

# Linslade Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	136766
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	384794
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 April 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Keith Brown

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	601
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Maxine Ward
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ceri Elle (acting)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	N/A
<b>School address</b>	Mentmore Road Linslade Leighton Buzzard LU7 2PA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01525 372640
<b>Fax number</b>	01525 851437
<b>Email address</b>	contact@linsladeac.co.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	9–13
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	24–25 April 2012
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Keith Brown	Additional inspector
Janet Bird	Additional inspector
Sherry Gladwin	Additional inspector
David Talbot	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 28 lessons taught by 24 teachers, and made brief visits to 11 other lessons. They scrutinised pupils' work in English and mathematics, and held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff and the school adviser. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents, including policies and procedures relating to the safeguarding of pupils, self-evaluation records and assessment information. The inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires from 218 parents and carers, 101 pupils and 39 staff.

## Information about the school

Linslade Middle School is larger than the average-sized middle school. It became an academy in June 2011. The school serves pupils living in the south-west of Leighton Buzzard and surrounding villages. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with a very small number at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school is led by an acting headteacher at present. A substantive headteacher will take up post in September 2012.

The school holds accreditation for Values Education and has the Sportsmark award.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because its leaders have not ensured that enough teaching is good across the school to support consistently good achievement, particularly in writing. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Their attainment on entry is often above the level expected for their age. All groups make satisfactory progress and leave school at the end of Year 8 with attainment that is above average in English and mathematics, although writing skills are a relative weakness.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall. It has some good features, such as teachers' good subject knowledge and the setting of clear objectives for learning. Where teaching is satisfactory, too much teacher direction slows the pace of learning or the work could be more closely matched to the needs and abilities of the pupils. Marking sometimes does not provide enough guidance on how pupils' work should improve, or ensure that pupils follow the advice given.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Both in lessons and around the school, pupils' behaviour creates a positive learning and playing environment. They are courteous and friendly to visitors. Pupils feel safe and understand how to stay safe. The school has worked hard to maintain the rate of pupil attendance, which is above average.
- The leadership of teaching and management of performance are satisfactory. Senior staff are driving improvement and ensuring that more of the teaching is good or better. The role of middle leaders is underdeveloped in terms of monitoring the quality of teaching. The curriculum and a good range of extra-curricular activities provide well-developed learning experiences that engage pupils' interest well.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress made by pupils and raise attainment by ensuring that teachers consistently:
  - use assessment information to set work that is closely matched to pupils' abilities and needs
  - make sure all parts of the lesson engage and challenge pupils
  - give pupils written guidance on how to improve their work, and ensure they follow the advice provided.
- Raise attainment in English by providing regular opportunities for pupils to write at length.
- Strengthen the capacity of middle leaders to observe lessons and provide feedback to teachers on how they might improve.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Information from lower schools indicates that pupils in Year 5 enter the school with above average attainment in English and mathematics, having achieved above average scores in their Year 2 national tests. Most parents and carers feel that their children make good progress, but inspectors found that pupils make satisfactory progress overall across Years 5 to 8. Recent English results in Key Stage 2 national tests have fluctuated, with progress in writing being less good than in reading. The school is aware that the lack of opportunities for extended writing is holding back pupils' progress. The work of pupils currently in Year 6 and the school's assessment records show that they are on track to reach above average levels of attainment in English. By Year 8, attainment in English is above average and improving. Attainment in mathematics is similarly above average, and on an upward trend. Pupils have above average mental calculation skills, use fractions and decimals well, and apply basic numeracy skills very proficiently to solve problems.

Pupils typically make satisfactory progress in lessons, and it is sometimes good. They have positive attitudes to learning, settle to work quickly and concentrate well. They try hard even when they find the work difficult. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils persevered and were able to identify and discuss the key features of rotational symmetry. There is no significant difference in the progress made by different groups of pupils. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are closing the gap on pupils nationally. This is because tasks are matched closely to their ability levels and teaching assistants are deployed well. They help pupils by teaching subject-specific vocabulary, demonstrating skills precisely, and providing both challenge and encouragement.

Teachers are increasingly supporting the development of literacy skills across the

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curriculum. Pupils all have a reading book. They read aloud accurately to inspectors, often with expression and fluency, showing a good understanding of what they had read. Pupils' attainment in reading is above average at the end of Year 6, and above national expectations by the time they leave Year 8.

## **Quality of teaching**

Questionnaire responses showed that parents and carers feel their children are taught well. Inspectors found that there is an increasing proportion of good or better teaching, but the quality is inconsistent across the school and the impact of teaching over time is satisfactory overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use to set clear objectives and to plan relevant activities, including carefully modified work for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Teachers develop good relationships with pupils that build their confidence and encourage all to participate. They convey high expectations for pupils' behaviour, effort and presentation of their work, and use examples from the real world to focus learning. This contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good planning of the curriculum supports teaching well and provides regular opportunities for teachers to emphasise the importance of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in tutor periods and lessons.

In the best lessons, teachers provide pupils with criteria for success that are clearly linked to their target levels. They set work to challenge pupils of different abilities, and ensure that the pace of learning does not slow at any point. They use questions well to check pupils' understanding. For example, in a Year 8 science lesson the teacher engaged pupils' interest through a demonstration of a chemical reaction before using a paired practical activity for pupils to look at the effects of mixing solutions, and then used good questioning skills to establish possible word equations. Where teaching is only satisfactory, the challenge and pace of learning slow. This is typically because parts of the lesson are too teacher directed, or the teacher does not check carefully enough if pupils are finding the work too easy or too difficult.

The most effective marking seen gives pupils detailed feedback about their progress and clear guidance on how to improve. Teachers complete regular reviews of pupils' progress and give pupils the opportunity to assess their own work. However, sometimes advice on how to improve is not specific enough, and teachers do not always check that the guidance they have given to pupils is followed.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Parents, carers and pupils acknowledge the good quality of behaviour and safety in the school, both in and out of lessons. Pupils respond well to the school's strategies for managing behaviour. Inspectors saw only very rare instances of disruption to learning in lessons, and all of them were well managed by staff. High expectations and regular routines, together with clearly understood sanctions and rewards, result in a supportive, positive, and happy atmosphere for learning and playing. The school's log of behavioural incidents and other records show that behaviour has

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improved over time. The school's clear anti-bullying policy is rigorously enforced. Pupils report that bullying is restricted to rare instances of name-calling, with no racist or homophobic intent.

The school environment is safe and well ordered. Pupils have a good understanding about what constitutes unsafe situations and talk confidently about how to keep safe when facing dangers such as traffic, fire, or potential drowning. Effective liaison with external agencies helps to meet the needs of pupils whose circumstances make them most vulnerable and potentially disaffected. The school can point to striking examples of where it has helped pupils to manage their own behaviour better, so that their progress in lessons has improved.

Pupils' above average attendance is being sustained because of rigorous strategies to follow up any issues. Pupils noted that the exciting curriculum encourages them to come to school.

### **Leadership and management**

The acting headteacher and senior staff set a clear vision for the school that is appropriately based on developing a strong climate for learning and raising achievement. This contributes to the improved progress pupils are making. Senior staff review the school's performance effectively, know its strengths and weaknesses, and use the information gained to inform well-focused future training for teachers. However, the monitoring of teaching by middle leaders is not always incisive enough to ensure that teachers receive well-focused feedback on how to improve their lessons.

The curriculum is good because it meets the needs of a wide range of pupils, builds effectively on pupils' previous learning and prepares them well for the next stages in their education and later life. Pupils say that they enjoy the regular themed days and weeks. For example, a recent 'India' day helped everyone to learn much more about Indian food, dancing, clothes, languages, currency and religions. The curriculum is extended by a good range of art, music, dance and sport activities, as well as visits and visitors, that promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Promotion of equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work, creating a harmonious and positive atmosphere. The school is inclusive and there is no evidence of discrimination. Governors ensure that current safeguarding requirements are met. They know the school's strengths and increasingly challenge senior staff and middle leaders to demonstrate the progress the school is making. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 8 is improving, attendance is above average and the school now uses assessment information better to monitor pupils' performance closely, indicating that the school has the capacity to improve further.

## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.



## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



26 April 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Linslade Middle School, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 2PA**

Thank you very much for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. A special thank you goes to those who met with us, and those who completed questionnaires. Your views helped us to find out about the school.

The school is providing a satisfactory education for you. It has some good features. You are happy and feel safe at school. Pupils behaved well in the lessons we visited. Your school ensures that you are well prepared for upper school. Teaching is satisfactory and improving, but as yet not enough teaching is good. You make satisfactory progress and reach above average standards by the end of Year 8, although writing is sometimes weaker than reading and mathematics. You benefit from a wide range of activities, events and trips.

The acting headteacher, staff and the governing body are determined for the school to become better, and know that the best way to do this is by raising the quality of teaching. We have asked the teachers to make sure that marking always gives you clear guidance on how to do better, and to check that you follow any advice you are given in your books. We have asked them to ensure that all parts of every lesson engage and challenge you, and to give you more opportunities to write at length. We have also asked your teachers to use their knowledge of how well you are doing to give you work that makes you think and is just at the right level of difficulty.

You can help by coming to school every day. Do continue to work hard and try your best. Please check your work carefully and tell your teachers if you need them to explain some of the work in more detail.

I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Brown  
Lead inspector

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