

# Leighton Middle School

Church Square, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 1EX

**Inspection dates** 4–5 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- The key leaders and governors of the school communicate a high level of ambition for its pupils and have worked effectively to improve teaching and learning.
- Pupils are making good progress and improving in their reading and writing throughout the school, especially in Years 5 and 6.
- By the end of Year 8, standards in English are above national expectations and are well above expectations in mathematics.
- There is good provision for all pupils to develop their talents and, as a result, individual pupils of all abilities make very good progress in specific skills and subjects.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan interesting and imaginative lessons and, as a result, pupils enjoy their learning.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those known to be eligible for free school meals are making the same progress as other pupils.
- Pupils conduct themselves very well in class and around the school, and incidents of poor behaviour are rare.
- Pupils feel safe at school and their parents have a high level of confidence in the school to look after them well.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is yet outstanding.
- Attendance is improving and is in line with national expectations, but the attendance of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is still below national expectations.
- Teachers mark pupils' books regularly but marking does not always show pupils how they can improve their work and achieve higher standards.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 24 lessons across all four year groups, and 10 of these were undertaken jointly with members of the school management team. Inspectors also looked at a range of pupils' work, both in lessons and in a separate work sample, with senior staff.
- Inspectors attended two assemblies and listened to some children reading.
- The inspection team held meetings with senior leaders, some subject leaders, a group of school governors and two groups of pupils. They also spoke to a representative of the local authority and talked to pupils informally at break and lunch time.
- Inspectors looked at the information kept by the school on the quality of teaching and learning and the records of progress and standards reached by the pupils. They also looked at a range of policies including those relating to safeguarding and for managing the performance of staff. The school's judgements on its own performance and the plans for school improvement were also taken into consideration.
- Inspectors took account of the 70 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and to questionnaires completed by 39 staff.

## Inspection team

Gillian Scobie, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Beverley Mabey	Additional Inspector
Alwyne Jolly	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Leighton Middle School is a smaller than average-sized middle school.
- Most pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as another language is lower than national averages.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is in line with national averages but the proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is below average. In this school, this extra government funding is mainly for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's floor standards for Year 6, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school organises a breakfast club for its pupils that is managed by the governing body.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding by ensuring that teachers' marking includes advice to pupils on how to improve their work, and that teachers make sure that pupils act on the advice they are given
- Improve the attendance for all groups, especially those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Most pupils make good progress and achieve well. They start Year 5 with average levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics and, by the end of Year 8, their attainment in reading is above that typically seen in of pupils of this age. Attainment is slightly above that expected for pupils' age in writing, and it is well above in mathematics.
- Progress is at least good in all subjects and across all years. Current school monitoring of progress since September shows that it is accelerating in Years 5 and 6, especially in reading and writing. In Years 7 and 8, progress in reading and writing is good. Progress in mathematics is outstanding.
- The attainment of pupils supported through pupil premium funding is improving and the gap in achievement between them and their classmates has closed in both reading and writing. However, in mathematics, eligible pupils are still working approximately two terms behind their classmates, although everyone is achieving standards well above national expectations.
- The high quality of guidance and support for pupils with special educational needs has ensured that they make good progress from their individual starting points across all subjects, and especially in mathematics.
- The whole-school policy of regularly setting a 'star challenge' in lessons ensures that the more-able pupils consistently make good progress and encourage other pupils to aspire to reach their full potential.
- Pupils enjoy reading and the whole-school policy on improving reading is beginning to have significant impact. The well-stocked school library has a wide range of books to ensure that everyone is well catered for, and the pupils say they value the help and support offered by the school librarian.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The large majority of teaching observed during the inspection was good or better. In all the observations carried out with school leaders, the grades matched inspectors' own judgements and the profile of teaching seen by the inspectors reflected the school's own evaluation of the quality of teaching across the school.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and, as a result, they engage their pupils well and foster their enthusiasm for learning. In a Year 5 English lesson where pupils were improving their sentences before writing a longer piece about the *Titanic*, their love of the subject was tangible. Pupils were so encouraged by the teacher's use of praise that they were inspired to do their best. Consequently, all pupils made outstanding progress from their different starting points.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations of their pupils and encourage them to take an active role in their own learning. Some Year 8 boys were very enthusiastic in describing how they had successfully rearranged and adjusted the usual gingerbread-man shape to make a 'Rudolph Reindeer' in their cookery lesson.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and explain the next steps very well so that pupils are able to move forward in their learning. Teachers know their pupils well and are nearly always

ready to adjust their teaching and explanations to ensure that everyone is able to make good progress. In a Year 5 computer lesson, for example, pupils with specific special educational needs were able to make excellent progress in developing basic control programs.

- Teachers check pupils' work carefully to ensure that they are making good progress. They generally use questioning well and are quick to offer guidance and advice that will skilfully correct misconceptions or errors.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and, in the better examples seen, teachers identified each pupil's strengths and gave clear guidance on how to improve, often with clear examples for the pupils to follow. However, this is not done consistently across all years and subjects. Where marking gives pupils advice, teachers do not always check that pupils act on it.
- Homework is set regularly and is helping pupils to consolidate their learning and practise the skills they have previously developed in class.
- The basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy are taught well across the full range of subjects and pupils are aware that they are essential for learning to be effective. Teachers check pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation frequently.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons is almost always at least good. Pupils respond quickly and respectfully to their teachers and low-level disruption in lessons is uncommon.
- There is a positive ethos around the school and in lessons. Pupils show adults and each other a high level of respect and make good and sensible use of the excellent facilities offered by the school grounds.
- Pupils say they enjoy their lessons. Pupils work hard to meet their teachers' high expectations.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school, and this is fully supported by the great majority of parents and staff who responded to the questionnaires.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the different sorts of bullying, and incidents of any kind of bullying are extremely rare. Pupils are very confident that their teachers would deal swiftly and effectively with any problems that may arise.
- Pupils look after each other very well. Year 8 pupils particularly enjoy their responsibilities as mentors to the younger pupils and as 'Young Sports and Dance Leaders' in their own school and local lower schools.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. However, the attendance of pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding remains below that of other pupils.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have a shared vision for the school. Their self-evaluation is accurate and realistic, and they have correctly identified the areas of teaching and attendance that require improvement in order that pupils might reach the very best

standards.

- The quality of teaching is regularly monitored and performance management procedures are careful and rigorous. The school ensures that only good teaching is rewarded. Teachers and staff at every level benefit from a range of professional development opportunities that continually help them to improve their own skills and, as a result, the quality of teaching and learning is always good and sometimes outstanding.
- The curriculum is planned carefully to ensure that basic literacy and numeracy skills are able to support learning effectively. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered across the full range of lessons. Inspectors were impressed by the pupils' developing spirituality in pursuing their love of music, poetry and art, and pupils' enthusiasm for the school choir.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities available to encourage pupils to develop their talents and interests across areas as varied as sport, music and computer science. The more-able pupils, and those with specific talents, are offered workshops and individual mentoring to encourage them to 'aim high', and help them fulfil their potential as young artists, musicians, scientists and masters of computer animation.
- The local authority maintains a light touch involvement with the school.
- The school goes to great lengths to share its good practice with local schools across a range of subjects and skill areas and to learn from them in return. A recent collaborative project has enabled pupils of all abilities to achieve bronze and silver Crest awards in science; awards that are usually only open to older pupils.
- The school uses additional funding, including pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding effectively to ensure that all pupils are able to make full use of the opportunities the school offers. Funds have been spent on providing additional resources for those receiving the pupil premium and those falling behind in literacy and mathematics. There is also a programme of support and guidance for pupils who need extra help to ensure that they make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Primary sports funding is providing training for teachers and buying in specialist expertise in sport. This is enhancing the broad range of opportunities the school provides both in lessons and after school. More opportunities for competitive games, swimming, athletics and extra coaching for the most able are all increasing the pupils' health and well-being.
- The school works well with parents and carers and is successful in reaching parents who are traditionally reluctant to work closely with schools. Parents value the breakfast club, that helps the children settle quickly when they arrive in the morning.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.

**■ The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well established and knows the school and its pupils' performance well. Governors visit the school regularly and individual governors are linked to specific areas of the curriculum so that they can offer well-informed support to the headteacher. They provide effective challenge on a wide range of areas, such as the provision for the more able and the school's approach to behaviour management and support. Governors have a good understanding of how performance management of staff is linked to target setting and progression through the pay scales. They receive regular reports from the headteacher on progress and carefully monitor the use of additional funding, such as pupil premium and the new primary sports funding, to ensure that it is used effectively.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109689
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	429628

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	469
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Fiona Dry
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anne Thompson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 June 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01525 374907
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