

Hardwick Middle School

Mayfield Road, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 2PD

Inspection dates

21–22 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Students' attainment at Key Stage 2 has declined since the previous inspection; in 2014 it was significantly below average in writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged students' attainment was far below that of others. Progress accelerates thereafter but by the end of Year 8 the attainment of a significant minority is below the level expected for their age.
- Over time, senior leaders have been too optimistic about the effectiveness of teaching, which has deteriorated since the previous inspection, particularly in mathematics.
- Leaders have not ensured that the assessment of students' work in all subjects is accurate. Until recently, procedures for tracking students' progress and providing additional support for those who need it have been ineffective. This has limited their progress.
- Students' attitudes to learning require improvement. Many lack a real enthusiasm for learning, and do not try as hard as they might to do their best. Often, teaching does not challenge, encourage or inspire them to do so.
- Work set is often not well matched to students' abilities; feedback on it frequently does not make clear how students can make improvements. Until recently, expectations as to what students can achieve have been too low. They have been encouraged to meet unambitious targets, rather than demanding ones.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently-appointed headteacher, senior leaders and governors have identified the right priorities for improving the quality of teaching and learning. They are pursuing them with urgency and impact. Standards are rising.
- Teaching is improving as a result of the changes leaders have made. This is because the activities that students complete are being better matched to their abilities.
- Students are safe and secure at school. Attendance is high. Students are punctual, polite and they usually conduct themselves well around the site and in lessons.
- The school makes a positive contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. A very high proportion of students regularly attend sporting and other activities which contribute well to their personal development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 30 lessons or parts of lessons. Several lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors analysed documentation, including that relating to attendance, exclusions, safeguarding, behaviour, the school’s systems for improving teaching and learning, and details of its use of additional funding to support disadvantaged students.
- Inspectors took account of the 51 responses to the online, Parent View survey, and the 28 responses to the staff survey.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other senior and subject leaders, teaching staff, members of the governing body and groups of students.

Inspection team

Jason Howard, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Heather Housden	Additional Inspector
Genevieve Usher	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average middle-deemed-secondary school, with pupils starting in Year 5 and finishing at the end of Year 8.
- Approximately 20% of students are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or are looked after. This proportion is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, at around 15%, is slightly below the national average.
- Almost all students are White British.
- The school makes use of alternative provision at Wickhambrook Community Primary School to support students who are dyslexic.
- The school is in a soft federation with the local King Edward VI School. Each school has its own governing body. The school has its own headteacher, who is assisted by the executive headteacher and head of King Edward VI School.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school is subject to the local authority reorganisation from a three-tier to a two-tier system, and is scheduled to close at the end of the 2015-16 academic year.
- There have been significant changes in staffing since the last inspection at both middle and senior leadership levels. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue the improvements made to the quality and effectiveness of teaching so that students attain higher standards, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - deliver activities that are interesting, which motivate students to want to work hard and meet their challenging targets
 - ensure that lessons and homework activities meet the learning needs of all groups of students, including disadvantaged students, less able students and the most able
 - are alert to students who need additional support, or challenge, within lessons and adapt their teaching to provide it
 - use questioning or other strategies to ensure that students can develop their ideas and responses fully
 - give students clear information about how to improve their work, and time to respond to the suggestions.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders at all levels by ensuring that:
 - teachers apply marks, levels or grades to students' work accurately
 - the quality of feedback that students receive is of consistently high quality across all subject areas
 - the impact of intervention and additional support provided to students is monitored carefully, and that changes are made as required
 - the good practice identified in the school is shared more widely to improve the quality of teaching and learning
 - governors and senior leaders evaluate how effectively the additional funding for disadvantaged students is spent, monitoring the impact of recent changes.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess

how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Over time, leaders and managers have not ensured that teaching has been effective enough to enable all groups of students to make as much progress, and attain as highly, as they can. Until recently, senior leaders' evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching has been overly generous and weaker teaching has not been tackled with sufficient urgency.
- Leadership is not inadequate because a number of recently-appointed senior and middle leaders have demonstrated the capacity to improve the school, and in particular the quality of teaching, through the impact their changes have already made. Staff are fully committed to the headteacher's vision, particularly its emphasis on improving the quality of teaching, assessment and the feedback that students receive, so that all groups attain as well as they can. They actively support the changes she is making.
- Senior leaders' efforts to improve teaching have prescribed in detail how lessons should be structured and taught. This has not always allowed teachers the flexibility to ensure all groups of students make progress. Teachers now have this flexibility; as a result, teaching is improving.
- In some subject areas, frequent changes of staffing have made it difficult for middle leaders to monitor, and improve, standards within their areas of responsibility. As a result, the quality of teaching and feedback, and the accuracy of assessment of students' work, have varied both between, and sometimes within, subject areas. Greater stability, and considerable support from the new headteacher and other senior leaders, have helped to increase the ability of leaders, including within English and mathematics, to drive improvements.
- Teachers are held accountable through revised performance management arrangements that set challenging targets relating to students' progress. This, together with the improved system for tracking the progress of individuals and groups of students, is beginning to raise teachers' expectations of what students should achieve. Some teachers are using the information to identify the gaps in individuals' knowledge and understanding and plan activities that will help them take the next steps in their learning.
- Over time, interventions to help students catch up, who entered the school having made insufficient progress, have not been effective. Since the start of this academic year, new arrangements have ensured that this work is coordinated well and based on accurate assessments of the gaps in individuals' knowledge and understanding. Early indications are that the students receiving the extra support have made faster progress than their peers in English, but less so in mathematics.
- Leaders have started to create opportunities for teachers to share their effective techniques with each other; these arrangements, though not yet fully in place, are helping to improve the quality of teaching.
- The school's use of additional funding to support disadvantaged students requires improvement because it has not helped to close the gaps in progress and attainment between these students and their peers.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. However, until recently, students in Year 5 and Year 6 who received additional support to help them catch up in reading, writing or mathematics often missed learning in other subjects, while deriving limited benefit from the catch-up sessions. Recent changes mean these sessions have more impact and involve only limited changes to students' normal timetables.
- The school prepares students for life in modern democratic Britain well. Leaders foster good relations and tackle discrimination by ensuring that students learn about the different beliefs and lifestyles of others, and the need to respect these. The citizenship curriculum enables students to explore the difference between right and wrong, and understand the importance of exercising rights and freedoms within the law. The changes that leaders at all levels are making to improve the quality of teaching are evidence of their commitment to promote equality of opportunity within the classroom for all.
- Although students do not choose their GCSE options until they move to upper school, many are able to talk confidently about their possible future next steps in education, and the kinds of qualifications and

skills they might need to realise their ambitions.

- Additional primary school sport funding is being used to increase further the already considerable range of activities that students can take part in, at lunch times, after school and via inter-school competitions. This breadth of choice means the proportion of students who regularly take part in at least one sporting activity is high.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and are effective.
- Leaders monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of any pupils who attend part-time alternative provision very carefully, ensuring they are safe and secure.
- Visits from local authority advisers have helped school leaders to evaluate aspects of the school's provision securely and determine appropriate priorities for development. The local authority has also provided effective governor training and support. Working in collaboration with the partner school has made a considerable contribution to the school's capacity for continued improvement, through the sharing of staff, leadership and expertise. This is helping to raise standards quickly and increase the impact of leadership, including within English and mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is increasingly effective. Until recently, governors have not always had all of the information they have needed in order to make accurate judgements about the quality of all aspects of the school's work. They have been active in addressing this. Governors continue to receive and consider regular reports from senior leaders about the quality of teaching, which they supplement with additional sources of information. Governors support the school's leaders when difficult decisions need to be made in order to raise standards. Recent training has helped governors to ask questions about, and monitor the impact of the school's work on the progress and attainment of different groups of students. As a result, they understand the school's strengths, weaknesses and priorities well. Performance management processes have been strengthened so that teachers' targets are precise and include high expectations about the amount of progress students should make. Governors know how the school rewards good teaching and tackles any underperformance. The Chair of Governors led the initiative to share leadership, and work more closely with, the partner school. This has increased the capacity of the school's leaders to raise standards quickly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although the majority work with enthusiasm when the activities they complete are engaging and demanding, few demonstrate a consistently strong desire to learn or a real commitment to improve their performance. This limits the progress they make.
- When students work in groups, some lose focus and are content for others to complete most of the work. Work scrutiny indicates that over time, a significant minority of students often rush work, present it poorly and sometimes fail to complete it fully. Many do not respond to the suggestions teachers make about how they can improve their work, so continue to make the same mistakes.
- Although a minority of parents expressed concern about standards of behaviour via their Parent View responses, incidents of poor behaviour that disrupt the learning of others are uncommon. Students report that these have declined over recent years.
- Students' conduct around the school site, and when being educated off-site, is usually good and the vast majority say they enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Levels of attendance and punctuality are high. There are few temporary exclusions from school.
- Students engage positively in a wide variety of activities and opportunities that take place outside of the classroom, developing their confidence and contributing to the school and the wider community.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Regular training means teachers know what to do if concerns about students arise. A number of governors are safer-recruitment trained and ensure arrangements for checking the suitability of those who work, volunteer in or visit the school are robust and rigorous. Procedures to minimise risks during trips and visits are effective. Appropriate systems are in place to support and monitor those who spend some of their time being educated off-site.
- Most students report that bullying is rare, and dealt with effectively. Some felt that it had been more of an issue in previous years, but that its incidence has declined. Leaders have responded to the concerns of some parents about bullying, and have made it much easier for students to report it. The school ensures that students have a clear understanding of the different kinds of bullying, and how to minimise the risks involved in using the internet.
- Racist incidents are almost unknown. A number of students mentioned they occasionally heard homophobic language when at school but were clear that this is tackled by leaders. Teaching and assemblies help students to understand the importance of respecting those with different lifestyles.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies across, and sometimes within, subject areas. Over time, teaching has not been effective enough to ensure students make as much progress as they should in mathematics and in English. Recent improvements are evident, particularly in English, but school leaders acknowledge that some concerns remain in mathematics. These are limiting the progress of the least able students at Key Stage 2, and slowing the rate at which others catch up. Leaders acknowledge that students have had insufficient opportunity to apply their mathematical skills to problem-solving tasks, though this is starting to improve.
- Teachers do not always use the information they have about what students already know to plan activities that will help them take the next steps in their learning. Often, all students complete the same tasks, and make limited progress because the work is either too difficult or too straightforward for them. Students noted this during discussions with inspectors. Over time, the most able have not been challenged sufficiently by the activities they complete. In some subject areas, including the humanities, tasks involving evaluative, analytical extended writing are infrequent.
- Questioning and other techniques often do not encourage students to explain, develop and refine their thinking. Sometimes students are not clear about what they have to do, or have insufficient time to complete tasks or to respond to feedback. Often, homework tasks do not support or extend the learning that has taken place in the classroom.
- The impact of marking and feedback varies considerably. In some books, comments made by teachers often focus on levels of effort and students' quality of presentation, but give little guidance on what students need to do to improve the depth, clarity or relevance of their responses. Marking in some subjects, particularly English, is a strength. Work scrutiny indicated marking is infrequent in French and in science, and that this slows students' progress.
- Discussions with students indicated that although most knew their improvement targets, many were unsure about how to reach them. In some subject areas, the marks or levels applied to pieces of students' work are not always accurate.
- Most teachers in most subject areas address inaccuracies in students' spelling, or in their use of punctuation and grammar. Although many students respond and make the necessary changes, some do not and continue to make the same mistakes. Students are increasingly confident readers, and monitoring data indicate those who have recently joined the school with low levels of literacy are making faster progress than their peers because of the additional support they receive. The teaching of numeracy across the curriculum is less well-developed.

- Teaching in many subject areas is improving rapidly, in large part because school policy no longer dictates that teachers should plan activities and lessons according to a strict set of criteria, which in the past distracted some teachers from focusing upon students' progress.
- Effective, and sometimes highly effective teaching is evident within many subject areas, including physical education, design technology, English and music. Teachers are alert to gaps in students' knowledge and understanding, and address these rapidly. They use the information they have about students' progress to plan activities that will help them move forward. Work is challenging, engaging, and sometimes exciting. Students are able to re-draft their work and respond to marking and feedback that shows them how to improve. Work scrutiny indicates that the quality of feedback students receive in English has improved markedly since the start of the current academic year. Some groups of students in mathematics are making accelerated progress because teaching is exciting their interest and helping close prior gaps in their knowledge and understanding.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Achievement is inadequate because, over time, teaching in English and mathematics has not ensured all groups of students make sufficient progress during Year 5 and Year 6 from their starting points, which for many are above average. Additional intervention to support those students who join the school having made slow progress since the start of Key Stage 2 has not been effective. National test results show that rates of progress are too slow and have declined since 2012.
- In 2014, the performance of most groups of students in the Key Stage 2 national tests was significantly below national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged students and others nationally widened considerably in 2014 because these students made insufficient progress from their starting points.
- In 2012 and 2013, disadvantaged students were typically between one and two terms behind others nationally in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2, and about half a term behind their peers within school. In 2014, these students were over three terms behind others nationally in writing, four terms behind in reading and two years behind in mathematics. They were over a year behind their peers within school in mathematics and reading, and half a year behind in writing.
- In Years 7 and 8, most students make more rapid progress. Work scrutiny indicates that students currently in Year 8 have made at least as much progress in English as expected from their starting points. Gaps in many students' knowledge and understanding in mathematics remain. A significant proportion of students leave the school with attainment that is below the level expected for their age.
- The use of additional Year 7 'catch-up' funding to provide one-to-one and small group support has enabled students to make more rapid progress in literacy; in mathematics the impact has been more limited.
- The proportion of the most able students who attained at least a level 5 in the Key Stage 2 national tests has fallen. In 2014, the most able were less than half as likely to gain at least a level 5 in mathematics, reading and writing than their peers nationally. Work scrutiny and lesson observations indicate that the most able often complete work that is too easy for them.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs has been inadequate, because of weaknesses in the teaching and in the additional support they have received. A recently-appointed leader has addressed these issues successfully and the progress of many current students is accelerating.
- The school's monitoring indicates that the off-site educational provision some students receive on a part-time basis helps to support their work within school.

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	124839
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	456056

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	378
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Bowcher
Headteacher	Rachel Forward
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2012
Telephone number	01284 764994
Fax number	01284 764994
Email address	reception@hardwickmiddle.suffolk.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2015

