



Maiden Beech Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123874
LEA Somerset
Inspection number 281579
Inspection dates 7 June 2006 to 8 June 2006
Reporting inspector Peter Griffiths HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Lyme Road
School category	Community		Crewkerne
Age range of pupils	9 to 13		Somerset TA18 8HG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01460 72677
Number on roll	450	Fax number	01460 74266
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	6 June 2000	Headteacher	Mr J Broad

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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

Maiden Beech is a larger-than-average school. It has relatively few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average while the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is low. The school serves socially and economically diverse communities across the town and surrounding countryside. Rural isolation is a factor that affects many of the pupils. As a result, access to activities other pupils take for granted is problematic: a visit to an art gallery or a major museum, for instance, has significant financial and logistical implications.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Maiden Beech is a good school. The leadership and management are good. The senior leadership team has a very good understanding of the school's effectiveness and what needs to be done in order to continue to improve. The school has implemented a range of appropriate strategies that have ensured that pupils achieve well. For example, subject departments have developed a variety of successful approaches for monitoring pupils' progress and setting targets for improvement.

The good teaching ensures that pupils show positive attitudes to their work and make good progress. The teachers' good subject knowledge and detailed planning lend confidence to their teaching styles which engage pupils. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory, though the school's approach to rewards and sanctions could take more account of the views of pupils and parents. Pupils enjoy coming to school, where they are well cared for and feel safe. This contributes to their desire to do well. The curriculum is well matched to their needs so they can all succeed. Many pupils take part in the extremely wide range of extra activities. The majority of parents are happy with the school and all it offers.

The school has clearly demonstrated that it has a strong capacity to improve. It has successfully addressed all the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching are very effective and some of the resulting subject review reports are of an outstanding quality. The school has formed very good working partnerships that have contributed to the pupils' achievement and well-being. The school uses its resources very effectively and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Combine the best practice in monitoring pupils' progress and setting targets for improvement into a single-school process.
- Use those subject review reports that are of an outstanding quality as the standard expected of all reports.
- Review the school's approach to rewards and sanctions so that it takes greater account of the views of pupils and parents.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The pupils achieve very well by the time they leave. Although pupils' attainment on entry to Year 5 is broadly average, a majority of them have weak literacy skills, particularly in writing. The school builds effectively on the work of the lower schools by implementing strategies to address weaknesses such as those relating to literacy. In Years 5 and 6, pupils make good progress. In the 2005 national tests in Year 6, standards were below average in English, average in mathematics and good in science. The progress that pupils make accelerates in Years 7 and 8. Pupils are well prepared for their upper school education and go on to do very well in their tests in Year 9.

In many subjects, girls make more progress than boys. Those pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because of the early and accurate identification of their needs, careful tracking of their progress and the ways teachers and other staff support them in lessons.

Pupils are confident, articulate and have good inter-personal skills. They are able to work effectively both independently and in teams. Pupils are numerate and their information and communication technology (ICT) and research skills are improving. In order to ensure that more pupils attain higher NC levels, the English department has a focus on the further development of literacy, and in particular the development of writing skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. The school's positive ethos and good relationships contribute significantly to pupils' personal development and well-being. Most pupils enjoy school and are keen to learn, especially when teaching is lively and stimulating. Attendance is satisfactory and unauthorised absence is low. Behaviour during the inspection was good, although pupils and some parents reported that at times lessons are disrupted by a minority who do not respond to the school's rewards and sanctions system. Pupils say that they feel safe because any bullying is dealt with effectively by staff, who have their interests at heart.

As well as participating in physical education (PE), many pupils participate in structured recreation at break-times and in extra-curricular sports. Through the energetic and committed school council, pupils have been involved in developing the school's healthy eating initiatives, which have been well received by the majority of pupils. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Though pupils have had limited opportunities to do so, they have developed satisfactory work-related skills. The majority of pupils take part in the wide range of extra-curricular and community activities that includes residential visits at home and abroad.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Where teaching is particularly successful, the work includes a variety of tasks for the pupils and the lesson proceeds at a lively pace. Teachers pose challenging questions that engage the pupils in developing their subject knowledge. As a result, pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to progress further. When planned well, pupils work effectively in small groups and enjoy discussion. In all of these lessons, the pupils are well behaved, but still lively, and make good progress. On the rare occasion when pupils are not challenged with tasks that meet their learning needs, some pupils are poorly behaved. A number

of pupils expressed frustration because they were unable to learn as well as they might because of this.

The use of data to assess and plan pupils' work and to set targets for improvement is at least adequate, often good and in some subjects it is outstanding. Such good practice has yet to be combined into a whole-school approach to monitoring and target setting.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum that provides for the needs of different groups of pupils, such as the gifted and talented and those with learning difficulties. There is a good PSHE programme that makes significant contributions to pupils' personal development.

Despite the rural location and lack of additional funding, there is a good range of clubs and activities which adds excitement and depth to the curriculum. Activities in drama, music and art are particular strengths. Pupils have achieved national recognition for their success in local and national science competitions. There is a good uptake of the activities and both the pupils and parents are appreciative. However, they would like more opportunities for the girls in PE. At present, girls have limited access to a female teacher for lessons and clubs.

Subjects are successfully contributing to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The provision in ICT has improved since the last inspection.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. However, the rewards and sanctions system is not effective with all pupils and is in need of review. The involvement of pupils and parents in such a review would be helpful. The regularly reviewed procedures for ensuring pupils' safety are effective. However, current arrangements for the supervision of girls' changing rooms for physical education are inadequate. There are good child protection procedures, and pupils at risk are identified early and their progress carefully monitored.

Pupils with learning difficulties are particularly well supported, either in class or in the nurture group, by a skilled and dedicated team of adults. The school's nationally recognised home study programme, a coordinated response to homework, is outstanding.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. The senior leadership team (SLT) has ensured that all members of the school community have contributed to the development of an inclusive ethos, where pupils feel valued and safe and where

relationships are good. With the support of colleagues in the SLT, the headteacher provides a clear direction for developments. There have been considerable improvements since the last inspection and the school is well placed to improve further.

Monitoring and evaluation procedures are good. The SLT conduct a thorough and effective programme of lesson observations as part of performance management. The procedures for departmental reviews are exceptionally good. Subject leaders produce self-evaluation reports which are based on the scrutiny of assessment data, the inspection of teaching and learning, the scrutiny of pupils' work and interviews with teachers and pupils. The subsequent reports are used to good effect by the departments as the basis for their action plans. The self-evaluation reports are presented to both the SLT and the governors. The SLT is most effective in ensuring that all development needs arising from the reviews are met. Some of the subject reviews are of an outstanding quality, and set an example for other subject leaders to adopt.

The SLT and governors have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are committed to the school and are focused on helping the school to achieve excellence. They provide a good balance of challenge and support and act productively as critical friends. Overall, the school provides good value for money and makes effective use of its resources and the well-maintained accommodation.

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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?	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	3	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	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	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	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	3	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

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	2	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	2	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

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 welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school. We thought you would like to know what we liked about your school and how we thought it could get even better.

We believe your school is providing a good quality of education.

Your teachers and teaching assistants work very hard to make sure that you get the right sort of help you need to help you learn.

You are clear about the differences in the quality of the teaching, between lessons that are challenging and fun and those where you are not actively involved.

You enjoy coming to school and participate well in lessons and the out-of-school clubs and activities.

Through the school council, you have made positive contributions to the school.

Another key reason for your success is how well you are cared for.

The majority of you and your parents are very happy with the school and all that it offers.

We have asked your school to:

Combine the best ways of monitoring your progress and setting you targets within a whole-school system.

Use the outstanding subject review reports as the standard expected of all reports.

Involve you and your parents in a review of the school's approach to rewards and sanctions.

Yours sincerely

Peter Griffiths HM inspector