

Bacton Community Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124816
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	359780
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Trevor Riddiough HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	406
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wendy Lummis
Headteacher	Alison Nicholson
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2008
School address	Wyverstone Road Bacton Stowmarket IP14 4LH
Telephone number	01449 781389
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 19 teachers in 30 lessons including seven joint observations with members of the senior leadership team, four tutor groups and one assembly. Inspectors carried out three learning walks incorporating a further ten lessons and held meetings with senior leaders and other staff, groups of pupils, and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work and looked at the tracking of pupils' progress, performance data, pupils' work, whole-school and subject development plans, numerous policies, school documents and case studies. Completed questionnaires from 99 pupils, 155 parents and carers and 34 staff were received and analysed.

Information about the school

Bacton Community School is an average sized middle school and serves a large rural catchment area. The school is part of the three-phase system that serves the Stowmarket area. Pupils enter the school in Year 5 and leave at the end of Year 8. Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. While the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average, this number is rising. The school has a lower than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities although this proportion is rising also. The school has been awarded the Sportsmark and has Healthy Schools accreditation. The school works in close partnership with a small number of other local schools in the area. Since the last inspection, a new senior leadership team has been established. The school has met the government floor targets for the previous three years.

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	3
Teaching	2
Leadership and management	2
Behaviour and safety	1
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- This is a good school which is improving strongly. It is an inclusive school where all pupils are known and valued and as a result, they enjoy coming to school.
- The recently formed leadership team has rightly focused its efforts on improving the progress of pupils. New systems have been established to contribute to this improvement and these are showing good signs of success.
- Although achievement is satisfactory, it is rising strongly and the school has made significant inroads into accelerating the achievement of all pupils from previously low levels to those which are now satisfactory. In some areas achievement is good. In the past two years pupils made greater progress in Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 2 but this gap is closing rapidly.
- The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good due to the accurate and early identification of need coupled with effective targeted support given to each individual.
- Improvements in teachers' planning have contributed to improvements to pupils' progress in lessons. In the more successful lessons, learning is planned effectively to meet the needs of most pupils in the class. However, pupils of the highest ability in some classes are not sufficiently challenged by the nature of the learning activities and do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- In the best cases, pupils receive useful verbal feedback in lessons and written feedback in their books on how to improve. However, this practice is not consistent and in some lessons pupils are less clear about how to improve on their current performance to reach the targets set.
- Leaders have been highly effective in developing an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation between pupils so that behaviour is excellent and attendance is high.

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- All pupils who answered the questionnaires say they feel very safe in the school and this is supported by the responses from parents and carers.
- The headteacher and senior leaders acknowledge that there is still much work to be done. The priorities for future development have been correctly identified, and there is a strong expectation that these will be pursued.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the attainment of more-able pupils and accelerate their progress further by planning learning activities so that pupils of higher ability in every class are sufficiently challenged.
- Strengthen teaching further by:
 - providing consistently clear advice and guidance to pupils through the day-to-day marking of their work to accelerate their progress
 - developing pupils to be active learners without over-reliance on their teachers
 - sharing the good practice in teaching and learning that exists in some areas across all departments through a planned approach.

Main report

Bacton provides good opportunities for pupils to develop into mature and purposeful learners. The drive and ambition from the recently formed senior leadership team is central to the strong improvements seen since its establishment last year. Leaders are well supported by the governing body and strive to carry on improving. There is an accurate appraisal of how well it is achieving and a well-formulated improvement plan to ensure it continues to do so. These, along with the successes to date, demonstrate a good capacity to improve.

Achievement

Following the last inspection, achievement in 2009 had dropped such that attainment was below national averages and progress was significantly below expectations in all core subjects. By 2010 this situation had been arrested and currently attainment in English and mathematics is above average and in science it is average. The pace of learning and progress of pupils has similarly improved and most pupils are now making good progress in their subjects. Recent gaps in achievement have been closed, such as that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This has been as a result of their careful stewardship, the precise identification of need and the close tracking that is carried out to monitor their performance linked with carefully tailored support. However, one gap remains: some high ability pupils in the school are not achieving the levels of attainment of which they are capable; when compared with pupils of similar ability nationally, their attainment remains below

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national averages. During the inspection, many pupils were observed making good and occasionally outstanding progress in lessons. In these lessons, pupils were fully engaged and responded well to being given opportunities to work in groups or on their own. Observations showed that pupils of higher ability in some classes are not sufficiently stretched by the work they are given. This was confirmed by the group of able and gifted pupils interviewed who commented: 'some lessons are easy – the hardest lessons are best'.

Teaching

Teachers have good subject knowledge and pupils show very good levels of concentration in lessons. Where teaching is outstanding, teachers create a buzz of excitement about learning which enthuses and engages pupils. This was evident in a Year 6 history lesson where the teacher challenged the pupils to think more deeply about interpreting and understanding chronology. This was done through a range of interactive activities aimed at the different learning abilities in the class including 'hot-seat' question and answer tasks in a simulated press conference which made great demands on all pupils. In the best lessons teachers skilfully set learning objectives linked to national curriculum levels. This ensures that pupils have a good understanding of their progress. More-able pupils are not always adequately planned for or sufficiently challenged in lessons and this limits their progress. In some lessons, pupils are heavily reliant on their teacher which reduces the opportunities for them to develop their skills in learning independently and this can further limit their progress. In most lessons teachers give immediate feedback verbally during lessons. However, the quality of written marking is variable, often restricted to encouraging comments rather than detailed feedback on what pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve.

Teaching promotes the development of pupils' communication skills well. Pupils' verbal responses in lessons are often highly imaginative. They speak clearly and confidently and their oracy is a strength. The school has actively sought to improve pupils' reading skills with a number of whole-school initiatives. World Book Day activities were particularly enjoyed by pupils and have encouraged more boys, in particular, to borrow books from the library. The school has also focused on improving pupils' writing skills. Teachers have worked together to share good practice and resources, however, there is inconsistency in some subject areas, notably science. Key elements of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are planned across all years. This is enhanced by all pupils following a 'general studies' course which emphasises many of these aspects.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision of where the school needs to go and how it will get there. She has built an effective leadership team with high expectations and, as a result, the school is moving steadily towards its goals. For example, the recent strong focus on the performance particularly in the core subjects has resulted in secure improvements being made. With the exception of a group of high ability pupils, gaps

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in the performance of different groups of pupils have closed or are closing indicating that equality of opportunity is seen as a priority for the school. The school makes every effort to ensure that discrimination is eliminated and that the needs of all pupils are met. There is evidence of support for teachers having raised the quality of teaching, but there is also a recognition that all lessons need to be good or better to raise standards further and accelerate progress. The senior team is working effectively in planning and implementing improvements, although it recognises that there is some way to go to establish universally good teaching across the school. The approach taken to sharing the good practice that exists is variable and is not having maximum impact on securing further improvement. School self-evaluation is accurate, detailed and thorough.

Governors know the school very well and work hard to look to securing its future success as well as the day-to-day matters. They actively seek to drive improvement to good effect. Procedures for the safeguarding of pupils are under constant review and the school adopts recommended good practice across all areas of its work. Training is of good quality and all school staff and other adults working with children have the skills and expertise required for dealing with child protection issues. The school works very well with outside agencies to provide effective support.

Behaviour and safety

Behaviour is excellent with pupils engaged and enthusiastic in lessons and wanting to achieve. Records, comments from pupils and responses to the questionnaires from pupils, parents and carers also show that similar standards of behaviour are the norm. The school community is extremely harmonious and pupils were keen to let inspectors know how they feel safe and that behaviour is very good at all times. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school and, as a consequence, attendance is high and punctuality is good. A very small minority of parents and carers commented about behaviour in the questionnaire. Inspectors followed up these comments: they judged that the school has effective policies and procedures in place with regard to behaviour. Procedures are followed consistently, contributing to the exemplary behaviour in the school. Pupils show good awareness of how to behave safely particularly in practical lessons such as in design and technology and science. They are highly aware about other aspects of staying safe, for example, on the internet. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are effectively supported and guided and as a result their attendance and behaviour have improved significantly. Pupils are mature, open and able to discuss and relate to sensitive issues that affect themselves or others. School records and pupils' own observations confirm that incidents of any bullying are extremely rare, and that when anything happens that concerns them, pupils know exactly who they can turn to for help or advice. One pupil commented, representing the views of others, 'The trust between pupils and teachers is strong here and we can talk to our teachers very easily'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bacton Community 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 155 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 406 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	93	60	59	38	2	1	1	1
Q2 My child feels safe at school	92	59	61	39	2	1	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	71	46	80	52	4	3	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child's particular needs	75	48	72	46	7	5	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	92	59	57	37	6	4	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	93	60	60	39	2	1	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	59	38	87	56	7	5	1	1
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	35	23	99	64	17	11	0	0
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	53	34	78	50	12	8	0	0
Q10 The school helps me to support my child's learning	62	40	80	52	11	7	1	1
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	72	46	68	44	9	6	4	3
Q12 The school is well led and managed	90	58	55	35%	7	5	2	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	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 achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.



24 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bacton Community Middle School, Stowmarket, IP14 4LH

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. Your views were very helpful and we enjoyed our discussions with those of you we spoke to in lessons, in meetings and around the school. The school provides you with a good quality of education. We found that your behaviour is excellent and we were particularly impressed with the time and commitment that many of you were giving to the school production this week. Your teachers work hard to support you and they care for you well. They monitor the progress that you make and take action to support you whenever it appears that you may be falling behind with your work. As a result, you generally make good progress and achieve well in most of your subjects, but those of you with higher abilities are not making the amount of progress that you could.

Your school has a strong leadership team which is committed to giving you best possible education. Like all good schools, it recognises that there is still more that can be done to improve further, and so we have identified some areas that need to improve. These are:

- ensure that lesson planning enables all of you in the class to make the best possible progress
- providing you with clear advice and guidance through the day-to-day marking of your work on to how to accelerate your progress
- helping you to learn independently of your teachers.

You have a part to play and you can really help your school by ensuring that you do not settle for anything other than your best and that you follow up the comments and suggestions that your teachers make to help you to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Riddiough
Her Majesty's Inspector

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