

Brewers Hill Middle School

Aldbanks, Dunstable, LU6 1AJ

Inspection dates

13 -14 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement is good because attainment is below average when pupils start at this school and it is better than expected when they leave at the age of 13.
- The progress of pupils in English and mathematics is good in all years.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making excellent progress.
- Pupils feel safe and behave well. They enjoy school and have a positive attitude to learning.
- The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and other leaders have worked hard to improve teaching and learning at the school. This has contributed to pupils' much improved achievement since the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching is good throughout the school.
- Governors work hard to improve the school so that every pupil can achieve as well as possible.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some pupils do not come to school as often as they should. This hinders their progress.
- Some lessons are too long, others are too short and time is not always used well at the start of the school day.
- Teachers do not always tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work, and pupils are not always expected to correct their mistakes.
- Teachers do not always expect enough of the most-able pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by 15 different teachers. Two of the lessons were observed jointly with senior teachers. Inspectors also conducted a work scrutiny with the head teacher to assess pupils' progress. During lessons, they looked at books, listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors held meetings with staff, pupils, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at assessment information, attendance data, the school's improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, a wide range of policies, and governing body documentation.
- There were 22 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection, and inspectors also spoke to a parent about the school. Inspectors examined 18 questionnaires about the school completed by members of staff. All their views were considered by the inspectors.

Inspection team

Steven Cartlidge, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Keith Wheeldon

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average middle school and the number on roll has fallen slightly since the last inspection.
- A very high proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium (extra funding from the government for pupils in local authority care and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals).
- The majority of pupils are White British with a low number from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is very high. However, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need, or who are receiving support through school action plus, is small.
- There is a very high turnover of pupils. One in every five pupils who start school here at age 9 moves away before they reach age 13, and a similar proportion joins the school between the ages 10 and 13.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school organises a breakfast and after-school club in order that pupils have a suitable place to study.
- All pupils are taught in single-age classes.
- The school is planning to join the Barnfield Federation of Schools and become a Barnfield Sponsored Converter Academy before September 2013.
- All pupils are taught on the site and the school does not provide alternative education elsewhere for any of its pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance rates, particularly among girls and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, so they are at least in line with national averages by the end of July 2013.
- Review the use of lesson time so that pupils' learning starts promptly at the beginning of the day, and the amount of time allocated to different subjects is better matched to the lesson content and the age of the pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good in every lesson by:
 - setting harder work for more able pupils
 - ensuring all teachers mark pupils' work regularly and consistently, give pupils written information about how well they are doing, tell them what they need to do to improve their work, and allocate time for pupils to correct their mistakes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved rapidly since the last inspection. This is because of much-improved teaching with well-targeted support to help pupils who are in danger of falling behind. Results in national tests are now much better. For example, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 4 at age 11 in English and mathematics has risen from 63% in 2008 to 79% in 2012 and is now in line with that in other schools.
- Pupils of all ages are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are given opportunities to read in class on a daily basis and there are regular spelling tests to help pupils improve their writing skills.
- In other lessons, most pupils are making good progress, but there are some inconsistencies. For example, lessons are sometimes too long, especially for the youngest pupils, and this adversely affects their progress. There are also times when the work is not demanding enough for the more-able pupils and this is slowing their progress.
- The school receives extra funding to improve the education of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for those who are looked after by the local authority. This funding is being used to provide additional support in English and mathematics and, as a result, these pupils are making very good progress and catching up with others of the same age.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making excellent progress and, in reading, writing and mathematics, most of them are catching up quickly with those of a similar age. The school carefully checks the progress of all pupils and intervenes swiftly when progress falters.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good, with some of the best teaching in English, mathematics, science, physical education and information and communication technology.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is usually good. They convey their knowledge well and they understand what is required to move their pupils on quickly. As a result, pupils of all ages make good progress. In the few lessons where teachers lack specialist expertise, lessons are not sufficiently challenging because standards and expectations are not high enough.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and this has a positive effect on pupils' learning.
- Teachers plan their lessons carefully to ensure work builds well on earlier learning. However, teachers do not always plan well enough to stretch the most-able pupils.
- As a result of the good teaching, pupils make good progress and this is evident in lessons and in the pupils' books. Teachers have high expectations and, at times, lessons are inspiring. For example, in an information and communication technology lesson, pupils worked in pairs to assess their progress, using sophisticated subject-specific vocabulary; while in physical education, a group of girls enjoyed developing highly skilled dance routines.
- The quality of marking varies. Most of the books are marked by teachers but comments are

often congratulatory. Although pupils know what level they are working at, they do not always know what they need to do next, and teachers do not always give them time to correct the mistakes they have made.

- Teachers manage the behaviour of pupils well in lessons so that learning is rarely interrupted. Pupils know the classroom rules and understand the consequences if they do not obey them.
- Teachers give their time freely to support the wider work of the school. For example, many of the staff are involved in the forthcoming production of 'Bugsy Malone' and, during the inspection, many of them were working closely with pupils during lunch-time and after-school rehearsals.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are keen to learn in almost every lesson. Their behaviour during lessons is almost always good and this has a very positive impact on their learning.
- During breaks and at lunch times, the behaviour of pupils is exemplary. For example, in the very attractively furnished school canteen, they are always polite to each other and to adults. They tidy up quickly and efficiently after eating, without any prompting from the staff, and leave at the end of break in the same manner as they entered – quickly, politely and without fuss.
- Pupils are helpful to visitors and keen to talk about their school with a sense of pride.
- Some of the pupils act as 'peer mediators' to deal with the few incidents of bullying which occur in the school. These peer mediators start by explaining the rules of mediation to the bully and the victim, and then chair discussions to help them resolve the conflict. Pupils feel that such incidents are dealt with quickly and to the satisfaction of all involved. Records show that only rarely is it necessary for a teacher to become involved.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet or when using mobile phones for sending messages and, for example, they know how important it is to keep passwords secret.
- All the staff and the great majority of the parents agree that behaviour at the school is good. Most of the 22 parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) would have no hesitation in recommending this school to another parent.
- Attendance has improved slightly in the past three years but still remains below the national average because some pupils, more frequently girls and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, do not attend regularly enough. The school is working hard to improve this situation and has introduced a new set of measures to focus again on the importance of attending school every day.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's relentless drive to improve teaching since the last inspection has been successful. In this much-improved school, pupils' progress and the quality of teaching are checked regularly. Well-targeted training is provided to help individual teachers, and they respond well because they are eager to improve their work. As a result, pupils' learning and achievement are significantly better than at the time of the previous inspection.

- The headteacher and other senior staff know what more the school needs to do to improve, although occasionally some of their observations about the quality of teaching are too generous. However, in other respects, such as their monitoring of pupils' progress, their judgements are more accurate.
- The day-to-day running of the school is good, but the start of the day is not always well used because the pace of personal, social and health education lessons is sometimes slow and the content undemanding. There are also some discrepancies in the time allocated to other lessons. Some are too long, especially for those aged nine and ten in Year 5 classes, while other lessons, such as design and technology, are sometimes too short.
- Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. In religious education lessons, assemblies and in personal, social and health education, pupils are taught about the issues, such as discrimination and democracy, that are relevant to living in a modern British society, and a good assembly on equalities was seen during the inspection. There are fewer, but sufficient, instances where pupils' are given the opportunity to consider issues that inspire an understanding of spirituality.
- The school's provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is very good and, as a result, they make excellent progress. Appropriate testing, good use of data and strong links with other agencies and other schools to share good practice support pupils' progress. There are, however, times when the extra support is provided for a little too long.
- Extra funds are used well to support pupils who are known to be entitled to free school meals and those in local authority care. Some of the funding is used to keep English and mathematics classes small, and staff have received extra training to help them better support pupils in these lessons. Among other initiatives, the school also provides a homework club, booster classes and Easter revision sessions which focus on improving key skills. Altogether, these are having a very positive effect on the progress made by this group of pupils.
- Pupils, parents and staff report that children feel safe at school. There are robust arrangements to ensure the health and safety of pupils while they are at school, and teachers very actively promote the pupils' understanding of how to keep safe in different contexts. For example, during the inspection, pupils aged 10 and 11 were given the opportunity to take the seat and see the lorry driver's view from the cab of an articulated truck. This gave them a good understanding of how it is sometimes hard for drivers of heavy goods vehicles to see pedestrians and other road users.
- The head teacher and others with positions of responsibility ensures that different groups of pupils have equal chance to succeed and they immediately tackle any instances of discrimination.
- The school is moving towards academy status so the local authority has provided limited support during the last year. However, the local authority has sufficient contact with the school to know that it is moving in the right direction.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - As a result of the move towards academy status, there have been changes in the governing body in recent months. Nonetheless, governance of the school remains good and the governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas needing improvement, including the pay and performance of teachers. Governors successfully question

and challenge the head teacher and set demanding goals for the future performance of the school, based on their secure understanding of data. The school's budget is kept under tight review with extra funds for disadvantaged pupils being monitored carefully. Safeguarding policies and procedures meet all requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	109659
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	401066

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	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Perry
Headteacher	Anita Harvey
Date of previous school inspection	17 – 18 November 2009
Telephone number	01582 666668
Fax number	01582 672708
Email address	admin@brewershillmiddle.co.uk

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