionally, these teachers consistently consider the needs of different groups. For example, in an outstanding English lesson for Year 5 students, the teacher regularly and successfully exhorted boys to contribute; there was 'nowhere to hide' and consequently during this lesson the boys worked highly productively and made excellent progress. This is one example of a number of successful strategies that are helping to raise boys' performance so that it comes closer to that of girls. The English department is leading the way in ensuring that students know what they have to do to improve their work but accuracy of assessment and clear guidance for students are not yet consistent features within mathematics. Departments beyond English do not draw sufficiently upon students' writing targets to support improvements in writing and oracy.

¹ 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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The curriculum is broad, balanced, and meets students' individual needs. Since the previous inspection, students' views have informed a curriculum review. As a result, graphics and French have been introduced, and the curriculum in English has been geared more closely to interest boys as well as girls. Curricular provision in information and communications technology, physical education, science and technology is a strength. Opportunities for enrichment are good and include lunchtime clubs, residential visits in Year 6 to the Harz mountains and Year 7 to Köln and sports fixtures with other SCE schools.

There are effective transition procedures to ensure that students are well supported whenever they join or leave the school. Opportunities are provided for students to have personal space in the deployment room and to maintain email contact with parents on deployment. The school assesses students' individual academic and personal needs within three weeks of entry and an effective range of intervention strategies is in place to support students' learning, particularly in reading and writing.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

'The headteacher and deputy headteacher work particularly hard to provide a school of excellence with a constantly moving population', noted one parent. Senior leaders do aspire for this school to be excellent. They display a single-minded determination to improve teaching and have a good track record in so doing. They know their teachers well. Monitoring leads to action and school improvement planning is sharply focused on improving outcomes for students. The school's commitment to equalities is well exemplified by the conscientiousness with which leaders track the performance of different groups and act upon their findings. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous; the school works assiduously with SCE to ensure all pertinent checks are undertaken and that students are properly protected from unnecessary risk.

The school works effectively to promote community cohesion by using the curriculum to deepen students' understanding of different faiths and cultures although it is aware that there is yet more to be done to prepare its young people for life in communities where the population comprises an increasingly diverse mix.

The school governance committee has an acute understanding of the challenges faced by the school. Its members support the school yet hold it effectively to account

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by checking the performance of different cohorts and groups. Committee members are also powerful advocates for the school because they understand the good extent to which the school has made improvements.

Although the school's engagement with parents and carers is not perfect, it is effective in maintaining a dialogue between home and school. Planners, texts and email are used increasingly proficiently by staff to ensure that parents are kept well informed. The school shares its high expectations of students with parents by informing them with planners of the National Curriculum level that individual students are expected to attain in each subject.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	NA

Views of parents and carers

Parents' views as expressed through questionnaires tended to present an overall positive picture. A minority of respondents had some reservations about the school which were explored in depth by inspectors. Parents may be reassured that behaviour is good overall and that students do make good progress during their time at the school. Many parents noted how responsive the school is to any concerns which arise.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at John Buchan Middle 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 received 90 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 297 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	49	35	39	11	12	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	37	57	63	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	21	53	59	15	17	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	29	41	46	14	16	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	32	36	44	49	7	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	37	41	46	11	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	24	61	68	6	7	1	1
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)	21	23	50	56	8	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	28	48	53	12	13	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	24	47	52	13	14	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	20	52	58	12	13	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	24	27	48	53	4	4	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	38	39	43	10	11	5	6

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



21 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of John Buchan Middle School, Sennelager, BFPO 16

It was delightful to meet you when we inspected your school recently. Thank you for the time you gave us, talking about your work and answering our questions about the school. It is clear that the greater majority of you enjoy your time at John Buchan. You behave well (although you do recognise that behaviour isn't always perfect!) and you are well cared for.

You will be pleased to hear that John Buchan is a good school which has improved since its previous inspection, largely because of the tremendous push your headteacher and other leaders have given to improving the teaching you get. As a result, you are making good progress and Year 8 pupils leave with higher standards than expected. Those of you with special needs and/or disabilities get good, focused support; you make good progress because of this. Boys are now making better progress in English because teachers are planning themes that interest them more, without losing the focus of girls. Your attainment in mathematics is not as strong as that in English. To remedy this, we would like the mathematics department to give you clearer guidance about exactly what you need to do to make progress. We also want mathematics teachers to ensure that they are teaching the planned curriculum so that you do not miss important elements of work.

We do think that it is the job of all teachers, and not simply those in the English department, to support your literacy skills. We have asked all departments to refer to your writing targets and to plan to help you develop a more complex written and oral vocabulary.

Finally, a number of Year 8 students pointed out that individuals do not always get access to careers advice. We have asked the school and SCE to ensure that you do receive such advice in the future.

Best wishes

Bradley Simmons
Her Majesty's Inspector

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