

Hardwick Middle School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124839
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	380995
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2012
Lead inspector	Ian Seath HMI

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	394
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Bowcher
Headteacher	Andrea Smith
Date of previous school inspection	3 June 2009
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Age group	9–13
Inspection date(s)	13–14 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Ian Seath

Her Majesty's Inspector

Michael Stanton

Additional inspector

Gay Tattersall

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Thirty-two lessons were visited and 23 teachers seen. Inspectors looked closely at pupils' work and at the accuracy of the school's own assessments of progress. Meetings were held with groups of students and staff, a representative of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. 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 much of the school's documentation, including improvement plans and self-evaluations. A total of 213 completed parental questionnaires were received, representing a majority of parents and carers. Completed questionnaires were also received from staff and students.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average middle school. Most students are White British. Few are of minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is just below average and the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is also below average. The school meets current floor standards. It has specialist sports college status. The school is subject to the local authority reorganisation from a three-tier to a two-tier system.

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. It is not outstanding because teaching, though good, is not consistently outstanding. The school provides a good quality of education that prepares students well for the next stage. The school makes good use of its sports college status to improve learning in core subjects and to build relationships with feeder schools.
- Students make good progress that accelerates in Years 7 and 8. Students leave at the end of Year 8 having attained standards that are above average. They develop good skills of independent learning. In class, they are confident and articulate.
- A large majority of teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Teachers assess students' work and progress accurately. However, this information is not consistently used in class to ensure that all students learn to the very best of their ability.
- Students behave well around school and in class. They are polite and helpful to visitors. Almost all parents say that their children feel safe at school, and students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. A handful of parents and students expressed concerns about bullying, but most stated that incidents were dealt with promptly and effectively by the school. Safeguarding arrangements are good.
- Good leadership and management mean that the school maintains consistently good quality of provision. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The management of teaching and learning is good, although leaders' lesson observations do not fully exploit opportunities to evaluate standards and learning. The management of performance is good but some targets for improvement lack precision.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By January 2013, raise the quality of teaching so that all lessons are outstanding or good by ensuring that:
 - the results of the accurate assessment practice are used consistently in all classes so that all students learn to the very best of their ability
 - literacy and numeracy is developed consistently in all subjects
 - leaders' lesson observations accurately monitor learning and standards in class.
- By September 2012, ensure that all targets for improvement are precise so that progress towards them can be accurately monitored by the governing body and leaders at all levels.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students join the school with attainment that is close to that expected for their age. They make good progress as they move through Years 5 and 6, and this accelerates further in Years 7 and 8 so that pupils leave the school having attained standards that are above average. Progress made in mathematics is well above that expected. This gives students a good foundation for further studies. There are differences between the attainment of boys and girls, although they are being successfully tackled and the gap is narrowing. Currently, it is less than that seen nationally. Students with special educational needs make progress that is at least as good as their peers because intervention strategies are closely matched to their needs. For example, where necessary, the teaching of reading using letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is well-developed across the school. Students make good progress in the development of their reading skills, attaining higher than average standards.

In class, inspectors observed students making good progress. They work well individually and in groups and are always keen to make contributions to the class. They generally develop good skills of independent learning by Year 8, although they are not given the opportunity to practise them in all classes. Almost all of the questionnaire responses from parents and carers agreed that their children are making good progress at the school, and inspectors agree.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is mostly good with some that is outstanding. As a result, progress made in class is good. In the best lessons, teachers encourage students to use their skills of independent learning and analysis. Questioning is challenging and students are eager

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to give their views. In these lessons, the teacher's knowledge of students' progress is based on clear and accurate assessment. The planning ensures that those at the lowest levels of attainment make progress faster because the work they are given is more challenging and moves them on at a faster rate. Because of this, the spread of attainment in Year 8 is much narrower than when students start school in Year 5. In the less successful lessons, students who have attained lower standards are given work that is less demanding than their peers. As a consequence, their progress is not as good as it should be and they are slower to catch up.

Throughout the school, assessment is accurate. The school has a clear view of attainment on entry and adjusts the curriculum accordingly. For example, those in need of extra support for reading or writing are identified early and the support is provided. The use of assessment to monitor progress and to inform management about how well the school is performing is excellent. However the use of assessment to ensure that all students learn to the best of their ability in class is uneven across the school.

The teaching of literacy is good, as is the teaching of reading through phonics. Although students make good progress in the development of literacy skills, opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy in subjects other than mathematics and English are often missed. Homework in core subjects is regular and it consolidates classroom learning well. Marking is thorough and helpful, although students are not always given time in class to reflect on any issues raised by marking.

Teaching makes a good contribution to students' social and moral development. Skills of independent learning develop quickly. Students take responsibility for their own learning well. Parents and carers have a very positive view of the teaching, and inspectors agree.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in lessons is good because teaching is good and teachers make their expectations clear. Around school, students are welcoming, curious and polite. They demonstrate good levels of self-confidence and discipline. Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that their children are safe at school. Inspectors confirm this. A handful of parents and carers and a few students raised concerns about bullying, mainly name-calling, but most reported that such instances are both rare and dealt with quickly by the school. The very large majority of parents and carers reported that behaviour at the school was good, and inspectors agree. There are good systems to monitor and analyse patterns of behaviour and confirm that it is consistently good.

Attendance is above average due to the rigorous follow-up of absent pupils. Punctuality is good.

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Leadership and management

The headteacher has a very clear vision on how the school needs to develop. She is well supported by staff and enjoys their confidence. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and does not shy away from identifying weaknesses. Areas for development are well understood and appropriate actions are taken. However, at all levels, targets for improvement sometimes lack precision. This means that it is difficult for leaders and the governing body to monitor progress towards them. Performance management is an effective tool to maintain and improve standards although, as with other aspects of the school, targets sometimes lack precision. Issues identified at the previous inspection have been effectively tackled. This shows the school's good capacity to sustain improvement.

The management of teaching and learning is good. It is helped by a clear and accurate view of student attainment and progress. However, this is not always used effectively in observing lessons. Although accurate in their overall judgements, leaders' observations do not always sufficiently evaluate the learning of individual pupils. This means that, in some classes, those who have reached lower standards than their peers and are insufficiently challenged are not always identified so that they are challenged more and can catch up. Good practice is systematically identified and shared. Weekly 'top teaching tips' enrich staff meetings on Wednesday mornings.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Teachers have clear guidance on how to incorporate these aspects into their teaching. Students have good opportunities to reflect on their feelings during form sessions. They understand the difference between right and wrong and are prepared to question injustice. Students benefit from an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and enrichment. Sports activities are well developed, with high participation rates. Notably, the school's specialist sports status is used well to drive whole-school improvement, for example by sharing a team approach to teaching across the school. In addition, sports leader work with feeder primary schools is well developed.

The governing body supports and challenges the school well. It has ensured that statutory requirements are met and that arrangements for safeguarding are good. The governing body's promotion of equalities is good because it has ensured that all groups of students achieve well. The governing body is well informed about school performance because analyses presented to it by the headteacher are accurate. However, the targets set by the governing body sometimes lack precision or exact timescales.

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.

15 March 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of Hardwick Middle School, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 2PD

As you know I visited your school recently with two other inspectors. We met many of you and visited most of your classes. We were pleased to see so many of you enjoying lunchtime clubs, especially those involving sports and physical education. Throughout our visit you were helpful and polite, and I would like to thank you for that. Your school has many strengths and one of them is you.

You and your parents and carers told us many things. You told us that you enjoy being at the school and that you feel safe. You said that there was a little bullying but that the school dealt with it quickly. You said that you learn a lot and are well taught. We agree. We judged that your school is good and that it is giving you a good education and preparing you well for the next stage.

However, we must not be complacent about this, and the headteacher and staff want to improve even more. We have therefore suggested some ways that they might do this. First, we have asked that the school improves teaching further by using assessment better in class. This means that teachers will plan lessons so that all of you are challenged to learn better. Along with this we have asked that teachers in all subjects, not just mathematics and English, encourage literacy and numeracy in their lessons. As well as these changes, we have asked that the governing body are more precise about the targets that they set the school. This is so that improvements in the school can be better measured.

Teachers will need your help with these changes, though. Remember that it is your education and you should make the very best of it. Never let a lesson go by without making sure that you understand what has been taught: if you are not clear then say so.

Once again, thank you. I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector

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