

Minehead Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123876
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	359538
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Mark Sims

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	594
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Lloyd
Headteacher	Paul Rushforth
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2007
School address	Ponsford Road Minehead TA24 5RH
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 31 lessons taught by 26 teachers. Inspectors also held meetings with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding documents, improvement plans, progress reports, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' progress. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from 88 parents and carers and took account of staff and pupil questionnaires.

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

- How much progress pupils make in English and mathematics at Key Stages 2 and 3.
- How accurately teachers assess how well pupils are doing.
- The effectiveness of middle leaders at all levels to bring about improvements in achievement.
- How well the school promotes cultural diversity.
- The impact of care, guidance and support and the curriculum on the outcomes for pupils at risk of becoming vulnerable.

Information about the school

Minehead Middle is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It is situated close to the centre of Minehead, serving a mixed rural and coastal community. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language is very small. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is low. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status and has been awarded Sportsmark.

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

Minehead Middle is a good school that has improved significantly since the last inspection. Its care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding. As one parent said, 'The team has been excellent with my daughter's transition. Their support over the last few months has been outstanding.' The school provides an exceptional level of care for its pupils and ensures that it does everything possible to ensure, through excellent rigorous safeguarding procedures, that its pupils are kept safe, a view shared by most pupils and by parents and carers. This, together with a good curriculum, contributes to good outcomes for pupils at risk of becoming vulnerable. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school community and beyond.

The headteacher, senior leaders and leaders of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science provide good leadership. In particular, they evaluate the work of the school well, accurately plan important improvements and are supported and challenged by the outstanding governing body. Thorough and accurate self-evaluation, focusing on achievement and monitoring of teaching, has led to good improvements in outcomes. This focus is not as well established in all middle managers, however.

Pupils join the school mid-way through Key Stage 2 when they have achieved below the expected level of attainment for their age in English, mathematics and science. Because of the good progress they make, they have reached the level of attainment that is in line with that expected by the time they leave at the end of Year 8, and above average in mathematics and science. Pupils make more progress in English at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 3, and in mathematics, progress is better in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 2. Pupils enjoy coming to school and compared to secondary schools their attendance is good. Their behaviour is good and much improved as seen by the fall in the number of exclusions.

Teaching and learning are good and despite previous disruption to staffing, which led to insufficient progress for pupils in English for a year, the current teaching of English is good, particularly in the way pupils have the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning. Not all teaching consistently plans for the needs of different groups, such as higher attaining pupils, and younger pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in mathematics. Teachers assess accurately what pupils have achieved and set written targets for pupils but these are not always followed up by teachers or pupils. The curriculum has a number of innovative features such as 'Friday University' and the extra-curricular activities are much appreciated by parents and carers and pupils. Monitoring of uptake by groups is not as sharp as it is for achievement.

The school is conscious that most of its pupils come from similar backgrounds and does a good job in providing experiences within the curriculum and through additional activities

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such as trips to ensure pupils are well informed about cultural diversity in the United Kingdom.

The improvements in achievement and quality of teaching combined with the enhanced leadership of the core subjects all demonstrate the school's good capacity to make further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Share the very best features of teaching and learning more widely to ensure that more lessons are outstanding by:
 - ? planning consistently well for the needs of different groups, particularly those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in mathematics at Key Stage 2 and higher attaining pupils
 - ? providing more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and develop their own ideas
 - ? using assessment information, including written marking, to show pupils how they can improve their work.
- Establish consistently good leadership of middle leaders by ensuring all subject leaders have a sharper focus on monitoring and evaluating achievement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From their below-average standards on entry to the school, pupils' achievement is good. Learning of pupils in lessons is particularly strong in English. For example, in their work on Macbeth pupils were given the chance to make decisions about their learning and work independently or in groups. Their own positive response to this style of learning enhances their progress. In some other lessons, learning is restricted by a slower pace of lessons caused by over-directed teaching and limited independent work. The school has taken effective steps to address previous underachievement in English. In particular, the good quality of teaching and learning in Years 6 and 7 has helped pupils to catch up.

All groups of pupils make good progress including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Through its rigorous monitoring of pupils' achievement, the school is able to identify any trends or differences in year groups and subjects so that it knows that a minority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make enough progress in mathematics at Key Stage 2.

There is no significant gap in the overall progress made by boys and girls. The achievement of pupils in receipt of free school meals is slightly below that of all pupils; however, the majority still make good progress. Lesson observations confirmed that the current progress of this group of pupils matches that of all pupils.

Most pupils have a good awareness of healthy living and eating, which has led to the Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards the school has received. Not all packed lunchboxes reflect this, however. Pupils take on additional roles enthusiastically, such as prefects including head boy and head girl. They are involved in fund raising for charity and more widely show care and consideration for the environment. They are prepared well for their next steps through the progress they make in literacy, numeracy and information and

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communication technology, and have enterprise opportunities through, for example, selling garden produce which they grow themselves. Pupils get on well with each other including the small number from different backgrounds and are good ambassadors for the school on trips and visits.

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	3
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	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	1
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

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?

The quality of teaching enables most pupils to make good progress in their learning. Teachers regularly inform pupils what they expect them to learn and have good subject knowledge. Relationships are strong between teachers and pupils. In outstanding lessons, teachers are able to spark pupils' enthusiasm for learning and through high expectations and rapid pace ensure they get the very best out of them. At the moment, overall, there are only a few outstanding lessons and leaders are ambitious to increase the proportion. Teachers know exactly when to intervene and when to let pupils get on with their learning independently. In some other lessons, teachers do not sufficiently challenge high attaining pupils and in mathematics at Key Stage 2 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not always get their needs met effectively. Most marking is accurate and gives pupils a clear idea of how to improve. Pupils usually know what their targets are and how well they are doing but the written target sheets they use in their exercise books are not always followed up by teachers or pupils.

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The curriculum meets pupils' entitlement and is broad and balanced. Where necessary, alternative provision is made available for pupils with very specific needs. ♦ A range of cross-curricular themes, for example for older pupils on the Celts, is a strength. By modifying the timetable the school has forged closer links between subjects such as music and drama. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of well-subscribed additional activities. All pupils can attend at least one residential trip. The school does not sufficiently monitor the uptake of extra-curricular activities by different groups.

Care, guidance and support are a significant strength of the school. Staff engage very well with a wide range of agencies to ensure that all pupils are fully supported and make good progress in their studies. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well served by a team that recognises their strengths and responds well to their changing needs. Transition arrangements are excellent and the school pays particular attention to individuals who need extra support both as they arrive at the school and when they move on to their next stage in education. Families are fully engaged by the school and support is available both at the school and organised with other external agencies. The small number of new arrivals who speak English as an additional language are integrated well into lessons.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Strong and determined leadership has enabled the school to improve. Procedures for monitoring the achievement of all groups of pupils are rigorous. The impact of leadership on improving the quality of teaching and learning is clearly evident in lessons and improved achievement. The school is striving to improve this further by bringing teachers together in groups of three to share and support each other's practice. The role of the subject coordinators in English, mathematics and science focuses clearly on achievement and these leaders use the wealth of data available on pupils' progress to good effect allowing groups and individual pupils to be supported when necessary. There is not yet a similar focus across all middle leaders.

The school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and strategic planning includes key areas for improvement. However, these are not always sharply focused to make the development plan an outstandingly effective tool to aid school improvement.

The school benefits from a very impressive and astute governing body that supports and challenges all aspects of school life. Parents and carers are kept well informed, including through newsletters and the school's effective website, and their views are regularly

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sought and acted upon. The school's procedures to keep pupils safe are exceptional and governors too play their part to ensure systems are as thorough as they can possibly be.

The school promotes equal opportunities well and does not tolerate any form of discrimination. Provision and outcomes for all groups of pupils are good and where there was underachievement the school has already identified it and is tackling it. The uptake of extra-curricular activities is not as well monitored to ensure equal opportunities. Community cohesion is good, particularly within the local community. Attempts to join up with a school from a different part of the United Kingdom are developing, and the school has links with a school in the United States of America.

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	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Most of the very small minority of parents and carers who responded to the survey said that overall they were happy with their child's experience at Minehead Middle School. Overall, parents and carers agree that the school keeps their children safe and that their children enjoy school. A small minority did not agree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour or that the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. Most parents spoke favourably about how their children had settled in. They commented that their children are well looked after but a few raised concerns about the school not dealing effectively with bullying or not responding to parents' telephone calls and messages. Inspectors agreed with the very large majority of parents and pupils who told us that care, guidance and support were a significant strength in the school and that misbehaviour and any bullying are dealt with effectively. The school's engagement with parents and carers is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Minehead 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 88 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 594 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	43	46	52	4	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	48	42	48	2	2	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	32	36	50	57	5	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	40	47	53	4	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	29	33	52	59	5	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	31	49	56	10	11	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	23	57	65	7	8	0	0
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)	30	43	50	57	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	27	55	63	6	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	27	47	53	9	10	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	23	49	56	12	14	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	33	38	47	53	4	5	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	40	46	52	4	5	3	3

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.



3 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Minehead Middle School, Minehead, TA24 5RH

You will know that we recently came to inspect your school. Thank you to all of you who took the time to speak to us, show us around your school or tell us your views through the pupil questionnaires. We are very grateful for all the things you said.

Minehead Middle is a good school and you play your part in making it so. You have told us how much you enjoy school and how the school helps to keep you safe and we agree with you. Your school provides an exceptional level of care, guidance and support, particularly in helping you to settle in at the start of Year 5. You make an outstanding contribution in helping others within the school, in the local community and beyond. You know about the importance of exercise and healthy eating. You have a strong sense of what is right and wrong and a good understanding of how people are different. Your governors make an exceptional contribution in helping your headteacher and other leaders to run the school well.

You make good progress in your learning because of the good lessons your teachers plan and your good behaviour and positive attitude to learning. You quickly gain ground in English, mathematics and science so that by the time you leave you have reached the expected level for your age. You appreciate the good range of activities the school provides for you in lessons and out of lesson time. We were very impressed, as you are, with the 'Friday University' for younger pupils.

There are few things we have asked the school to do which we think will help it to improve further.

- To make sure all your lessons are as good as the very best so that teachers make them suitable for all groups of learners, give you the chance to make choices in your learning and consistently let you know how well you are doing and how to improve.
- Make sure your leaders check how well you are doing in other subjects as well as they do in English, mathematics and science.

Thank you again for making us feel so welcome at your school. I wish you every success in your future and please continue to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims Her Majesty's Inspector

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