



Newnham Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109661
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278235
Inspection dates 8 February 2006 to 9 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Alan Clamp LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Polhill Avenue
School category	Community		MK41 9DT
Age range of pupils	9 to 13		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01234 303 403
Number on roll	597	Fax number	01234 303 404
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Malcolm Green
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr. Richard Walmsley

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Newnham Middle School is a mixed 9-13 community school in Bedford. It has 597 pupils and is smaller than a typical secondary school. The school has a lower proportion than average of pupils eligible for free school meals. Around 22% of pupils have special educational needs, which is higher than the national average. Approximately 25% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, which is higher than the national average, and there are about 8% of pupils whose first language is not English.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The inspectors agree with the school, that the overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. The school has taken effective steps to promote improvement since the last inspection. Standards have improved in mathematics and in design and technology. The planning of lessons is better and there is very little teaching that is less than satisfactory. Procedures for the monitoring of teaching and learning are now more robust. The school has recognised the need to more rigorously evaluate the impact of the internal observation system on improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Improvement planning is now more focused on raising standards, but remains an area for further improvement. The key strengths identified at the previous inspection have been maintained. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall and achieve broadly average standards. Particularly good progress is made in mathematics but is not matched in English. The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. In some lessons there is insufficient challenge for the most able pupils. The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils enjoy their education and participate in a very wide range of extra-curricular activities. Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The school is in the process of implementing strategies to improve the focus on teaching and learning, and on raising standards. At the same time, it is seeking to maintain the high quality of care, guidance and support, and the good personal development and well-being of pupils. The monitoring, evaluation and improvement of performance are more robust in some subjects and year groups than in others. The school works effectively in partnership with others to promote the well-being of pupils. The capacity of the school to improve is good. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is comprehensive and accurate. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress made by pupils in English to match the good progress made in mathematics.
- Ensure that all lessons include sufficient challenge for the most able pupils.
- Enhance the impact of monitoring and evaluation on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Make better use of test results and other information to evaluate and improve the quality of provision and raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school self-evaluation that achievement and standards are satisfactory. Attainment on entry to the school in Year 5 is broadly average. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 5 and 6, and achieve broadly average standards in national tests in Year 6. The progress made and the standards achieved in Year 6 are generally better for mathematics than for English and science. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make particularly good progress in mathematics. The school sets itself

ambitious targets for achievement and standards. It just exceeded its target for the proportion of pupils achieving at least level 4 in English in Year 6 tests, but did not quite meet the equivalent target in mathematics. The target for the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or above in mathematics was met, but this proportion was 14% below the target for English. The progress made by pupils in Years 7 and 8 is satisfactory in English and outstanding in mathematics. The school has recognised the need to focus on the improvement of reading skills for all pupils. Progress between Years 4 and 8 improved in 2005 compared to 2004. The overall standards reached at the end of Year 8 were average in English and well above average in mathematics. The progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school has a purposeful atmosphere and teachers and pupils address each other with courtesy and respect. Teachers make a strong point of praising pupils' achievements and, as a result, pupils' self-esteem and confidence develop well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is also effective, and they show careful consideration of each other's needs. Pupils have an impressively mature attitude towards the small minority who have behavioural problems. Pupils are very proud of their school and the overwhelming majority behave responsibly and well during lessons and at other times. They are keen to learn and reflect upon issues such as how they can make the most of their talents. The pupils adopt safe practices and participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. They enjoy coming to school and attendance has been good for at least the last three years. Pupils mature into friendly and articulate young people and they play an exceptionally active part within the school and wider community. Through their involvement in an eco-schools project, they have re-developed the school pond and installed bird boxes. They readily assume positions of responsibility, such as prefects or peer mentors, and are quick to use their initiative. Pupils voice their opinions through the school council and the school's strong emphasis on sport and healthy eating encourages them to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils' strong work ethic, positive attitudes and sound basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology equip them well for their future lives within the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The school has a comprehensive lesson observation system. All teaching staff are observed at least once each year. Useful feedback is given to teachers following observations to help them improve and they have opportunities to participate in a range of professional development activities. The school has recognised the need to evaluate more, the impact of the observation system on improving the effectiveness

of teaching and learning. Most of the teaching observed during the inspection was either satisfactory or good. effective lessons were characterised by clear planning and thorough preparation. A wide range of learning activities ensured that pupils were actively involved. Teachers used effective questioning techniques to involve pupils and check their understanding. Good individual support was provided by teachers and learning support assistants. In better lessons pupils worked purposefully and made good progress. In the less effective lessons, pupils were not as actively involved in learning and their understanding was not always checked thoroughly. The planning of some lessons limited the effectiveness of learning. The progress made in weaker lessons was sometimes slow and there was some insufficient challenge for the most able pupils. Assessment is fair and accurate, and helps pupils understand the progress they are making.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provided by the school is good. One of the reasons that pupils said that they liked school was the fact that learning was often fun and interesting. The school works hard to develop pupils' academic and personal confidence. One way it achieves this is through providing a good range of learning experiences and many opportunities for pupils to experience success. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets legal requirements. It is enriched by the fact that French is taught in all four years. The provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education contributes to the good personal development. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Currently teachers are more skilled at supporting lower attaining pupils than ensuring that higher attaining pupils are always challenged sufficiently. The curriculum is enriched by residential experiences and alternative curriculum opportunities, a wide range of trips and extra-curricular clubs and activities, which involve a large number of pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The welfare of pupils is central to the school's work and staff work closely to ensure their continuing safety, security and health. Robust child protection and anti-bullying procedures are in place and pupils with medical conditions are looked after very well. Good quality guidance and support are provided. Teachers know their pupils very well and working relationships are positive, friendly and very constructive. Pupils who struggle to cope in the playground can opt to spend lunchtime indoors undertaking structured activities that help to build social confidence. The school's links with lower schools are effective and good use is made of the personal and assessment information they provide. Once they arrive in Year 5, pupils undertake a wide range of additional tests and the results help to allocate them to the most appropriate sets or classes. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good and experienced learning support assistants provide well-targeted, yet unobtrusive, help during lessons. Pupils know how well they are getting on with their work and say that teachers provide

valuable advice and guidance. There are regular reviews of pupils' progress in relation to the targets set and parents are kept informed. Although most of the pupils receive well-targeted help and support, older pupils would like to have more information concerning possible careers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The senior leadership team have ensured that pupils make satisfactory progress, that there are good systems in place to support pupils' pastoral needs and that the school provides good learning experiences. The school has taken effective steps to promote improvement since the last inspection. There are strengths within leadership and management which indicate that the school has a good capacity and the necessary skills to improve further. The headteacher is leading the school well with a clear and sustained focus on improving standards. The school is clearly committed to supporting pupils' learning needs and improving their achievement. The senior leadership team has a clear sense of purpose and shared values. There is a sense of teamwork and a growing professional accountability for pupils' progress across the school. The whole school evaluation is comprehensive and accurate and makes good use of pupils' and parents' views. There are good examples of departments beginning to evaluate themselves carefully. However, few subject areas are using assessment data sufficiently to examine the progress of specific groups of pupils, or to evaluate the impact of actions in development plans. The school has a clear sense of direction which is reflected in the school development plan. The governing body is supportive of the school. Governors are aware that they have to develop in their role of challenging the school to support continuing improvement. Performance management is satisfactory. The school is very inclusive and pupils are supportive of each other. Financial management is effective and resources allocated carefully for the benefit of pupils. Given the standards attained and pupils' progress, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

On behalf of the inspectors who visited Newnham Middle School. I would like to thank you for introducing us to your school. We enjoyed the opportunity to share your achievements and talk to you. Many of you helped us find our way around and made us feel welcome. We think that you might like to know our view of the school. Below is a summary of the report that you will also be able to read when it arrives in school. What we liked about your school: - you make particularly good progress in mathematics - you enjoy school and participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities - your personal development is good and you make a very positive contribution to the school community - learning is good in lessons in which you are actively involved - you are well cared for, guided and supported - the staff in the school are committed to improving standards. What we have asked your school to do now: - improve the progress made by pupils in English to match the good progress made in mathematics - ensure that all lessons include sufficient challenge for the most able pupils - enhance the impact of lesson observations on the quality of teaching and learning - make better use of test results and other information to evaluate and improve the quality of education and raise standards. The school is effective and improving. The school has high hopes for the future and is in a good position to improve further, but it will need you to play your part. We wish you every success.