

Westfield Middle School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	109666
Local authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	377962
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
Lead inspector	Judith Matharu 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	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	379
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Neate
Headteacher	Karen Watts
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Judith Matharu	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sean Thornton	Additional inspector
Christine Mayle	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days notice. Inspectors observed 18 lessons, including two joint observations undertaken with the headteacher. A further 10 lessons were visited specifically to observe behaviour on the second day of the inspection. In total, 22 teachers were observed. Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, a representative of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, the headteacher from the local upper school, groups of pupils from all year groups and two parents. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of pupils' work and school documentation including 82 questionnaires from parents and carers, 10 from staff and 96 from pupils.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized middle school serving pupils living in the Queen's Park area of Bedford. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the percentage of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are above average. The majority of pupils are of Pakistani or Bangladeshi backgrounds; however, the school population is becoming increasingly diverse. Twenty seven languages are currently spoken in the school, with the vast majority of pupils speaking English as an additional language. Pupil mobility in and out of the school at times other than the usual transfer points is high. Pupil numbers have increased since the last inspection.

The school has achieved the government's current floor standards for the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in English and mathematics in 2011. The school currently holds the Quality Mark for Basic Skills and an International 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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school with several strengths. Within its welcoming, inclusive atmosphere, pupils are supported to overcome various barriers to learning, feel secure and achieve well.
- Based on pupils’ significantly below average starting points, during their four years in the school achievement is good for all groups of pupils. Although attainment is below national averages in Year 6, by the end of Year 8 pupils reach broadly national average levels in mathematics. In English, although the gaps with national performance are narrowing rapidly, attainment levels remain lower overall than those achieved in mathematics. Promoting pupils’ skills and comprehension in reading remains an ongoing challenge for teachers across the whole curriculum.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their school. They give their best in lessons and enjoy learning. This is because teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils’ performance. The school’s behaviour management policies are applied consistently and effectively to good effect, and the vast majority of pupils feel safe and behave well. However, communication between the school and a number of parents and carers has not been sufficiently successful in allaying concerns from a significant minority that poor behaviour is dealt with effectively and does not disrupt learning to any significant level.
- Teaching in most lessons is good. Teachers are committed to raising attainment and are purposeful in their efforts; they have suitably high expectations of pupils’ learning and maintain good relationships that encourage participation and involvement. However, the level of challenge posed to stretch all pupils is variable at times and some inconsistencies remain in the quality of feedback provided, including marking. Best practice in teaching is not routinely shared at present.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher’s approach is vigorous and determined, purposefully leading a strong staff team who share her ambition. This is based on the premise that all children can succeed, given appropriate support and challenge. However, the role of middle leaders is under-developed in terms of monitoring the quality of teaching.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate attainment in English through:
 - ensuring that the drive to improve literacy is shared by all staff across the curriculum
 - consolidating a systematic phonics programme across Key Stage 3 in response to pupils' needs
 - extending reading strategies to promote a reading culture across the whole school.

- Improve teaching to the next level by:
 - ensuring that all lessons proceed at a good pace with an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils
 - ensuring that feedback to pupils, including marking in all subjects reflects the school's best practice
 - identifying the best teaching practice in the school and sharing this more widely across the staff team
 - strengthening the capacity of middle leaders to observe lessons and provide feedback to teachers on how they might improve.

- Strengthening communication and consultation with parents and carers about all school matters, including the school's work in behaviour management and how parents and carers might support their children's learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Throughout their time in school, all groups of pupils make good progress in their learning. There are some significant barriers to overcome, as on entry to the school pupils' attainment is well below the national average. At Key Stage 2, although consistently good progress is made in both English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6, attainment in the Key Stage 2 tests over time has been below average. The school has challenged this robustly since the last inspection through careful identification of pupils' needs, good teaching and a programme of planned interventions. Consequently, steady and sustained improvements are evident over time: in particular in 2011, results in mathematics at Key Stage 2 improved to broadly the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in national tests in 2011 in both English and mathematics also rose significantly. The progress these pupils made in both subjects exceeded the school's targets.

The school's highly effective work with pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, including disabled pupils and those with special educational

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needs includes targeted individual attention and a variety of useful support programmes. This enables this large group of pupils to make consistently better progress than those from similar groups nationally. Expert support for those pupils who speak English as a second language results in better than expected progress compared to their counterparts nationally.

Inspectors agree with most parents and carers who believe that their children are making good progress. In particular, throughout Key Stage 3 the gaps with national performance are steadily closing, most notably in mathematics where performance now matches national expectations. Importantly, the gap with national performance in English has narrowed significantly at Key Stage 3. This is due to determined efforts to monitor pupils' progress accurately at regular intervals, identify any underlying issues or barriers, and implement suitable provision to resolve these. This is proving effective; a range of useful literacy improvement activities were observed at inspection. These include: the use of a phonics programme in Year 7 to establish and secure basic skills in sound and word recognition; some expert small-group teaching of those pupils who are new to learning English; and several reading recovery strategies being used well with nurture groups in English lessons.

The school is creative in organising groupings in English, using careful setting by ability and by gender if appropriate, enabling work to be targeted to meet needs. The school acknowledges that extending the systematic phonics programme across both years in Key Stage 3 is an area for development to meet pupils' needs. Single sex groupings are working well; at inspection, a group of more able Year 8 girls demonstrated consistently good use of sophisticated vocabulary in making inferences about their studied text with good prompting from their teacher to expand and justify their comments. However, there is more to be done to raise attainment in English to the same level as mathematics. This remains a priority for all teachers in supporting the development of literacy skills across the curriculum. In particular, the contributions of all teachers, regardless of their subject specialism, to support the development of reading skills and establish a secure reading culture across the school are not yet consistent.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers feel that pupils are taught well. The school's records of teaching suggest that teaching is consistently good. This was endorsed at inspection; very little satisfactory teaching was observed with most teaching judged to be good, together with examples of outstanding practice.

Teachers plan lessons well around a broad, balanced curriculum, employing a good variety of tasks that are well-matched to pupils' abilities and suitably varied to retain their interest and motivation. Teachers assess pupils work thoroughly and use this information well to plan the next steps in learning. The use of learning journals helps pupils to understand what they need to do next. Relationships with pupils are consistently positive. Pupils commented that most teaching is good and often makes learning fun, providing opportunities for discussion and exploration of ideas. In a

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successful Year 5 history lesson, pupils examined the bias in opposing sources of evidence, describing a conflict situation. Their understanding was developed as they moved on to reflect on various conflicts today. One pupil explained with great maturity how the current conflict in Syria could be viewed from different perspectives. His teacher's comments supported and encouraged his explanations well, adding to the learning of everyone in the group. Such highly successful lessons require pupils to use and consolidate their language skills; consequently, progress in developing the use of English is rapid. However, occasionally, the pace of learning slows a little, particularly when pupils are recapping previous learning; sometimes they are not moved on swiftly enough.

Another successful lesson centred on personal and social development as pupils tackled issues concerning their safety and well-being and, in particular, the importance of recognising when help is necessary to resolve high-risk situations. The teacher tackled sensitive material with confidence, presenting various scenarios and encouraging suitable discussion of the underlying issues. This lesson was highly successful because the level of challenge posed by the teacher's comments and questioning was excellent. It prompted very good understanding of personal safety from pupils, as indicated in their thoughtful reflections on their own responsibilities in keeping themselves safe. However, the excellent practice evident is not widely shared across the whole teaching team. Similarly, strengths are evident in some teachers' marking of work, providing detailed feedback to pupils. However, some inconsistencies remain in the depth and quality of this across the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils feel that school is a friendly, safe place and express pride in how well they get on together. They enjoy their diverse community, support each other well and suggest how their community might be celebrated, for example, displaying the flags of the nationalities represented in school in their dining hall.

The school has established a safe environment for learning with good attention paid to pupils' safety and well-being. Pupils' attendance has improved to above the national average; they behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils' respond well to their teachers' instructions and are courteous and friendly to visitors.

The school has a significant number of pupils with identified behavioural difficulties. There is no doubt that, at times, these pupils can display challenging behaviour in school. However, strategies for managing this are clear, well organised and implemented consistently by staff, as noted in the school's behaviour records and observed at inspection. The use of the highly effective 'Enrichment Centre' supports pupils with behavioural problems and ensures that pupils who might otherwise be alienated from main-school provision can succeed through 'time-out' in a different environment. This alternative provision is very well led and managed; many pupils commenting favourably that 'Captain' (the provision leader), is 'a legend in the school'. Pupils say that, on occasions, some pupils misbehave but they express confidence in staff to deal with instances of poor behaviour swiftly. Pupils are aware

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of different types of bullying, for example cyber bullying and prejudice-based bullying, and how to respond to it. They say that bullying instances are rare but dealt with robustly.

However, a number of parents and carers are concerned about poor behaviour, in particular, the disruption caused to other children's learning. They can be reassured that instances of poor behaviour are dealt with consistently well by the school with minimal disruption to other pupils' learning. However, the school has not succeeded in communicating this to home, particularly in conveying to parents and carers sufficiently well enough about behaviour management procedures.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has pressed on with school improvement activities since the last inspection with a clear sense of purpose. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher who shares her determination that all pupils should be given every chance to succeed. This commitment to inclusion, together with the belief that ways to break down any barriers to learning must be found, pervades all aspects of the school's work. Tackling discrimination is central to this and one of the school's key successes. The senior leaders are a constant presence around school, checking on learning and monitoring pupils' behaviour. Together, they have a very accurate view of the school's work and areas for improvement.

The capacity of the school to continue improving is good. The drive to improve attainment is underpinned by a realistic school improvement plan and a commitment to on-going staff development and training in order to continually strengthen teaching. The plans to raise achievement in English are thoughtfully considered and based on appropriate actions, for example, linking reading with sport to engage reluctant boys. Curriculum provision is good, many lessons drawing successfully upon issues of morality and social development, encouraging pupils to consider responsibility for their own and others' well-being and the importance of socially responsible behaviour.

The governing body is knowledgeable and supportive of the school's work. It has a good understanding of the strategic direction of the school and suitably challenges the school's work, holding leaders to account. The governing body and school leaders fulfil their statutory duties to safeguard pupils. The close monitoring of pupils' progress and the good progress made by all groups of pupils, including those who are potentially most vulnerable, indicate how well they promote the equality of opportunity of pupils.

Middle leaders are capable and confident, with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. However, their input into monitoring and improving teaching to the next level is not fully developed at present.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



14 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westfield Middle School, Bedford, MK40 4HW

Thank you for welcoming inspectors into your school recently to look at your work and talk with many of you. We enjoyed looking at your lessons and talking with you about your work and life in school. Lots of you told us how much you enjoy school and appreciate the many opportunities to get involved in a range of interesting activities, in lessons or as part of enrichment clubs.

We found that your school provides you with a good education. You are safe and well cared for and the vast majority of you work and behave well. Teachers are doing a good job in teaching good lessons that are helping you to improve considerably in your four years in Westfield. By Year 8, most of you have made good progress, particularly in mathematics, although there is more to do for English results to reach the same level.

We have asked your school to make some improvements to build on what it is already doing.

- Ensure that you are encouraged to develop your reading skills in all subjects so that results in English continue to improve. Some of you need additional help in Years 7 and 8 and we have requested the school provides this
- Check that all teachers provide you with a good level of challenge to make you think, concentrate and work to the best of your abilities. We saw some excellent feedback in lessons and good marking, so we have asked that all teachers provide you with clear guidance on your next steps in learning.
- Ensure that your parents and carers are consulted frequently and receive regular information about the work of the school and how they can support this.

You can help in this by giving your best and joining in all of the activities available to help you improve your learning. I hope you continue to enjoy school and work hard to achieve your very best.

Yours sincerely

Judith Matharu
Her Majesty's Inspector

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