



Alameda Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109680
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278245
Inspection dates 5 July 2006 to 6 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Alan Alder HMI

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

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|------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Type of school | Middle deemed primary | School address | Station Road |
| School category | Community | | MK45 2QR |
| Age range of pupils | 9 to 14 | | |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01525 750900 |
| Number on roll | 495 | Fax number | 01525-750901 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mrs. Belinda Wilson |
| Date of previous inspection | 6 December 1999 | Headteacher | Mrs. Therese Mostowfi |

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|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
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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

Alameda Middle School is situated in the market town of Ampthill. There are about 500 pupils on roll, the great majority being White British; very few pupils' first language is not English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is in line with the national average, whilst the proportion with Statements of Special Educational Needs is less than half that found nationally. The Local Authority is currently reviewing its system of primary, middle and upper schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school's overall effectiveness is good. This matches the school's own evaluation. It is a rapidly improving school as a result of the outstanding leadership shown by the headteacher and deputy. This has been achieved at a time of budgetary constraint and represents outstanding value for money. The school's strengths include the progress made by pupils and the standards they reach, both in the Year 6 national tests and in their work in Years 7 and 8. Their personal development is good as a result of, for example, the responsibilities that many have in the day to day running of the school and in organising special events; the extensive extra-curricular activities which many participate in; and the well-structured support for pupils who may be new to the school or going through a period of personal difficulty. The school's curriculum meets statutory requirements and responds well to need, for example the extra provision to develop literacy skills in some Year 6 pupils who were not performing as well as others. Teaching is good, helped by a programme of frequent lesson observations. Much has improved in a short time and the improvement has been more successful in some areas of the school than in others. For example the development of a system whereby pupils assess each others' work against very clear criteria operates extremely well in some lessons but is not as well-developed in others; though most teaching is at least good there is still a wide variety in its quality; the provision of work linked well to pupils of different abilities is also good in some lessons but needs further development in others. There is a strong capacity to improve and the progress made since the last inspection is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the very good practice which exists in the school becomes the norm, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and the marking of pupils' work, and the use of peer assessment. - Ensure that pupils of all abilities are challenged and supported in all lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good and have improved rapidly in the last two years. Pupils' standards in the Year 2 tests, taken at their previous school, are above average. When they join Alameda, pupils of all abilities make good progress and when they leave school their standards are higher than the national average. The 2005 national tests showed that pupils' progress was in line with the national average, though their standards were higher. The indications from the recent Year 6 tests show that the numbers achieving the national expectations are now very high, and the majority of pupils achieve better than that in English, mathematics and science. The school has worked hard to improve pupils' writing ability and these results show that the work has been highly effective, as writing is now pupils' strongest point in English. Good progress continues in Years 7 and 8, especially in English and mathematics. The school has achieved its challenging targets. Pupils who receive additional support because

they have learning difficulties or disabilities generally make good progress and some make very rapid progress in Year 6 as a result of the special provision they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school, and their attendance and behaviour are good. Attitudes to learning are positive. The good relationships staff establish with pupils provide a good model for pupils to follow. They feel safe and know who they can turn to if they have a problem. Pupils reported very little bullying. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good knowledge of other cultures, developed for example through the recent 'India Day', and about the unfairness of racial discrimination. Healthy lifestyles are encouraged by the school's commitment to healthy eating in which pupils played a part by reviewing meals with the school's kitchen staff. The extra sporting activities provided are well-supported. Pupils contribute well to the community. There is extensive support for charities. A significant number of pupils help others, through the school's 'buddy' system and through work on the school council. Through peer assessment, pupils learn how to help others to improve their work. The very good programme for careers education is contributing well to pupils' future economic well-being. Their highly developed literacy and numerical skills, together with their expertise in using computers, further enhance their development in this direction.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, know the pupils well, have good relationships with them and create an environment in which the pupils are ready to learn. The most successful lessons have a variety of interesting activities, with work that is matched to the abilities of all pupils, and which gives opportunities for independent learning and research. Assessment is often used well, for example in a music lesson when the teacher assessed pupils' progress, realised that some were having difficulty and switched to a quick supplementary activity which helped improve their understanding. An outstanding example of pupils assessing their peers' work in an English lesson, resulted in a very clear understanding of where work could be improved, and through the teacher's questioning, how to achieve the improvement. This powerful approach is helping pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and to be critically reflective of their work. The overall quality of marking in the school is too inconsistent however; while some is excellent, some marking lacks advice on how work can be improved. In the few less successful lessons, the main activity is sometimes too long and some, particularly pupils who have learning difficulties, find it difficult to maintain their interest and concentration. Pupils could be pushed to work at a faster rate and some could be given more challenging work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good and statutory requirements are fulfilled. There are good opportunities for learners to progress and perform well, helped by the provision of specialist teachers. The curriculum is modified when necessary, for example to improve the literacy of some Year 6 pupils with learning difficulties. The citizenship programme is well organised. Pupils are given the opportunity to put into practice what they have learnt about citizenship, for example some visited the town hall for consultations over a youth club. The reporting of citizenship does not yet meet the national requirements. The range of visits and special events enriches the curriculum well. Numerous and varied extra-curricular activities provide for a wide range of interests. The large range of physical activities supports the promotion of healthy lifestyles. Music is a strong area with many pupils having instrumental lessons. The rich variety of activities makes a good contribution to the pupils' enjoyment of learning and to their personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care guidance and support are good. Procedures for health and safety and child protection are robust, with an appropriate child protection officer appointed and suitably trained. There is a very good approach to helping pupils new to the school to settle in quickly and there is a good range of adults to whom pupils feel able to turn with any problems they may have. Pupils' progress in their work is regularly assessed and the procedures for checking that they are achieving their targets are very thorough and effective. Pupils know their targets and are usually kept well informed about their progress, through generally helpful marking. A good amount of information is offered to pupils through careers guidance enabling them to begin to make informed choices about which subjects they should study in their next school. There is a strong emphasis given to reducing any possible bullying or racist behaviour and this works well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy provide strong and effective leadership. When they recently joined the school their detailed evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses resulted in well-considered strategies to bring about improvement. This was based on high, but realistic, expectations of what pupils could achieve, both academically and in their personal development. The views of pupils and parents are sought regularly and are taken into account. The capacity for further improvement is good. The use of data to assess the progress made by pupils against targets has helped to bring about a strong feeling of accountability in the school. This is felt by both class teachers and subject leaders, whose new role includes responsibility for ensuring that the quality of education in their areas is improving. The quality of subject leadership is developing and is now good. Clear improvement

plans have been written and these are based well on the school's self-evaluation. Governors are highly effective in ensuring that the school improves. They are a hard working group who know the school well. They provide a good level of support and challenge for the headteacher. The improvements to the school are being brought about while the school has to save money and this has created additional burdens. The school is very effective in its use of resources, and given the progress which is being made, value for money is outstanding.

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Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 | 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? | 2 | NA |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | NA |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 | 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 | 2 | 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? | 2 | 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

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 | NA |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 2 | 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 | 1 | NA |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 | NA |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected | Yes | NA |

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 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

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful during our inspection. We met and spoke to quite a number of you when we visited, and your comments were very useful. I'd like to let you know what we found out. The first thing we noticed was how easy it is to speak to you. You are confident, express yourselves well and are at ease when talking to adults. You get on well together and with your teachers. The standard of work you do is good and your school is helping you to progress well. Your assessment of each other's work, particularly in some English lessons, is outstanding because it helps you to understand how to improve your work. We thought highly of the many other opportunities you have to help others, through your work for charities and the organisation of the school fete and being involved in the 'buddy' system, for example. We thought that your school is improving quickly and in many ways. One of our tasks is to find ways in which schools can improve further. We have recommended that the very good peer assessment system becomes more widespread, and that your school continues to work to make all teaching and marking as good as the best. In addition we have recommended that all pupils should be given work that matches their abilities in all lessons. Best wishes for your future.