



Inspection report

# Dedworth Middle School

**Better  
education  
and care**

Unique Reference Number 110072  
LEA Windsor and Maidenhead

Inspection number 273421  
Inspection dates 10 and 11 January 2005  
Reporting inspector Mrs C A Bolton HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of School	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Smiths Lane Windsor Berkshire SL4 5PE
School category	Community		
Age range of pupils	9 to 13 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01753 860561
Number on roll	377	Fax number	01753 831243
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr A Makepeace
Date of previous inspection	11 November 2002	Headteacher	Mrs K Bolton

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Age group	Published	Reference no.
9 to 13 years	21 February 2005	273421

## Introduction

When Dedworth Middle School was inspected in November 2002, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on four occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in January 2005.

### Description of the school

Dedworth Middle School is similar in size to other middle schools, with a roll of 377 pupils aged between 9 and 13 years. The proportion of the pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. The school has identified 19 per cent of its pupils as having special educational needs and this is close to the average. However, the percentage of pupils for whom Statements of Special Educational Need are maintained is relatively high. The proportion of the pupils for whom English is an additional language is above average. The number of pupils entering and leaving the school other than at the normal times of transfer into and out of middle school education is also high.

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## Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

Dedworth Middle School has experienced serious difficulties in recent years in recruiting suitably qualified and experienced teaching staff, problems which contributed to the inconsistency in the quality of the teaching and in the pupils' achievement. However, the staffing situation is now more stable and, at the time of this inspection, only one teaching post was vacant. The headteacher and staff have worked hard to improve the teaching and learning, building upon the considerable expertise of a nucleus of effective classroom practitioners. Standards remain too low but the teaching, learning, leadership and management have improved since the last inspection and the school now provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good and they are keen to succeed. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and there is a broad range of extra activities to engage the pupils' interest and to encourage them to be confident and responsible members of the school community.

### Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of November 2002 required the school to address key issues concerned with leadership and management, standards in English and literacy, the quality of teaching, special educational needs and spiritual and cultural education. There has been reasonable progress in relation to the first four of these key issues and good progress on spiritual and cultural development. However, standards in literacy need to be improved further.

### Capacity to improve

The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. The headteacher and senior managers have rightly placed emphasis upon improving the quality of the teaching and learning and the pupils' achievement. There are systematic arrangements for the analysis of data about the school's performance and for monitoring the effectiveness of the provision. The school has a large senior management team, providing some strong models of good classroom practice. However, the quality of subject leadership is uneven and the management roles of the subject leaders are relatively underdeveloped. Since the last inspection, the governors have improved their role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The school is in a weak budgetary position, partly arising from the falling number of pupils on the roll, and a recovery plan has yet to be finally resolved with the local education authority (LEA).

## What the school should do to improve further

The school's development plan recognises the areas where improvement is needed. However the key priorities are to:

- raise levels of achievement in both key stages;
- improve the quality of the teaching and learning so that it is consistently at least satisfactory and more of it is good or better;
- make full use of the range of assessment information available to ensure that the pupils' individual needs are met in lessons and there is sufficient challenge for pupils of all levels of attainment;
- develop the management role of the subject leaders.

## Achievement and standards

In the statutory tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2004, the average points scores of the school's pupils were well below the figures for schools nationally in English and mathematics and below in science. The five year trend in the school's results between 2000 and 2004 was below the national trend. The standards achieved by the school's pupils in the 2004 tests were well below those of schools nationally which operate in similar contexts in mathematics and science, and very low in English.

The pupils' progress was at least satisfactory in nine out of ten lessons and in just under half it was good or very good. In some lessons, the legacy of unsatisfactory provision in the past showed itself in gaps in the pupils' prior learning. Achievement across the curriculum was often inhibited by standards in literacy, which are lower than they should be. However, the school has implemented a suitable programme of measures to address this issue and its own assessment information indicates that achievement in literacy is improving in Key Stage 2.

The progress of the higher attaining pupils was uneven. In the best lessons, there were suitably challenging activities for the most able, but these pupils were making unsatisfactory progress in some mixed-ability groups because tasks and resources were not demanding enough to meet their needs. There is a good range of extracurricular provision through which pupils have opportunities to develop their individual interests and talents.

The progress of the pupils who have special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, was at least satisfactory overall in the majority of lessons, in which the activities and support were appropriate to their levels of attainment. Learning support assistants often made a valuable and well-informed contribution but, in a few instances, they were unduly passive while whole-class work was taking place. Individual education plans for pupils who have special educational needs have been revised and are now generally of good quality. The LEA provides the school with specialist support on half a

day each week for pupils who speak English as an additional language, giving an opportunity for teachers to discuss their pupils' progress. However, the school staff have not been trained in working with individual pupils for whom English is an additional language, and their skills in meeting these specific needs are variable.

## Personal development

In nine out of ten lessons, the pupils' attitudes and behaviour were at least satisfactory and in six in ten they were good or very good. In the great majority of cases, the pupils were attentive, courteous, keen to learn and eager to take an active part in discussion and practical work. In a successful science lesson, the pupils were excited and curious as they watched a demonstration, carried out their own investigations and then took part in a lively class discussion of their speculations and findings. In two lessons, there was low level but recurrent disruption and immature behaviour by a few individuals, which impeded the learning of the entire class in each case. Around the site, the pupils were generally sensible, orderly and considerate in their movement, although there were occasional instances of boisterous behaviour between buildings and on corridors. The school's monitoring shows a decrease over time in the number of incidents of unacceptable behaviour and there have been no exclusions in the present academic year to date. The pupils' attendance during the autumn term in 2004 was above the average for middle schools.

Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Relationships between adults and pupils are generally very positive and most of the staff provide clear guidance about right and wrong behaviour. The school provides sporting and cultural activities beyond the teaching day, which cater for a wide range of interests. The staff are developing links with other schools to enable them to broaden further the range of extracurricular opportunities. The pupils are encouraged to take responsibility in a variety of areas of school life. Assemblies are positive occasions, used to recognise and celebrate the pupils' achievements and to provide opportunities for reflection and for prayer. The pupils treat these occasions with respect and their engagement is encouraged through the use of a collection of prayers which they have written. The school draws upon and celebrates the experience of pupils from different cultural heritages, providing opportunities for all pupils to encounter and develop their understanding of other cultures and world faiths.

## Quality of provision

In nine out of ten lessons the teaching was at least satisfactory and in just over half it was good or very good. The staff have worked hard to improve the quality of the lesson planning and at best it was of high quality, establishing clear objectives for learning and providing challenging and stimulating work for all the pupils. The teachers generally began lessons effectively but the final ten minutes were not always well used. Most teachers were able to maintain good order without difficulty, and relationships between adults and pupils were generally good-humoured and based upon mutual respect. There were examples of

effective management of discussion in which staff took care to involve all the pupils, including the less confident and the lower attainers, in question and answer sessions. Marking is uneven in quality but much of it provides the pupils with useful guidance for the improvement of their future work.

There are still weaknesses in the teaching. In too many lessons in which there was a wide range of attainment, the pupils were completing the same tasks and using the same resources with the result that the high attainers were not extended, while the lower attainers found difficulty in coping when no support was available for them. In two lessons, there was undue tolerance of unacceptable behaviour so that the learning of the whole class was disrupted. Oral work was not managed consistently well and there was too little use in French of the target language by staff and by pupils.

The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. The literacy strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has been given appropriate emphasis, but there is less evidence of the implementation of numeracy across the curriculum and of the use of information and communication technology in a range of subjects. French is taught to pupils in Key Stage 2; however, the school has found difficulty in recruiting subject specialists in modern foreign languages and by making provision for teaching French in years in which there is no statutory requirement to do so, resources are stretched and non-specialist teaching has a negative impact on the pupils' achievement. Curricular policy and provision for the pupils who have special educational needs have been developed and improved since the time of the last inspection.

There are systematic arrangements for the assessment of the pupils' attainment and progress and for identifying those at risk of underachievement. The school has a good range of assessment data available and the senior staff make good use of it to identify strengths and weaknesses in the pupils' progress and in the provision. It is not yet used consistently well by all staff in their planning for the pupils' learning. Most pupils were able to identify their individual targets, although they were often less clear about the steps they needed to take in order to reach them. Until very recently, information about the pupils' attainment in the two years prior to joining Dedworth Middle School was not available, making it difficult to evaluate the value added during Years 5 and 6. This situation has been rectified and the school is now well placed to make more systematic judgements about the pupils' progress in Key Stage 2.

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The headteacher, the governing body and the senior managers have established a clear educational direction for the school's development and have worked hard to raise its profile and reputation in the local community. The three-year development plan adopts an appropriate focus upon raising standards and the quality of teaching and learning, building upon the improvements made in response to the last inspection. There is a large senior leadership team, in which roles and lines of accountability are clearly established; members of this team provide strong role models for colleagues through their effective classroom practice. There are

systematic arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school, through first-hand observation and through the analysis of performance data. However, the school's monitoring records show that some managers are less rigorous than others in their judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. The quality of subject leadership is variable and the role of the middle managers in monitoring and evaluation in their areas is underdeveloped.

The governors have increased their involvement in monitoring the work of the school and in holding it to account for its performance. The chair is well informed about its progress and the governing body includes members with helpful and relevant expertise. Individual governors are linked to specific subjects and aspects of the school's work, although some are more proactive than others in making monitoring visits and in reporting back to the governing body as a whole. The governors have yet to fulfil their statutory obligation to invite parents to a meeting to discuss the content of their annual report.

The school's managers value the support provided by the LEA in aspects of management, improving the quality of teaching and learning and in the monitoring and evaluation of its work. The LEA has formulated a new plan as the basis of its future support and this co-ordinates well with the school's own current development plan. The school is facing financial uncertainty as a result of a significant deficit budget and it has yet to agree with the LEA a recovery plan to address the problem.

## Appendix – Information about the inspection

Dedworth Middle School was inspected in November 2002 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in May and November 2003, and in June and September 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of November 2002.

In January 2005, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Twenty one lessons, four registrations and an assembly were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the senior managers, the staff responsible for the management of special educational needs, the subject leaders for English, mathematics and science, the chair of governors and a representative from the LEA and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of November 2002 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.





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