

Hardwick Middle School

Mayfield Road, Bury St Edmunds IP33 2PD

Inspection dates

17–18 November 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Too few pupils make good progress from their starting points. The proportion of pupils reaching expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 remains below the national average.
- The feedback teachers give to less-able pupils about their work does not always help them to develop their learning well enough.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies too much in different classes and year groups.
- Steps taken by leaders and governors to improve teaching and learning have not ensured it has improved well enough.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to improve their literacy and numeracy skills outside English and mathematics lessons.

The school has the following strengths

- School leaders have improved the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics. Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are starting to rise.
- Teachers assess pupils' work accurately and use this information to make sure pupils who need extra help are supported to catch up.
- By the end of Year 8, most pupils have caught up.
- Pupil premium funding is used successfully to raise the standards achieved by disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils behave well both around the school and in lessons.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in order to raise outcomes for all pupils by:
 - ensuring that all teachers create opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills and provide opportunities in all subjects for pupils to practise writing at length
 - continuing to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and urgently addressing these through support activities or by teachers modifying what they are teaching
 - extending the focus and strategies used to improve the performance of disadvantaged pupils in 2015 to all pupils in the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The drive and commitment of the headteacher, supported by the executive headteacher, the governing body and other members of the senior leadership team have united the staff, raised their aspirations and improved the learning experiences and achievement of pupils. Despite the school being scheduled for closure in July 2016, there is a clear sense of purpose that it must continue to strive to provide the very best education for pupils that it can. Responses to the staff questionnaire during the inspection showed that staff are fully supportive of the headteacher and her team.
- Governors and the headteacher know this school and its pupils extremely well. Their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is entirely accurate. They know what requires improvement and, importantly, what to do to make the necessary changes so that all pupils make accelerated progress towards improved outcomes.
- Senior leaders have maintained a sharp focus on raising standards and strengthening teaching and used support offered by the local authority following the previous inspection to help achieve this. Last year, the main focus was on improving the teaching of English and mathematics. This has been successful and has had a positive impact on the progress of pupils.
- The performance of all teachers is monitored closely. Good teaching is rewarded and well-targeted support is put in place for teachers who still need to improve or develop their teaching. Judgements of teachers' effectiveness take full account of the progress pupils make in their lessons and over time.
- Subject leaders are now held to account for pupils' progress. They track carefully how well pupils are doing in all classes. Training for all teachers on topics such as improving levels of engagement and encouraging pupils to learn more independently, for example by developing more effective research skills, is ongoing and continues to improve the quality of teaching overall.
- The school has very effective systems to track the progress of all groups of pupils. This information is used promptly to pick up any underachievement so that support from newly appointed support teachers can be put into place. Tests at the beginning of the academic year across all subject areas identified any gaps in pupils' knowledge and this information has been used to target support for individual pupils.
- An effective programme of support for disadvantaged pupils resulted in much improved outcomes for this group in 2014. Pupil premium funding continues to be used to provide additional provision, such as a homework club and one-to-one support, to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils continue to make accelerated progress this year and that the gaps in their attainment, including with other pupils nationally, continue to close.
- The extra funding received by the school to improve physical education is used well. A sports coach ensures that pupils have more opportunities to take part in a greater variety of sports in extra-curricular clubs and also to compete in tournaments and competitions with other schools. He is also coordinating a 'Fit for Christmas' campaign at the moment involving all pupils and staff at the school, after a general lack of fitness was identified. Some parents have also become involved in a bid to improve their own fitness along with that of with their children.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils in both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. The provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education effectively increases pupils' awareness and knowledge of the wider world and educates them to be tolerant and respectful of other cultures, rules and laws. The school also provides a good range of extra-curricular activities for pupils before, during and after school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching and how well the school performs compared to other schools nationally. They confidently question the headteacher about the progress of pupils and what actions are being taken to address weaknesses in teaching. They are fully aware of how the pupil premium funding is being used to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
 - The Chair of the Governing Body meets with the headteacher weekly, offering robust support with strategic planning, as well as monitoring the impact of these strategies. Governors make regular visits to see the school at work and to scrutinise progress on an area of the school action plan. Visiting governors make recommendations and report back to the full governing body.
 - The governing body carries out its statutory obligations to keep pupils safe and to ensure equality for all.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are appropriate and the right checks are made on the suitability of staff to be employed at the school. Staff training is up to date. Child protection procedures are used well and outside agencies are contacted to provide extra support for pupils when appropriate.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable. There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across subjects and between teachers. In too many lessons, the work is not pitched at the right level to challenge pupils with different abilities well enough. In particular, the activities that teachers give to less-able pupils are, at times, too easy and so do not support them in making good progress.
- The determined programme of training and professional development led by the headteacher is strengthening the quality of teaching. At this point, however, this is still not enabling all pupils in all classes to make accelerated progress.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills fully through completing longer pieces of writing. Many pupils can talk confidently about their learning but they do not show the same level of understanding when they have to demonstrate this and use their skills in writing.
- Not all teachers routinely make the most of opportunities to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of pupils in their lessons. Some good examples of literacy and numeracy skills being developed outside English and mathematics lessons were seen, for example in pupils' science books, but this is not the case in all subject areas so pupils do not develop the understanding they could.
- Teachers do not always give pupils clear advice on how to improve their work, especially those who are less able. Some advice was too difficult for some pupils to follow, which prevents them from using the guidance to support their learning.
- Teaching in mathematics has improved since the previous inspection. Effective support from an adviser provided by the local authority, together with in-school training, has led to a higher level of challenge in lessons, resulting in increasing rates of progress, especially for more-able pupils.
- Teachers, in English and mathematics in particular, are using information on how well pupils are doing to plan activities that help them to fill gaps in their knowledge and reinforce learning before they move on to the next step. This information, together with direction by senior leaders, has also empowered teachers to respond more directly to the needs of their pupils. In a Year 6 English lesson, for example, the teacher quickly identified that pupils had not fully understood a previous lesson and so adapted her objective in response to this, ensuring that misunderstandings were corrected and learning reinforced before the pupils moved on. However, this level of adaptability is not seen in all classrooms.
- Teachers use a range of methods and approaches to capture and sustain pupils' interest in lessons. This is helping pupils to develop positive attitudes towards tackling more difficult work. Pupils are also working harder so that they can make more rapid progress. Where teaching is most effective, pupils share their ideas with each other and learn well together. A whole school focus on developing good research skills, supported by a new online homework strategy, has resulted in pupils being able to use these skills to improve their learning across subject areas.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils understand how to be a successful learner. They are developing this self-awareness through being actively encouraged by their teachers to take responsibility for their learning. An increasing proportion of pupils are becoming independent learners, able to get on with their work without the need for frequent reminders from adults.
- Pupils take pride in the presentation of their written work.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe. For example, they have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet and other technologies. Pupils report that there is little unkind behaviour and very few bullying incidents in school but they know that they will be listened to and supported if they do occur. School records show that there are very few incidents of bullying, including any linked to racism.
- Pupils relish the challenge to earn the right to become pupil leaders as they move into Key Stage 3, and

they take their responsibilities very seriously. They are very good ambassadors for their school.

- The attendance and progress of any pupils who attend alternative education are closely monitored by school staff, ensuring that they achieve well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Although they are appropriately supervised at breaktimes, the pupils show an impressive ability to manage their own behaviour. They demonstrate great maturity and consideration for others. Records provided by the school show that behaviour continues to improve, with the number of managed incidents since September markedly lower than in the same period in 2014.
- Observations in lessons show that the overwhelming majority of pupils are able to work collaboratively with others and support each other's learning well. Expectations of behaviour are made clear and are understood and respected by pupils.
- Attendance is above the national average. Pupils speak of their school with pride and are enthusiastic about their lessons. They are sorry that the school is to close.
- There is little low-level disruption in lessons and it rarely interferes with the learning of other pupils. Where it does occur, it is because teaching is not sufficiently interesting or engaging.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- By the end of Key Stage 2, from their various starting points, most pupils do not make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2015, the proportions of pupils who made expected progress and more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics increased from 2014. However, the proportion remained below the national average and too many pupils did not make enough progress.
- Outcomes at Level 4 and the higher Level 5 improved in 2015. This improvement was not sufficient to match the standards achieved nationally because pupils did not make enough progress.
- The standards that pupils achieve in subjects such as music and French by the end of Year 8 is below that expected for pupils of their age.
- Poorer quality of teaching in the past has affected the progress of some pupils, especially those currently in Years 7 and 8. However, improvements to the assessment and tracking systems used by the school over the past year are allowing leaders to start to address underachievement in all year groups, intervening and taking action to accelerate progress where necessary.
- The progress of more-able pupils is accelerating because they are being challenged more in lessons.
- By the end of Year 8, when pupils move to the upper school, they have caught up with their peers nationally from below-average outcomes at Key Stage 2. Scrutiny of Year 8 English and mathematics work by inspectors and information from testing carried out by King Edward VI Upper School, where the majority of Hardwick pupils go on to study, shows that they begin Year 9 with attainment in line with their peers.
- The small numbers of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs at the school are closely monitored and appropriate support is provided. Most of these pupils make better than expected progress from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieved better than their peers in school in reading, writing and mathematics. Apart from in mathematics, which remains below national standards, this puts them in line with other pupils nationally.

School details

Unique reference number	124839
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10006973

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	10–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Bowcher
Headteacher	Rachel Forward
Telephone number	01284 764994
Website	www.hardwickmiddle.suffolk.sch.uk
Email address	reception@hardwickmiddle.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 January 2015

Information about this school

- Hardwick is a smaller than average middle-deemed-secondary school that is scheduled to close at the end of this academic year due to the local authority re-organisation from a three tier to a two tier system.
- This year it did not take any new pupils in Year 5 and so currently has pupils from Years 6 to 8.
- Approximately 20% of pupils are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are looked after.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The school is in a soft federation with the local King Edward VI School but has its own governing body and headteacher, who is supported by the executive headteacher of King Edward VI School.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- Alternative provision at On Track in Mildenhall is occasionally used by the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection began as a section 8, one-day monitoring visit inspection and was converted to a full section 5 inspection before the end of the day. The monitoring inspector returned to complete the inspection the following day with a team of three other inspectors.
- Inspectors undertook direct observations of teaching in all classes.
- A range of documents were analysed, including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour, pupil progress, attendance, the school's self-evaluation and development plan and its policies for managing teachers' pay and improving teaching and learning.
- Pupils' books, especially in English and mathematics, were looked at closely.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other senior and subject leaders, several groups of pupils, a representative from the local authority and the Chair and members of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors took account of the 27 responses to the online Parent View survey and 29 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

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Susan Cox	Ofsted Inspector
Joanna Jones	Ofsted Inspector

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