



Five Oaks Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109664
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278237
Inspection dates 28 September 2005 to 29 September 2005
Reporting inspector Mr. John Godwood LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Five Oaks
School category	Community		LU1 4JD
Age range of pupils	9 to 13		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582726058
Number on roll	187	Fax number	01582727626
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.R Mills
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr. A Rogers

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small middle school. Pupil numbers have dropped significantly over the last two years. In March 2005, the school was audited by the local authority and found to be causing concern. The headteacher left in May. In an effort to improve the school, a partnership was established with another Bedfordshire middle school. The headteacher of the partner school has been acting headteacher of Five Oaks since May. New senior staff have been appointed, including an acting deputy headteacher from the partner school. The local authority has worked with the school and closely monitored its progress. The level of deprivation is average. Three quarters of pupils are white British. Small numbers of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 7% of the pupils are Travellers. A relatively high number of pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual times.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school's own view is that it is satisfactory. The inspection found it to be inadequate because the national test results in 2005 show that pupils' progress is inadequate. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards achieved. The local authority audit in March 2005 found progress, behaviour, teaching and leadership to be unsatisfactory. Since the appointment of the acting headteacher and other new staff, the school has improved rapidly. Many parents and pupils commented on this. Pupils are now happy in the school and are enjoying learning. Pupils' progress remains inadequate because the most recent national test results were low. However, their progress is improving and was satisfactory in the work and lessons seen during the inspection. Behaviour is very well managed and is now good. This is one of the significant improvements that has enabled learning to take place. Teaching and learning have improved and are satisfactory. Many lessons are good, but a small proportion remain inadequate. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' progress, but they are not used effectively enough in all subjects. Pupils are well cared for and feel safe. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the acting headteacher is outstanding. He has a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. He has provided very strong direction and detailed guidance, and has improved motivation and confidence. Expertise from the partner middle school has been used to good effect. The governors are well motivated to improve the school and are now holding it to account effectively: until recently, they did not challenge its performance sufficiently. The school's budget has a significant deficit and value for money is unsatisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory because standards have not improved. However, the significant improvement that has taken place since May in pupils' behaviour, the quality of teaching and the leadership of the school show that the school now has good capacity for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on the recent improvement in pupils' progress to raise standards in national tests.
- Ensure that all teaching is of a good standard and well matched to pupils' needs.
- Improve the use of assessment to boost pupils' progress.
- Make sure that the school is financially viable and has a long-term management structure.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement in national tests at the end of Year 6 is inadequate. When they join the school, their attainment is average. Standards in the Year 6 national tests in 2004 were also broadly average, but pupils' progress in relation to their starting points

was below that of similar pupils in other schools. Progress was better in English than in mathematics or science. In 2005, the test results declined significantly and were well below average in all subjects; pupils' progress was inadequate. The school did not reach its targets. The decline was due in part to the fact that many classes were taught by supply teachers and pupils' behaviour was unsatisfactory. In most recent years, pupils have made satisfactory progress by the end of Year 8 and have achieved average test results in Year 9 in their upper schools. In 2005, however, Year 8 test results show that standards declined in English and science, and were low, whilst pupils achieved well in mathematics. Since the appointment of the new headteacher, pupils' achievement has improved as a result of marked improvements in teaching and behaviour. Progress seen in lessons and pupils' work was satisfactory. However, this improvement is relatively recent and has not yet been translated into better test results. Pupils who have learning disabilities and difficulties, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other pupils. The school's published targets for the 2006 test results are very low and unchallenging. The new headteacher has revised these upwards and the new targets provide an acceptable level of challenge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. They have improved as a result of the new leadership team's high expectations and careful management. Staff treat pupils with respect. Pupils know where they stand because there are clear procedures for rewarding achievements and managing behaviour. Parents are kept well informed. As a result, pupils are motivated and behave well. They are pleased that the teaching staff is now more stable and the school has become a calm, positive place to learn. The number of exclusions has recently halved. Attendance has improved through close monitoring and is broadly average. Pupils feel safe in school. They are encouraged to eat healthily; they enjoy their lessons on health education. They have an increasing number of opportunities to make a positive contribution. Some are active on the school council and all are consulted on their views. Older pupils act as prefects or peer mediators. Pupils have limited opportunities to develop economic awareness, but in some subjects they learn to be enterprising and work in teams. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their moral and social awareness is good. They know how they should behave and most show good care for others. They have fewer opportunities to develop their spiritual and cultural awareness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and have improved significantly since the local authority audit, when many lessons were taken by supply teachers. Staff are absent, they are replaced by teachers from the partner school. Teaching has also improved through clear guidance on the school's expectations and coaching by experienced

staff. Many lessons are good, but a small number are still inadequate. Most lessons are carefully planned. Teachers make it clear to pupils what they are expected to learn and review their learning at the end of the lesson. Pupils are respectful. Most take a pride in their work, helped by the school's consistent expectations on presentation. Homework is set and checked regularly. Marking is done consistently and gives pupils constructive guidance on how to improve. Pupils also assess their own learning. This is sometimes simply by signalling a thumbs up or thumbs down, but it helps them to direct their efforts. All pupils know the level they are working at and their target. In the good lessons, pupils are well motivated by interesting work that matches their abilities and challenges them to concentrate hard. They especially enjoy lessons where they learn by doing. In some subjects, however, the expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough and, as a result, the quality of their work is lower. Teachers are aware of pupils' learning needs, but do not always attend to these sufficiently when planning lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The subjects cover the national curriculum well and interest pupils. The school is aware that the length of the school week is below national recommendations and is taking steps to rectify this. Too little time is allocated to French in Key Stage 3, but this is compensated for by time allocated in Key Stage 2 and additional lessons. Pupils benefit from additional physical education, which promotes their personal development and team work. The school is well equipped with computers and pupils develop their ability to learn independently through computer work in several subjects. The provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities has been recently improved. Pupils' individual education plans are carefully constructed and teachers are well informed of their needs, although some teachers do not cater for them adequately in all lessons. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified and additional opportunities are planned for them. There is a satisfactory range of clubs and activities. Football is thriving and there is an active computer club. Pupils have enjoyed visits to France and Chessington Zoo. However, pupils would like more clubs and activities, including additional sports and trips.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, support and guidance are satisfactory. The school looks after pupils' physical and emotional needs well. There are good procedures for child protection and ensuring safety in school. Pupils with medical or emotional problems are dealt with sensitively and supported by good links with other agencies. Pupils are happy in school and parents feel that they are well cared for. Almost all parents have a renewed respect for the school. There is very little bullying and pupils are confident that if it does occur it will be dealt with effectively. New pupils in Year 5 are given a good introduction to the school and assigned a 'buddy' from Year 6. Year 8 pupils are carefully prepared for upper school. The links with lower and upper schools have been strengthened

recently. The school has made use of good practice in its partner school to introduce thorough procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress. Pupils' target and current level in each subject are recorded by teachers and in their own planners. Assessment is used well to boost progress in English and mathematics, but because the developments are so recent, its use is less effective in science and other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since May 2005, the school has improved significantly in terms of staffing, teaching and pupils' behaviour. Almost all parents and pupils are now happy with the way the school is run. The improvement is the result of a concerted effort by the local authority, the new leadership team and, more recently the governors. The leadership of the acting headteacher has been outstanding. He has provided a very clear direction, unshakeable determination and optimism, and very thorough policies and procedures. He is well supported by the leadership team. Staff contribute well because they receive clear guidance on their roles and good feedback on their performance. The local authority has provided good support. Expertise from the partner middle school has been used very effectively. The school has also benefited from the support of a local upper school. Governance is satisfactory. Until recently, governors had little input into planning and did not hold the school to account. They now understand their role and are monitoring the school's progress. Financial resources have not been used effectively and efficiently and the school is anticipating a significant deficit at the end of the financial year. In order to secure the school's long-term future, its finances need to be on a more secure footing. Self-evaluation is good. Senior staff and governors have an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Since the appointment of the acting headteacher, the school's performance has been monitored closely. Pupils have been consulted and have contributed to the school's aims and vision. Parents have also been consulted. However, the formal performance management of teachers is at an early stage of development. The improvements that have taken place demonstrate that the new leadership team has good capacity for improvement. The improvements are secure but need to be built upon in order to raise standards in national test results.

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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?	4	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	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	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?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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	2	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	4	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

We enjoyed our visit to your school and would like to thank you for your friendly welcome and for sharing your thoughts with us. Many of you and your parents told us how much the school has improved since Mr Rogers, Mr Fox and Miss Black have been in charge. We could see that lots of things have improved. Mr Rogers has done a very good job to make it very clear what is expected in order to improve behaviour and teaching. We were pleased to see that behaviour is now good. Many of you told us that you are happy in school and enjoy your lessons because they are fun. We saw some good lessons. It is very helpful to your learning that teachers tell you what you need to do to reach your target levels. The teachers take good care of you. We were also pleased to see that you take good care of each other and take on responsibilities as buddies, peer mediators and prefects. There are a few things that still need to be improved. Most importantly, your progress last year was not good enough and the test results were much lower than they should have been. Now that the teaching is better, we hope that you will keep working hard to make the standards much higher in all year groups this year. Most lessons are now good, but there are still a few where you do not learn as much as you could. Your progress is assessed well in English and maths, but not so well in some other subjects. Finally, the school needs to make sure that the money it spends is carefully planned for the next few years. The school has improved a lot, but needs to keep improving. We wish you well with that and are confident that you will help to make your school as good as it can be.