



# Henlow VC Middle School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 109695  
**LEA** BEDFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 278248  
**Inspection dates** 7 June 2006 to 8 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Alan Alder LI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary	<b>School address</b>	Church Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		SG16 6AN
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9 to 13		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 813733
<b>Number on roll</b>	540	<b>Fax number</b>	01462 817340
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr. John Cook
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	31 January 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr. Ray Payne

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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**

Henlow Middle School is a popular and growing school situated in the village of Henlow, about ten miles south east of Bedford. There are 540 pupils on roll, the great majority being from White British backgrounds. Very few pupils' first language is not English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal is well below the national average while the proportion with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with Statements of Special Educational Need, is higher than average. The school serves an area which includes an RAF base and this leads to greater changes in the school's roll than is usual. The Local Authority is currently reviewing its current system of lower, middle and upper schools.

## **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 its effectiveness is satisfactory with some strong features. Pupils' personal development is, for example, outstanding and the care, guidance and support which pupils receive is good, as is the curriculum. However, the quality of teaching and the progress pupils' make in their learning are satisfactory. The school recognises the need to improve both and, in particular, boys' writing. In all areas the findings of the inspectors matched the school's own self-evaluation. The headteacher and the chair of the governing body have a clear view of how the school needs to develop. There are satisfactory systems in place for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school so the necessary improvements can be identified. This is resulting in some more effective teaching, of English for example. However there is still too much inconsistency in teaching and other aspects of the school's work. This is because there isn't sufficient follow-up after the monitoring to ensure that improvements are successfully implemented. The school rightly takes pride in the personal development of pupils. This is an area of strength which results partly from high expectations of what pupils can contribute to school life as well as from the opportunities that are made available for them. The extension of these high expectations to pupils' academic development is now needed. Progress on the areas identified for improvement in the last inspection is satisfactory, as is the capacity for further improvement. The school spends its budget wisely taking into account the learning needs of pupils. For example, the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has been recently expanded to good effect, in response to the last inspection. It provides satisfactory value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the standards of pupils' literacy, particularly boys' writing. - Ensure that teaching provides greater challenge for pupils, particularly the more able, by taking more account of pupils' abilities when planning lessons. - The improvements identified by school leaders are effectively implemented by more frequent and robust monitoring.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement and standards are satisfactory and improving. When students join in Year 5 their standards are in line with those found nationally. The Year 6 tests in 2005 showed that all groups of students make satisfactory progress overall and the standards they reach in the Year 6 national tests are at the national average in mathematics and science. In English they are significantly below national averages. A major reason for this is the quality of boys' writing. Pupils who receive additional support because they have learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress. Those children who entered the school with above average results from tests in Year 2 make less progress than their counterparts nationally. This is particularly true in English where the proportion of children achieving the highest level is significantly lower than the national average.

In science more pupils achieve the high levels than nationally; in mathematics it is the same as the national picture. Overall, in 2005 boys performed slightly better than girls. The school did not achieve its challenging targets for English, but was successful in mathematics, except for the number achieving the highest level. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the progress which pupils are making in English has improved since the 2005 tests and is now satisfactory. There is also evidence of some decline in pupils' progress in science. In Years 7 and 8 the progress pupils make is at least as good as that made by pupils nationally.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Behaviour is usually excellent and pupils' attitudes are extremely positive. Good attendance and low rates of exclusion match the day-to-day evidence of pleasant, happy students enjoying school. Many pupils act with maturity well beyond their years. Pupils gain immense confidence and social skills by contributing to others; the initiative they take in giving to charity is impressive and the school council is a model of good practice in the way it receives and acts on pupils' views and brings about changes. The spiritual, moral social and cultural development of pupils is good. They show a strong capacity for reflection in assemblies and lessons and have very highly developed self-respect and sensitivity towards others. Pupils understand right from wrong and show a keen concern for fairness. Their cultural development is satisfactory and the school acknowledges the need for better awareness of different cultures and beliefs. Pupils receive a good grounding in numeracy and ICT skills, which prepares them well for their future economic well-being. They are good at adopting safe practices in laboratories, workshops and on the sports fields. The great majority of pupils pursue healthy lifestyles because physical activity is successfully promoted in the school and healthy options dominate the school dinner menu.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons are mostly well planned, but timings are not always adhered to because the pace of lessons is not sufficient. A recent development is a clear focus in all subjects on improving literacy. This is generally successful, but sometimes the focus is on aspects of literacy at which pupils already excel, such as speaking and listening. Too limited a use is made of teachers' knowledge of pupils' strengths and weaknesses and this is why some pupils, including the more able, are not fully challenged in lessons. Teachers use a good range of questions, some of which allow pupils to give lengthy, thoughtful answers. However the tendency to ask only pupils volunteering to answer means that some opt out and also that the teacher is not able to assess general levels of understanding and so modify the lesson if necessary. Pupils often ask their teachers very good questions and on occasion this extends the lesson into more complex areas than would have been covered. Good use

is made of high calibre teaching assistants who help the pupils they work with to make good progress, for example, those with Statements of Special Educational Needs.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a rich curriculum which inspectors and the school judge to be good. The statutory requirements are all met and there is now additional time for the development of writing in Year 6, an area of weakness. The emphasis on practical work in food technology and art and design has led to particularly good provision which motivates boys well. In nearly all subjects there is a prominent place for practical and investigative activities for pupils. This motivates pupils and makes learning enjoyable for the great majority. There is a good range of special events, such as the day for Year 8 pupils in which science and technology work culminated in a rocket-launching display. These build on the day-to-day provision and take pupils' skills to higher levels of achievement in specific areas. Beyond the formal curriculum, a vast array of extra-curricular activities is on offer and take up by pupils is very high. Sport, drama, music and visit programmes are particularly successful in giving pupils valuable experiences of group performance or high level personal challenges.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Health and safety procedures are clear, suitable risk assessments are undertaken and the school is a safe place. The staff know and understand the arrangements for child protection. The school's work with outside agencies to support pupils who may be at risk is very effective. The school has a strong ethos of care and a strong concern for pupils' welfare. This is shown in the way the school successfully integrates pupils who join after the usual joining time and in its work with looked after children and the pupils from Forces families who serve overseas. An impressive programme has been established whereby a group of pupils is trained to listen to and advise others with problems. The progress pupils are making in their learning is monitored, but more guidance is required to enable pupils to meet or exceed their targets. There is very little bullying; if it does occur, it is tackled purposefully by the school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is taking a determined approach to developing the school, and the governing body has recently become more effective in challenging the school's leaders and pursuing issues that require improvement. The result is that after a period of weaker achievement by pupils, the school has re-established satisfactory academic progress and is continuing to successfully promote in its pupils very strong personal development. There have been significant changes in the leadership of subjects and secure management has only

recently been established in some areas, including English. Overall the quality of middle management is satisfactory and in some subjects, for example, in mathematics, it is good. The monitoring by leaders of the work of the school has improved and has led to an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, too often strategies for improvement are not given easily measurable targets so it is difficult for the school to assess their impact. The result is that some of the school's development work has lacked rigour. Subject leaders have a general view of teaching quality in their areas, but are not yet effectively challenging colleagues to increase the proportion of good or outstanding teaching. The school is particularly good at consulting with parents and with pupils, through the school council, and responds well to their suggestions. Governors are strongly supportive of the school and they have a satisfactory and improving impact on its work. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory and the school's capacity for future improvement is also satisfactory.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	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	1	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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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 mature you are, how confident and at ease you are when talking to adults, and how well you express yourselves. You get on well together and with your teachers. We were very impressed by the work of the school council and the amount of responsibility many of you are given. Just as impressive is the large number of opportunities your school provides for you, such as, in the clubs which your teachers and others run. Your school comes across very well as a caring place, for example, pupils who join the school after the beginning of the school year say that they were made to feel welcome and the support you give for charities is very good. One of our tasks is to find ways in which schools can improve. We noticed that the work you are given to do in lessons is not always challenging enough, so the progress you make is not as good as it could be. This is especially true of many boys' writing. We also saw that your school has some good ideas for improvements, but they are not always carried out by everyone. We suggest that your school makes more checks on this. Best wishes for your future.