



Linslade Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109668
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278240
Inspection dates 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006
Reporting inspector Ms. Rhona Seviour LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Mentmore Road
School category	Community		LU7 2PA
Age range of pupils	9 to 13		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01525372640
Number on roll	623	Fax number	01525851437
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Michael Vincent
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Colin Bromley

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Linslade is a large mixed middle school for pupils aged 9 - 13. Most pupils come from socially advantaged homes. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities or with English as an additional language is very low. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is slightly below the national average. The school works in partnership with local first and upper schools and also with schools within a local authority Learning Community.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that it provides a satisfactory quality of education, with some good features. Pupils reach standards that are above average at the end of Key Stage 2 and at the end of Year 8. Taking account of their attainment on entry to the school, pupils' progress is satisfactory and sometimes good, particularly in Years 7 and 8. However, some boys and more able pupils do not make as much progress as they should. Pupils have excellent learning skills. They are attentive and responsive in lessons, express themselves clearly and confidently and show a high level of interest and enthusiasm for all aspects of school life. They co-operate well with each other and are respectful of and responsive to their teachers. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The quality of most lessons observed by inspectors was good. In these lessons teachers demonstrate a secure knowledge of the subjects they are teaching and are adept at using questions to challenge pupils. Teachers show a good level of care for pupils but in their planning do not always identify clearly enough how the needs of individual pupils and ability groups are to be met. Planning for information and communication technology (ICT) in Key Stage 2 does not ensure that pupils have access to the full National Curriculum programme of study and there is no provision for pupils to work with food within design and technology. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher and senior leadership team have recently introduced appropriate systems to support pupils and improve achievement. It is too early to judge the impact of many of these changes. The school's self-evaluation is broadly accurate. Senior school leaders know the school's main strengths and areas for development although self-evaluation is not yet rigorous enough or fully effective as a means of informing improvement planning. In some cases, for example, the school does not monitor its ways of doing things closely enough or evaluate their impact. The school demonstrates that it has the capacity to improve further and provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make more effective use of self-evaluation to analyse information and inform improvement planning in order to raise standards.
- Make better use of pupils' tracking data to plan lessons which are well matched to the needs and abilities of individual pupils.
- Ensure that all pupils have access to the programme of study for ICT at Key Stage 2 and food related activities within design and technology.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that its achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils reach good standards at all stages of their education at the school. The standards in the national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 are above the national averages and remain so during Years 7 and 8. Although the school

has maintained good standards since its last inspection there has been some variability over the last two years. The school has not reached the appropriately challenging targets it has set itself. Overall results fell in 2004, and in 2005 those in English and mathematics fell, with a dip in the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 in both subjects. Conversely, in 2005, science results improved. A strength throughout the school is pupils' oral contribution to lessons, where they are able to communicate their views very clearly and confidently. Pupils are very good readers but standards of writing, particularly of the boys, are not as strong. The attainment of pupils entering the school in Year 5 is above average. There are fewer lower attaining and more higher attaining pupils. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, make satisfactory and, at times, good progress. This is due in large part to their strong motivation and interest in learning, the good relationships they have with each other and with their teachers and the good support they receive. The school knows that progress, particularly of some boys and more able pupils should be better. It has some appropriate ways to address this, including closer attention to the progress of individual pupils and securing increased parental involvement to improve writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy school and feel well cared for. They are confident and have very positive attitudes towards all aspects of school life. Attendance is consistently well above average. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding within lessons and around the school. They willingly take on responsibilities such as participating on the school council, acting as prefects and assisting with the programme of peer support. They are particularly enthusiastic about the many opportunities they have to engage in sporting activity. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle through exercise and healthy eating. For example, they are highly critical of current nutritional standards in the school meals. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is strong and their spiritual development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. They have a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Pupils co-operate well with each other in lessons and around the school. They show concern for others through their fundraising activities for charities. The school's work on global understanding is increasing pupils' awareness of other countries and cultures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Many lessons observed during the inspection were good, often progressing at a brisk pace and capturing pupils' interest effectively. Although teachers have good subject knowledge, there are weaknesses in their planning, which do not always identify how the needs of pupils with differing abilities

will be met. As a result, in some lessons, particularly where teaching is focused on the whole class, activities do not offer enough challenge for the more able pupils. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Teachers often celebrate pupils' achievements and hard work. They are very good at posing questions to stimulate pupils' thinking and they assess pupils' progress thoroughly and accurately. The marking of pupils' work is regular and helpful, although there is some variation in practice across the school. Teachers are good at ensuring that pupils are well informed about their attainment and what they need to do to improve. Pupils are very enthusiastic learners. They sustain their interest in lessons and possess very good listening skills. Their responses to questions are often thoughtful and expressed clearly. The school has recently begun to track pupils' progress more closely but procedures have not been in place long enough to make a full impact on their achievement. Since the last inspection, improvement in the teaching of French has been good.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. However, due to changes to the accommodation, in Years 7 and 8, pupils do not have the opportunity to work with food as an aspect of the National Curriculum in design and technology. Plans for teaching ICT to pupils in Years 5 and 6 are not structured well enough to ensure that sufficient attention is given to all parts of the National Curriculum programme of study. Extra curricular clubs and educational visits enhance the curriculum satisfactorily. There are high levels of participation in a good range of sporting activities, and pupils are often successful in competitions against other schools. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to contribute to their community beyond the school or to provide them with insights into the world of work and future careers. The provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is good. Additional programmes, often led by teaching assistants, to ensure these pupils learn to read and write are successful. The curriculum also successfully contributes to the future economic well-being of pupils through their acquisition of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for and receive good support throughout the school. There are good arrangements to smooth the transition from first to middle school and from middle to upper school. Pupils recognise rightly that the school's staff show a strong concern for their health and safety. All staff and other adults who work in the school are appropriately checked for their suitability. Child protection measures are clear and all staff are suitably trained. Pupils are supervised well at lunchtimes and this has improved greatly since the last inspection. The midday supervisory staff have very clear procedures and follow up any isolated incidents of poor behaviour well. First aid provision is good. Pupils trust and respect the adults in the school, and younger pupils are often helped by older ones through a peer mediation scheme. Pupils feel that the school deals effectively with bullying when it is aware that this is happening.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior team know the school's main strengths and areas for development and there is a developing culture of self-evaluation at middle as well as senior management level, which links to an effective programme of professional development. However, the processes supporting self-evaluation are not sufficiently robust. In some cases, the school does not monitor its strategies closely enough or evaluate their impact and, as a result, it does not always have the detailed analysis of information it needs to identify priorities for development. A number of initiatives to raise standards have been introduced by senior and middle managers, but these have yet to make a significant impact across both key stages and over time. The monitoring of teaching and learning by middle and senior managers is improving, but this is not yet sufficiently focused upon the practices needed to improve pupils' achievement. Subject departments increasingly use information on pupils' performances to target pupils who need help. The school uses its finances effectively to provide an improving environment to support learning. The recent provision of an ICT suite and an outdoor social area contribute to pupils' enjoyment of school. In their responses to the inspection questionnaire, parents indicated their support for the work of the school although a significant minority of both pupils and parents feel that communication is inadequate. This confirms the school's own judgement that improvement is needed in its links with parents. The involvement of governors in the work of the school is satisfactory. There is a strong partnership between the school and governing body, although targets need to be more focused upon the continued raising of standards. The school has made satisfactory progress since its previous inspection and its capacity for further improvement is good.

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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	3	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	2	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	1	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	3	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?	3	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	3	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	No
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

Thank you for being so welcoming to the inspection team when we visited your school to carry out our inspection. You could not have been more helpful in answering our questions, showing us around the school and talking with us about your work. You helped to make our visit to Linslade a very enjoyable one. During our visit you told us how much you enjoy school and the range of opportunities you have there. We think the school is very successful at supporting you and in helping you develop strong personal skills. You impressed us greatly with your consideration for each other, your ability to work well together and your positive attitudes towards all aspects of school life. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. In lessons, you listen well, respond enthusiastically and speak with great confidence. You respect your teachers and get on very well with them. We think that you are excellent learners and this is reflected in the good standards most of you achieve during your time at the school. Your teachers are skilful at challenging you through their questioning. However, we think that some of the work you do in lessons could be better planned so that you make even more progress. In particular, we think that more of you should be achieving Level 5 in your Key Stage 2 tests and that some boys should be making better progress, particularly in their writing. We have also told the school that it should do more to ensure that pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught about all aspects of ICT and that work with food is included in design and technology. We agree with Mr Bromley that the school is providing a satisfactory education. We also agree with him that it could be better. Several changes have already been made. Some of these, such as the new ICT suite and improvements to the playground, have an impact on you now but others may take some time. You can help with the school's improvement by continuing to set yourselves high standards in all you do. Your parents can also help, we know the school is keen for the parents of Year 6 pupils to work with it to improve standards of writing and we hope they will want to do this. We congratulate you on being such good ambassadors for your school and wish you success in the future.