

Margaret Beaufort Middle School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136475
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	382057
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2012
Lead inspector	Judith Matharu HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non Maintained
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	370
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hugh Carr-Archer
Headteacher	Charlotte Wood (Head of School) and Michael Lavelle (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2009
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Age group	9–13
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Introduction

Inspection team

Judith Matharu

Her Majesty's Inspector

Louise Briggs

Additional Inspector

Chris Ockendon

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 24 lessons taught by 20 teachers, including a significant number of observations conducted with senior leaders. Meetings were held with a number of school leaders, groups of pupils, several parents and carers and representatives of the federation's governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including improvement plans, records of teaching and pupil progress data. They analysed 285 responses received from the parents' and carers' questionnaires and responses from pupil and staff questionnaires.

Information about the school

This is a small-sized middle school. It converted to academy status in February 2011. Margaret Beaufort is part of the Academy Federation of North Bedfordshire Schools, in partnership with Sharnbrook Upper School and two other middle schools, Lincroft and Harrold Priory. The federation has a single governing body. The middle schools share an executive headteacher and each has its own head of school. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is also well below the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.

The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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 of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is a good school that has improved significantly since the last inspection. It is not yet outstanding because although teaching is consistently good across the school, it is not yet at the very highest level, to ensure that all pupils make outstanding progress in all subjects.
- Achievement has significantly improved in the last two years with all groups of pupils making better progress than found nationally. Pupils’ reading, writing and mathematical skills are well developed.
- A sharp focus on improving teaching and learning has paid dividends. This is good with an increasing proportion that is outstanding. At its best, the level of challenge posed and expectations of pupils’ contributions are consistently high; pupils work at pace, demonstrating maturity and independence in their learning. Dialogue is of an excellent quality with teachers probing through extended questioning; requiring pupils to talk through their answers with their peers and suitably challenge each other. Verbal and written feedback to pupils is detailed and informative. In less effective lessons, expectations of what pupils can achieve are more variable. Occasionally, teachers talk for too long, and follow-up questioning elicits individual responses, providing too few opportunities for greater involvement of pupils in leading learning and demonstrating what they know and can do. The quality of feedback varies and too little attention is paid to ensuring pupils follow up advice. Reinforcement of key literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum is good in the most successful lessons, but sometimes variable.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are courteous, respectful and welcoming. They take responsibility readily and contribute well to the positive learning environment in school. Pupils’ safety is given suitable priority.
- The significant improvements made since the last inspection arise from outstanding leadership. Leadership is strengthened by the contributions of the

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executive headteacher. The head of school is determined and ambitious for success. She is supported by a strong leadership team; together, this team has had an excellent impact on raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching. Importantly, members of staff share a clear, cross-federation vision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to ensure pupils achieve outstanding progress, eliminate the small amount of satisfactory teaching that remains and increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, by:
 - developing consistent approaches to and expectations of pupils' involvement in lessons, ensuring that learning tasks maximise involvement for all pupils
 - developing the quality of teachers' questioning so that it consistently challenges pupils and prompts their higher order thinking
 - securing consistency in the quality of written feedback provided for pupils, ensuring that they are encouraged to respond to and apply this advice
 - ensuring that all teachers consistently reinforce literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment by the end of Year 8 is high and above that found nationally for this age group. Standards at Key Stage 2 improved sharply in 2011. In both reading and writing and mathematics, pupils' attainment was significantly above national standards. From pupils' above average starting points to the end of Year 8, pupils' progress is consistently good.

Most parents and carers who responded at inspection agree that their children are making good progress. The school works hard to address achievement issues and tackle underperformance. For example, in 2011, more-able pupils did not perform as expected in the writing results at Key Stage 2. In response, monitoring procedures have been sharpened and a focus on improving writing for the more-able has been successfully introduced by the English department. Writing strategies have been focused on Year 5 in an attempt to prevent this happening again, and further initiatives implemented with Year 7 pupils to recover ground. Consequently, more-able pupils are now achieving well, in line with their capabilities.

The progress of potentially vulnerable groups is also consistently good. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good, and sometimes outstanding progress, due to careful identification of their needs, a range of suitable interventions to support them, careful tracking of their progress and close liaison with home. Parents and carers are positive about the improvements evident in provision for these children, with several commenting favourably on the leadership of

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this area and the good quality support provided to meet pupils' needs.

Lesson observations during inspection indicated that pupils' achievement is good across the curriculum. They are very responsive to teachers' advice and demonstrate secure reading, writing and mathematical skills. Overall, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education within the Academy federation.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good and continues to improve. An increasing proportion is outstanding. One of the federation benefits is the strong focus on professional development and the provision of greater opportunities for staff to share and develop their expertise. Most teaching is lively, interesting and promotes pupils' enjoyment of learning. Relationships are strong; pupils eagerly take responsibility and contribute to the positive learning environment evident.

In the very best lessons, a clear progression of suitably engaging learning activities is prominent. These meet the needs of all ability groups and suitably challenge all pupils, creating a notable buzz of learning. Teachers' questioning is sophisticated, providing suitably varied opportunities for pupils to explore new concepts, make decisions and demonstrate what they know and can do. Teachers use assessment effectively to monitor progress; in the most successful lessons, learning is checked quickly through a variety of means, including effective peer assessment. Following this, teachers press on with new challenges so that the pace of learning is rapid. Pupils are pleased they can recognise their own good progress; for example, in an outstanding English lesson, Year 7 pupils were engaged in a stimulating discussion about the gothic genre. They made effective links with their prior learning about Macbeth, comparing two texts with confidence. Excellent speaking and listening skills were evident as pupils animatedly and cooperatively decided on the success criteria for Level 6 work, based on their knowledge of those for Levels 4 and 5.

A highly successful Year 8 physical education lesson indicated similar strengths. Pupils demonstrated excellent skills in evaluating the performances of their peers in an athletics lesson, providing high quality feedback to their partners. Their observations and demonstrations reflected outstanding understanding of the key principles of the transition phase in sprinting.

However, when teaching is less effective, some pupils are passive and listen for too long, without contributing sufficiently for extended periods. Whole-class questioning limits involvement and proves frustrating for some who lose interest. Most teachers mark work regularly and many provide detailed feedback. However, this remains variable; sometimes, even the best marking is not routinely followed up, with insufficient encouragement of pupils to use and apply this in their next piece of work.

Literacy and reading skills are well developed through whole-school reading activities, for example, in school assemblies. However, some teachers beyond the core subjects miss opportunities to reinforce and consolidate key skills in their

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subject areas.

Parents and carers, whilst recognising strengths in the quality of teaching overall, expressed concern about recent teacher absences and the impact of temporary and cover staff on learning. The school recognises that this was a particular issue in the past term and once absence became long term, new improved arrangements were put in place.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils work and behave well in school. The vast majority respond very positively to the school's high expectations and contribute well to school life. A range of activities encourage large numbers to take responsibility readily; for example, over half of Year 8 pupils are trained as peer supporters; others take up the roles of prefects, captains or leaders, demonstrating maturity in supporting their peers and directing aspects of the school's work. Impressively several pupils have been trained as pupil observers of teaching and learning. They complete lesson observations, and provide feedback on the quality of learning from pupils' perspectives.

Pupils feel safe and express confidence in staff to deal with bullying should this occur. They are positive about the school's efforts to teach them about cyber safety; they are aware of different forms of bullying and the importance of keeping themselves safe.

A notable minority of parents and carers are concerned about how learning is affected by off-task behaviour in lessons. Inspectors pursued this vigorously through observations, consideration of the school's behaviour records and discussions with pupils. These indicate that disruption is not a major issue and misbehaviour is well-managed by staff, although there is a clear link between the frequency of misbehaviour and temporary and cover staff. These are discerning pupils who are confident in expressing their views. Pupils say that behaviour is good overall and when teachers' expectations are highest, behaviour is sometimes exemplary. However, they indicate that where teachers' expectations are inconsistent, this can have an adverse effect on behaviour.

Leadership and management

An uncompromising desire to raise expectations and improve standards and progress has been at the heart of the very significant improvements made since the last inspection. The executive headteacher, leaders at all levels and the governing body have a very clear vision for the future of the federation and for Margaret Beaufort within it. There is a strong commitment to ensure that greater opportunities for pupils help them to succeed at the upper school through common approaches across the federation.

The head of school has built a strong senior team around her; together they pursue a very ambitious vision for the school. Whole-school improvements have been

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achieved through a sharp focus on improving teaching as the school's core priority and ensuring that pupils' progress data is routinely collected, monitored and used consistently to target areas for improvement. This systematic use of performance data has resulted in clear, accurate evaluations of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Middle leaders are effective with well-developed skills; they are now a powerful force in driving school improvement.

The governing body is both supportive and challenging. It holds the school to account through rigorous analysis of its performance and uses the strengths across the federation to support ongoing improvement. Safeguarding procedures are robust and consistently implemented.

The school promotes equality of opportunity consistently well. Prompt and effective action is taken to close the gaps for potentially vulnerable pupils, with evidence of good impact on these pupils' achievements. There is a strong commitment to provide an inclusive, enriching curriculum experience for all pupils, which broadens their horizons and prepares them well for the next stage of learning. The enrichment programme is particularly strong; many parents and carers comment favourably on the range of sporting opportunities available. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well represented in school assemblies and across the curriculum.

The majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school's work. An increasing number are becoming more involved in school activities, for example, visiting the school to support career-based curriculum events. Several parents and carers visited school during the inspection to express their approval of the improvements evident in standards of attainment.

The track record in achieving several key improvements in the school's work, together with the continuing resources from the federation, indicates a very strong capacity to make further improvements.

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).

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.



2 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Margaret Beaufort Middle School, Bedford, MK44 1DR

Thank you for your warm and friendly welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with many of you and looking at your work. We found that you are rightly proud of your school and very perceptive in describing the key features of its work.

You are well taught and are achieving high standards in your work. Throughout your time in the school, you are making good progress. This means that you are well prepared for the next stage of your education.

The atmosphere is positive in school and you behave well, showing that you have a good rapport with staff members. Overall, leaders in school are doing a very good job in improving teaching and helping you to achieve well throughout the school.

We know that your teachers want to continue improving. So, having looked at your work and listened to what you said about when you learn best, we have asked teachers to always:

- Expect the very highest standards from you in your work and behaviour.
- Make sure that they provide lots of opportunities for you to be fully involved in lessons, not just listening.
- Make sure that when they have marked your work, they make it clear when, and how, you should follow this up afterwards.
- Check that they are encouraging and reinforcing your literacy and numeracy skills, in all subjects.

You can support this by making sure that you get involved in lessons, when these opportunities are presented. Also, by acting upon the advice provided in your books, making it clear you have done this.

We hope you continue to do well and wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Matharu
Her Majesty's Inspector

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