



# Howard Middle School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 124801  
**LEA** SUFFOLK LEA  
**Inspection number** 281806  
**Inspection dates** 26 January 2006 to 27 January 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. John Godwood LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Beard Road
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		IP32 6SA
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9 to 13		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01284 761405
<b>Number on roll</b>	324	<b>Fax number</b>	01284704496
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr. Ken Norman
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 January 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Fiona Bromley

<b>Age group</b> 9 to 13	<b>Inspection dates</b> 26 January 2006 - 27 January 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 281806
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Howard Middle School is smaller than average for middle schools. Most pupils come from an area of relative social disadvantage, although the proportion receiving free school meals is average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is above average, although the proportion who have a statement of special educational needs is average. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds, with very small numbers from minority ethnic backgrounds.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's own view is that it is a good school and inspectors agree. Pupils make good progress and develop well as young people. The school has a good ethos, based on clear values, in which pupils and adults work well together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Pupils enjoy coming to school and behave well. They subscribe to the school's values and are motivated by the rewards and clear systems for managing behaviour. Achievement is good. When pupils join the school in Year 5, their attainment is below average in literacy and numeracy. They make good progress overall, but standards in Year 6 tests are not as high as they could be. Standards improve in Years 7 and 8 and are broadly average by the time pupils leave. However, some pupils keep repeating basic errors in writing because high standards of writing are not insisted on in all subjects. Teaching and learning are good. The best teaching challenges pupils of all abilities in the class and gives them a clear understanding of how well they are doing and how they can improve. These characteristics are school priorities but teachers vary in the skill with which they put them into practice. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a very clear lead for the school's vision of high achievement and personal development. Management processes are extremely thorough and ensure that all staff know what is expected and work consistently. Pupils' progress and the quality of provision are monitored very thoroughly and the school has a constant drive to improve. It has improved well since the last inspection and has good capacity to keep improving. The school environment is very well maintained, with a high standard of display and regular improvements to the facilities. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Improve progress in Years 5 and 6 and thus raise standards in Year 6 national tests.
- Make sure that lessons challenge all pupils at their own level and help them to know what progress they are making.
- Ensure that pupils write to the best of their ability in all subjects and learn from their errors.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' achievement is good. When they join the school in Year 5, their attainment is below average and many have difficulties with literacy and numeracy. They make good progress towards their challenging targets, so that by the time they leave at the end of Year 8, standards are broadly average. However, the results in national tests at the end of Year 6 are below average and are not as high as they could be. This difference in standards is because pupils make better progress in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6. Year 6 test results improved in 2002 and have remained fairly steady since then. The results are generally similar in English, mathematics and science, although in 2005, mathematics results were lower than the other two. Girls do slightly better than boys, but the gap between girls' and boys' results is narrower than is the case in most schools.

The school has been working hard to improve the results through carefully tracking pupils' progress and providing additional support where needed. Pupils' literacy skills are below average. Although they make good progress in English, some pupils continue to repeat basic errors in writing because teachers' expectations of their writing are not consistently high in all subjects. Standards improve in Years 7 and 8. Pupils achieve average results in Year 9 national tests in upper school, showing good progress in relation to their Year 6 results. Pupils with learning difficulties and from minority ethnic groups are well supported and make good progress throughout the school.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy school and many take part in clubs and activities. They are polite and helpful, demonstrating the values that the school teaches. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils are well motivated by the rewards for good work or behaviour and understand the clear consequences of any misbehaviour. They report that any bullying is dealt with effectively. Attendance is above average, with good procedures to monitor those pupils causing concern. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Assemblies are very effective in reinforcing the school's values and developing pupils' awareness. Teachers and other staff are good role models, treating pupils fairly and respectfully. Pupils are taught how to lead a healthy lifestyle and are encouraged to eat healthily. Participation in organised sport is high. Many pupils take on responsibilities within the school, for example as prefects or members of the school council. The school council spearheads the charity fundraising, which many pupils support. Older pupils act as mentors to younger pupils, looking out for their welfare in the playground. Pupils learn to use money responsibly. As part of their citizenship studies, each year group is allocated a sum of money that they plan to spend in a good cause. The Year 8 careers programme helps them to develop skills for their future working life. Pupils are very positive about the school and appreciate the support given by teachers and other staff.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent and encourage pupils to try their best. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' effort and behaviour. They use rewards and sanctions consistently and, as a result, pupils behave well. Teachers give clear explanations and encourage pupils to think for themselves. Pupils work well together and join in discussions sensibly. In the best lessons, teachers make learning exciting through imaginative use of resources and methods that involve all pupils actively. As a result, pupils are highly motivated. The work is well matched to all pupils' abilities and challenges them all. Pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are doing in relation to National Curriculum levels and

what they need to do to reach the next level. They are often involved in assessing their own or others' work. In the weaker lessons, the work that is set to the whole class does not challenge all pupils sufficiently at their own level. Pupils respond well but are less clear about what they are learning and how well they are doing. In a few lessons, the pace of learning slows and, as a result, some pupils lose concentration or become restless. Pupils have regular assessments and their progress is tracked very carefully. They know their targets and usually find teachers' marking helpful. This helps them to make good progress. The school regularly evaluates teaching and strives to improve it.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. It meets national requirements and serves the pupils' needs well. Younger pupils benefit from specialist lessons in science and technology. French lessons start in Year 6. All pupils have information and communication technology (ICT) lessons, and computers are used well in other subjects. Art and music both have a high profile. Displays are excellent and show the high quality artwork that pupils produce. Music can be heard all over the school and pupils clearly love participating. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and developed. The school is currently extending pupils' opportunities to learn from assessing their own work. This is very effective in the best lessons. A new focus on thinking skills is at an early stage. Literacy skills are promoted in all subjects, but teachers are not sufficiently consistent in the standard of literacy that they expect. There is a good range of clubs at lunchtime and after school, which many pupils attend. They include a homework club and booster classes for pupils who need extra help. Lessons in citizenship and personal, social and health education are successful in developing pupils' awareness of safe and healthy living and, particularly, their understanding of living in and contributing to the community.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. There are good procedures for child protection and ensuring safety in school. Pupils' care is a high priority and is evident in all the interactions between pupils and staff. Pupils themselves commented that they feel well cared for. Support and guidance are managed well. There are clear, consistent procedures for managing behaviour and, as a result, pupils believe that they are treated fairly. The school works well with parents and other agencies to support pupils. Parents are kept well informed through the homework planners. Any concerns about personal development or attendance are dealt with promptly. Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully. All pupils know their targets and how well they are doing in relation to them. Pupils who need additional help are offered booster classes. The needs of pupils who have learning difficulties are carefully assessed. Teachers are informed of their needs and they are well supported in class. There are good links with other schools. New pupils have a good introduction to the school and Year 8 pupils are carefully prepared for upper school.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a very clear educational direction and has established very strong management systems. The school has a good ethos, based on clear values that are well known by pupils and reinforced regularly. Children and adults work in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Displays of work celebrate pupils' achievements and remind them of what they should strive for. The headteacher is supported well by the senior management team. All the staff work well together in support of the school's aims and values. The school knows itself well as a result of very thorough procedures for monitoring teaching and other provision. Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully and the information is used well to plan additional support and improvements to teaching programmes. The amount of information given to staff is rather too extensive. Parents are regularly consulted. Most parents are pleased with the school. Several expressed appreciation for the support their children receive and commented on their growth in confidence. Subject leaders are given very clear direction. Work in all subjects is evaluated regularly, with the results used in planning improvements. Teachers work consistently to implement the school's priorities. They are well informed about the improvements needed in teaching practice but do not have sufficient opportunities to observe good practice or receive coaching. As a result of the school's clear direction, thorough management systems and improvement since the last inspection, it has good capacity to improve. Governance is good. Governors influence the school's direction and have a good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses through comprehensive reports. The school has difficulty in recruiting parent governors and has several vacancies. Finances are managed well. The school is constantly improving its facilities, including the computers, pupils' lockers and classrooms for science and technology.

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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>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	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	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	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>	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

<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**

We enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for your friendly welcome and for sharing your thoughts with us. Your school has a good atmosphere that encourages you to work hard and to learn. We were impressed by the way that you put the school's values into practice. You are helpful and treat other people with respect. Most of you behave very well. Your teachers are fair and listen to what you have to say. They take good care of you. We were pleased to see that many of you take on responsibilities as school councillors or prefects and care for others through charity fundraising. Many of you told us that you enjoy school. There are many clubs and activities. We were particularly impressed by the good art work and the music. Most of the lessons are good. They are interesting and encourage you to work hard. In the best lessons, the work challenges each of you at your own level and you know exactly how well you are doing and what to improve. We have asked the school to try and make all the lessons as good as that. Most pupils make good progress and go on to do well at upper school. Many of you get good results in the Year 6 tests, but overall the results are not as high as they could be. We have asked the school to keep working hard to improve these. Although you make good progress in English, some of you keep making the same mistakes when you are writing in other subjects. We have asked the teachers to help you to write carefully all the time and learn to correct basic errors. The school is well run and all the staff work hard to check how well you are doing and to keep improving things. It is a good school and we think that it will continue to improve. We trust that you will work hard to make even more progress and we wish you well with that.