

Etonbury Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109644
Local Authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	356595
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Mark Sims 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	Foundation
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Street
Headteacher	Dr Albert Mistrano (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2008
School address	Stotfold Road Arlesey SG15 6XS
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited parts of 20 lessons and saw 17 teachers.

They had discussions with governors, staff and groups of pupils, partners from the local Trust schools programme, a representative from the local authority and the school's improvement partner. They observed the school's work, looked at its priorities and policies, analysed recent national test results and school data on pupils' progress, scrutinised child protection and safeguarding documents, read 168 parental questionnaires and pupils' and staff surveys.

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

- How good is the progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly in mathematics?
- How effective is the use of data by staff to track progress and set challenging targets for pupils?
- How well do teachers plan for the needs of pupils at different levels of attainment?
- How effective are leaders and managers at all levels?
- How well are pupils prepared for life in a culturally diverse society?

Information about the school

Etonbury is small when compared to the average-sized secondary school. It is situated between the villages of Arlesey and Stotfold. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high although the percentage with statements is broadly average. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, of whom very few are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. Etonbury has sportsmark status. It is a member of a local Trust schools programme and the acting headteacher, who has been in post since the beginning of September, has been seconded from the partner upper school, initially for two terms. The chair of the governing body is also new in post.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Etonbury Middle School provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Pupils enjoy their learning and want to come to school and staff say they are proud to be members of the school. The new acting headteacher has established a positive ethos throughout the school. According to one parent, 'There is a very good attitude to school from children and parents. He has done so much already in just two and a half weeks.'

Pupils say overwhelmingly that they feel safe and well looked after and their view is supported strongly by parents. The good relationships between pupils ensures there is very little harassment or bullying and pupils have a secure understanding of the safety risks attached to the use of information and communication technology. Their behaviour around school and in lessons is good, even in those lessons that are less inspiring. They thrive when they are given the chance to take responsibility and make choices, for example in designing the new front of the school. They have a good knowledge of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils display a good knowledge of religious and cultural differences in society although national links with different types of schools are underdeveloped.

Pupils join the school at the start of Year 5 having reached levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science that are above the national average for their age. They make satisfactory progress and their attainment remains consistently higher than expected nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make satisfactory progress, including in mathematics. Progress is no better than satisfactory because of limitations in the quality of teaching, the majority of which is satisfactory and only occasionally is good or outstanding. Lessons are characterised by teachers' good subject knowledge and good relationships between staff and pupils. However, too many are overly teacher led and do not give pupils sufficient opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning. Lessons are not planned sufficiently to meet the needs of different groups, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Marking does not consistently inform pupils how well they are doing and how they can improve.

The curriculum, which is good, has a number of strengths with the range of extra-curricular opportunities available and the offer of a second language in Year 8. The Trust schools programme has brought increased curricular enrichment such as the recently successful 'gadgets day.' Staff look after pupils well, especially those who are at risk of becoming vulnerable.

The acting headteacher has galvanized his senior and middle leaders who are united in their ambition and drive to take the school further. There are inconsistencies in how successfully their roles have been fulfilled, especially in the monitoring of teaching, which is insufficiently rigorous. The use of data to track the progress and performance of

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different groups of pupils is developing but not yet fully embedded. Targets set for pupils do not take sufficient account of individuals' different rates of progress. The support of the Trust schools has strengthened the leadership of the school. The new governing body is supportive of the acting headteacher and recognises the changes needed to raise pupils' achievement. Up to now governors have not sufficiently held the school to account for the performance of pupils. As a number of changes and developments are very recent their impact has yet to be seen. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the monitoring role of senior and middle leaders with a focus on raising the quality of teaching and improving standards so that they are consistently good.
- Extend pupils' learning by:
 - making sure teachers use pupil progress data consistently to track the performance of individuals and groups and plan the next steps in their learning
 - giving more opportunities for pupils to take shared responsibility for their learning
 - using the marking of pupils' work more effectively so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Based on their previous Key Stage 1 assessments, pupils start with levels of attainment in the core subjects that are above the national average for their age and continue to work at a level higher than that expected nationally. This represents satisfactory progress. The higher than normal proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register also make satisfactory progress because of the additional support they receive. Pupils enjoy their learning in lessons and show they are keen to do well but they do not get sufficient opportunities to work together or to make decisions about their learning.

Pupils achieve highly developed basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology and apply them effectively across the curriculum. They are prepared well for the next steps in their education. Pupils' attendance is outstanding because they enjoy coming to school. They get on very well with each other and are accepting and supportive towards those with additional needs. They value and respect other people's beliefs. They are developing opportunities to take responsibilities, for example in designing residential trips and involving their parents through family Spanish learning.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are typified by good relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils of different backgrounds. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully involved in lessons. Pupils are keen to learn and respond well, as shown by their thoughtful questioning of teachers. Most teachers display good subject knowledge. Occasionally teaching is good or outstanding, particularly in music. A common feature of lessons that are satisfactory is that teachers spend too long talking from the front, so reducing the opportunity for pupils to work independently or share their learning with others. Teachers do not plan sufficiently for the needs of different groups of learners, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities; although the additional support they receive ensures they make satisfactory progress, at times the focus is on pupils getting through the task rather than on their learning. Teachers do not make sufficient use of the data that is now available on individual pupils to inform their planning or to evaluate how well pupils are doing in their lessons. Neither do they set pupils sufficiently precise targets so that they know what they need to do to achieve them. There are a few examples of pupils assessing their own and others' learning but this is limited. Marking in books is too inconsistent and does not sufficiently inform pupils how well they are doing and how they can improve.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is broad and balanced. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have good access to specialist facilities in their subjects which help them with

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their learning. Cross-curricular days are used well with a strong emphasis on literacy. Languages are taught throughout the school and there is the opportunity to study a second language in Year 8. The curriculum is enriched by trips including residential events and by visitors to the school. Links with other schools in the Trust are strong and the engineering specialism within the Trust is used well by the school. The extensive range of clubs and extra-curricular activities links to most subject areas.

Transition arrangements are good as a result of the close links with feeder schools and the partnership of the Trust schools programme which leads to joint events. A number of former students return to work with younger pupils to develop their leadership skills Pupils at risk of becoming vulnerable have their needs identified early on and effective pastoral support is put in place. Well organised care arrangements make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 acting headteacher has quickly identified the key priorities for the school and has already succeeded in the first of these; to develop a positive ethos throughout the school. The whole school community demonstrates commitment to his vision and purpose. He has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. The impact of senior and middle leaders to date has been mixed as their monitoring of teaching has been insufficiently rigorous and the use of data to monitor performance has been limited.

The partnership of the Trust has been instrumental in strengthening the leadership team, providing support for key leaders and participating in joint teaching appointments and training events. This leaves the school well placed to make further improvements. The governing body has acted strategically through the acting headteacher's appointment to bring about changes to the ethos of the school. Partnerships with parents are good and include opportunities to observe teaching and learning in lessons. Partnerships within the trust and with external agencies are also strong.

Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. All requirements are in place and safe recruitment procedures are followed by designated officers who are appropriately trained. The school's involvement with social services on child protection issues is of a high quality. Members of the governing body need to ensure they are fully up to date with the school's arrangements for safeguarding and that lines of communication between key staff and governors are clearer. There is a projected financial deficit as a result of a smaller than expected number on roll but the acting headteacher and Chair of Governors have already started to put plans in place to reduce this.

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The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. At a local level it is very strong through the work with partner schools in the Trust. Global links with Ghana and Nigeria are developing but to date the school has not made links at a national level to help pupils understand the diversity of the United Kingdom. The school promotes equal opportunities well and through the monitoring of attainment, attendance and exclusions knows that no group is over- or under-represented. Pupils at risk of becoming vulnerable are integrated well into the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire said that they were happy with their children's experience at Etonbury. The overwhelming majority said that the school keeps their children safe.

One parent, who summed up the views of many others, said, 'My child enjoys school so much. He is significantly interested in his work and keen to attend. The ethos is child-centred and caring. However I still feel teaching standards are inconsistent.'

Most of the parents and carers who responded said that the school helps their children to have a healthy lifestyle and makes sure they are well prepared for the future. A small minority said the school does not take account of their suggestions and concerns or help them to support their children's learning. A similar small proportion did not agree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour but these views were not shared by the large majority of other parents and carers or by inspectors.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Etonbury 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 inspection team received 168 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 417 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	29	107	64	7	4	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	39	23	124	74	4	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	18	11	120	71	23	14	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	15	110	65	23	14	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	13	8	131	78	17	10	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	11	110	65	29	17	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	9	134	80	13	8	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)	23	14	117	70	10	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	14	118	70	20	12	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	11	109	65	31	18	5	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	6	112	67	28	17	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	18	11	115	68	19	11	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	23	111	66	14	8	1	1

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. 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">■ 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.



1 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Etonbury Middle School, Arlesey, SG15 6XS

You will know that we came recently to inspect your school. Thank you to all of you who took the time to speak to one of us in lessons or meetings and for telling us your views through the pupil questionnaire.

We have said that Etonbury provides a satisfactory standard of education. You have all told us that you think your acting headteacher is doing a fantastic job. We can see from the smiles on your faces that you are enjoying school. The way you behave at all times, even in some less exciting lessons, is a credit to you. You get on well with each other and with adults and look after those who need extra help or support. You have also told us how safe and well looked after you feel. You are developing your opportunities to be more involved in decision making and some of you have volunteered to help redesign the front of the school.

Your acting headteacher and other leaders in the school have a very clear idea of what is good in the school and what could be improved further. We have made a number of suggestions which we hope will help them. You do well in English, mathematics and science and make the expected progress for your age but we think you could do better than that given how well you did in Key Stage 1. We have asked the school to improve the quality of lessons by making sure work is planned to get the best from you. We have asked your teachers to check your progress more to make sure you get more chance to plan your own work, work independently and with other pupils. We have also asked teachers to make sure that when they mark your work it is clear how well you have done and how you can improve your work next time.

I would like to thank you once again and wish you every success in your future.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims

Her Majesty's Inspector

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