

Newnham Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109661
Local Authority	Bedford
Inspection number	377961
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Liz Talmadge

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	591
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rob Baxter
Headteacher	Maxine Burrows
Date of previous school inspection	3 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 28 lessons involving 28 teachers and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and a local authority adviser. They observed the school's work and the school's self-evaluation documentation, the school development plan, attainment data, school records and minutes of governors' meetings. They analysed 206 questionnaires from parents and carers, 103 from pupils and 24 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The attainment and progress of all groups of pupils, particularly those targeted by the school in their development plan.
- Whether the evaluation and monitoring of teaching by the school is accurate
- Whether better assessment and marking is contributing to pupils understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.
- What the school does to ensure that the quality of care, guidance and support enables all pupils to achieve as well as they can.
- Whether the actions taken by the school since the last inspection are helping pupils to make progress in their learning.

Information about the school

Newnham Middle School is a larger than average five-form entry, co-educational middle school. It is a culturally diverse school with just over a third of pupils coming from a variety of minority ethnic groups of whom about half speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average. The school has Healthy School status and is part of the North East Bedford Learning Trust.

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

Newnham Middle School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is a school to which parents are happy to send their children, and that most pupils enjoy and attend very well. Attainment and achievement at the school have showed no clear trend over the past three years but a significant dip in attainment in 2011 resulted in attainment in both mathematics and English at Key Stage 2 being below the national averages. This is because pupils' skills in writing, problem-solving and conducting their own investigations are weak in Years 5 and 6. Consequently, the school has introduced a satisfactory range of changes. A renewed focus on achievement has led to the introduction of new monitoring and tracking systems and to some better teaching. As a result, more assessment data are available to teachers and they are starting to make use of this information in their planning. Strategies to help Year 6 pupils reach expected standards by the end of Key Stage 2 are now being used early enough to impact on outcomes. Attainment at the end of Year 8 is in line with national expectations and progress through the upper part of the school is satisfactory. Progress in mathematics is more rapid than in English. Support for the most vulnerable pupils is good and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress; the school is closing the gap in attainment between these pupils and other groups. The school's decisive action to address the drop in standards and to introduce strategies for improvement demonstrates satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

Leaders and governors are committed to improving the levels of achievement of pupils at all stages. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and they know what they need to do to secure future improvement. Monitoring, tracking and target setting are not fully embedded in the work of the school. This means that the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils are inconsistent. There is very little evidence of independent learning.

There is a well-organised pastoral support system that benefits pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable. The curriculum is adequately matched to the needs of pupils although literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are not sufficiently evident in all subject areas. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and they are appreciative of the range of opportunities that the school offers them. The school has good links with a small range of external agencies and is developing partnerships with others.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may

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receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and improve attainment in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 by:
 - ensuring that pupils' writing in Years 5 and 6 is well structured and that grammar, punctuation and spelling are accurate
 - improving pupils' skills and confidence in tackling mathematical problems and investigations
 - developing pupils' independent skills and their ability to conduct their own research.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that most lessons are good or better by December 2012 by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of all groups of pupils so that they are consistently high, for especially the most able pupils
 - making sure that teachers match work to the learning needs of all groups of pupils
 - making better use of marking so that all pupils know what to do to improve their learning.

- Strengthen the use of assessment so that target setting, tracking and monitoring is embedded by leaders at all levels in order to improve outcomes for pupils at Key Stage 2 and Year 8.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

By the time pupils reach the end of Year 8, they have made satisfactory progress and attainment matches the levels expected of their age nationally. In lessons, pupils behave appropriately and contribute willingly when the opportunity is offered to them. However, although almost half of all pupils arrive at the school with below average attainment, they do not make enough progress in Years 5 and 6. This is because pupils' writing is not sufficiently developed and they are not fully engaged in lessons. In addition, pupils are not confident in solving mathematical problems and conducting their own research. Intervention strategies have been used to remedy these weaknesses but in 2010 were introduced too late to have an impact on the 2011 test results for Key Stage 2. Through Years 7 and 8 pupils make more rapid progress overall. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given appropriate support for their learning and are set to make sufficient progress. However, the potentially higher attaining pupils do not have enough challenging activities to enable them to achieve as well as they can. When activities are engaging, pupils demonstrate the ability to work well together, sharing ideas, supporting each other and enjoying their learning. In a Year 8 English lesson, for

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example, pupils were able to make good progress with writing because they explored and reflected on the topic of their writing. Where learning and progress are slower, pupils depend too much on their teachers and show very little independence in their learning.

Pupils say that they are aware of how to stay safe in a range of circumstances. Some pupils are trained as ‘playground buddies’ and others as ‘young leaders’ enabling them to learn about responsibility and leadership. Pupils know that if they raise concerns they will be listened to and their concerns dealt with, and their parents and carers agree with them. Pupils understand what is expected of them and respond positively to the rewards and sanctions system. This leads to most behaviour seen around the school being orderly and calm. There is a good take-up of healthy meals and high numbers of pupils take part in clubs that promote exercise, and many pupils walk or cycle to school. Pupils have a clear understanding of what ‘being healthy’ means and most parents and carers think that the school promotes a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school through the school council and enjoy a range of enterprise activities that help them prepare for their future.

Pupils enjoy learning. Attendance at school is high and punctuality is generally good. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils develop their moral and social skills effectively through music and sport, but spiritual and cultural awareness are limited in subjects across the curriculum.

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	3
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	2
Pupils’ behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

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How effective is the provision?

The majority of teaching seen during the inspection was judged to be satisfactory. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics is weaker than at Key Stage 3, but recent changes have been made to address this. Where teaching is good, teachers’ planning and subject knowledge are effective and assessment is used well so that pupils know what to do to improve their learning. The best lessons have a good range of activities in which pupils can actively engage and where they can work together, express opinions and develop their thinking. Support staff are effective in complementing the work of teachers by ensuring that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are engaged in their learning and making progress. However, where teaching is not as effective, poor planning and the inconsistent use of marking and assessment lead to tasks and activities that are not well matched to the needs of different groups of learners. In addition, teachers’ expectations are sometimes too low, especially in Years 5 and 6, and pupils are not encouraged to develop their independence or given sufficient opportunities to find out things for themselves.

The curriculum is adequately matched to pupils’ needs and includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and French and German. There is an appropriate range of enrichment opportunities such as mathematics competitions for gifted and talented pupils and a good range of extra- curricular opportunities in areas such as music, drama and sport. The teaching of cross-curricular skills is less well developed and the school is aware that literacy, numeracy and ICT do not feature well enough in all areas of the curriculum.

The care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. The pastoral system is used effectively to support pupils and has a particularly important impact on the most vulnerable groups of children. Transition arrangements are good: Year 5 pupils settle quickly into school and Year 8 pupils are adequately prepared for their move to high school. The inclusive nature of the school is evident by the way in which pupils arriving mid-year from other schools are integrated into the school effectively. Whilst the quality of care is satisfactory overall, it is not yet having sufficient impact on the progress of all pupils. This is because the guidance and support for potentially higher achieving pupils is not robust enough and the improved support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has not had time to become securely embedded.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, the senior leadership team and the governing body have a clear vision for the further improvement of the school. They have identified appropriate and challenging priorities for improvement and are taking steps to make the necessary changes. The school’s self-evaluation is mainly accurate and has led to higher expectations of leaders and managers at all levels so that they are accountable for outcomes and provision. The school has started to take steps to improve the quality of teaching through better monitoring and evaluation of lessons so that all groups benefit from better teaching. Leaders are providing teachers with greater access to data to help them set targets and track pupils’ progress. The school is also using intervention strategies more effectively to raise achievement at Key Stage 2. However, the use of assessment data is not well established in all subject areas to help staff monitor pupils’ progress.

The governing body is committed to the school and fully supportive of the headteacher. It has taken important steps recently to become actively involved in the strategies necessary to secure improvement and is offering appropriate levels of support and challenge to the school. The governing body is listening to the views of parents and is working on ways to improve the school’s satisfactory communication with parents. Partnerships with external agencies and local schools are satisfactory.

The school promotes equal opportunities satisfactorily and incidents of racism or discrimination are very rare. Systems to safeguard pupils are satisfactory. There are a number of trained staff who have a thorough understanding of child protection, safeguarding and risk assessment. Promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory because the school has audited its provision appropriately and is looking at ways of extending it so that it can be embedded in the everyday experience of pupils. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3

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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

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about how well the school keeps their child safe and how much their children enjoy school. Most parents and carers felt that the school was well led and managed and were satisfied, overall, with their children’s experience of the school. The way in which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour was, however, a cause for concern for a small minority of parents. The inspectors investigated the parental concerns and found that the behaviour of pupils is managed satisfactorily.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Newnham 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 206 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 591 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	74	36	117	57	9	4	4	2
The school keeps my child safe	72	35	120	58	5	2	6	3
The school informs me about my child’s progress	52	25	127	62	19	9	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	53	26	125	61	19	9	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	50	24	132	64	11	5	1	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	48	23	123	60	21	10	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	24	133	65	18	9	1	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)	51	25	121	59	9	4	3	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	49	24	124	60	18	9	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	21	111	54	31	15	9	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	46	22	126	61	17	8	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	61	30	125	61	9	4	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	72	35	112	54	14	7	3	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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 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.



30 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Newnham Middle School, Bedford, MK41 9DT

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and talking to you about your school and were impressed with the sensible way in which you answered our questions.

Here is what we found out on the inspection.

- Your attendance is high.
- By the end of Year 8 you attain levels that are in line with the national average.
- Your behaviour in lessons and in the playground is good.
- The teaching is satisfactory and you respond well when given the opportunity to be involved in interesting activities.
- Staff look after you appropriately while you are at school.

We have asked the school to make some improvements.

- Help those of you in Years 5 and 6 to improve your skills in writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that most lessons are good or better.
- Strengthen the use of assessment so that target setting, tracking and monitoring is embedded by leaders at all levels.

You can all help too by trying hard in your lessons and always doing your best.

Yours sincerely

Liz Talmadge
Lead inspector

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