



Brooklands Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109655
Local Authority BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 288465
Inspection dates 10–11 October 2006
Reporting inspector Margaret Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Brooklands Drive
School category	Community		Leighton Buzzard
Age range of pupils	9–13		Bedfordshire LU7 3PF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01525 372018
Number on roll (school)	264	Fax number	01525 853062
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Simon Lockwood
		Headteacher	Mr Steven Harrington-Williams
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
9–13	10–11 October 2006	288465

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Brooklands Middle School is situated to the east of the town of Leighton Buzzard. Pupils come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. Almost all the pupils are of White British background and of the few minority ethnic pupils in the school, a small number have English as an additional language. There are seven children from Traveller families who receive additional support. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties is above the national average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with national expectations. The school works in partnership with lower and upper schools and is an active member of the local learning community of 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 school provides a satisfactory quality of education. This judgement matches the school's own self-evaluation. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is determined to make the school a better place for the pupils, and has brought about improvements over the past three years. However, middle managers have not been enabled to take enough responsibility and ownership for raising standards across the school. The pupils are friendly and welcoming. The environment and school buildings have been greatly improved. The issues from the last inspection have been addressed with varying degrees of success. Progress since the last report is satisfactory. The governing body is more effective and has adopted a more business-like approach to holding the school to account. The majority of parents are positive in their views about the school. Recent improvements show that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Standards across the school are in line with the national average and achievement for the majority is now just satisfactory. Results in national tests for pupils aged 11 have improved considerably from 2005. The more able pupils are being helped to achieve to their capability. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported effectively by well-deployed learning assistants and achieve as well as their peers. Teaching is satisfactory overall. However, in a few lessons the tasks given to the pupils do not match their levels of ability and pupils are expected to sit for too long. This leads to restlessness and lack of attention and limits pupils' progress. The outstanding teaching which exists in science is not effectively shared with other staff, and monitoring does not focus sufficiently on the learning that takes place in lessons. The pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Older pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility. They speak enthusiastically about the clubs they are attending and the school trips they have experienced. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. The quality of care is satisfactory and pupils progress confidently to the upper school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards across the school by increasing the progress made by pupils in the middle to lower ability range. - Improve the quality of teaching by implementing rigorous monitoring procedures and effectively sharing good practice. - Develop the strategic role of middle managers and increase their involvement in raising standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards on entry vary from year to year but are broadly average. The pupils' attainment in the national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 dipped in 2005. There were significant improvements in 2006, particularly in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5, with percentages close to or above national averages. The percentages achieving the expected Level 4 were also better than the previous year but remained below national averages. The school did

not meet the challenging targets agreed with the Local Authority (LA) in 2005 or 2006. By the end of Year 8 the majority of pupils attain in line with their capabilities, with the exception of some pupils in English. However, standards in all three subjects have improved and are currently in line with the national expectations. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, but better in English and science in Key Stage 2. This is in part due to the school's systems for tracking pupils' attainment which enables teachers to work productively with the minority of pupils in each group who are not progressing as fast as they could. The intensive support programme which is being introduced is intended to enable the school to target groups of pupils in the middle and lower ability band in order to improve their progress as well. Pupils from minority ethnic groups are well integrated and achieve well. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress towards their own learning goals.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy their school, especially residential trips, practical and creative subjects and the chance to take responsibility such as working on the newly formed school council. Pupils understand what is meant by a healthy lifestyle. Much work has been done to improve school meals and this is supported by teaching and learning in science, food technology and personal and social education, but the school has not taken advantage of being part of the National Healthy Schools Programme. Pupils work safely and understand the need for personal protective equipment in practical subjects. Good relationships help pupils feel safe in school but some younger pupils are concerned about the safety of their possessions. Pupils develop skills which will help them in their future careers but there is no recording of the progress they make in these areas. Attendance is satisfactory and in general most pupils are punctual. There has been a reduction in exclusions since the last inspection but they remain high. Behaviour is satisfactory and the behaviour management policy and card system linked to sanctions is having a positive impact on improving learning. Pupils realise that all actions they take have consequences. Despite improvements in behaviour, some parents are still concerned that the behavioural problems of a minority are affecting learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory. Regular assemblies and work in English and art enhance spirituality. Pupils have a clear grasp of right from wrong. Pupils work and play together well. Although pupils understand cultural differences there is a lack of multicultural artefacts and display to help pupils develop tolerance and understanding of different lifestyles.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good relationships and activities which engage pupils mean that they make sound gains in learning. During lessons, teachers are increasingly providing work for more

able pupils and this is helping them to progress faster and attain higher levels in national tests. Although there is some outstanding teaching, there is too much variation in the quality of teaching overall and most of it remains only satisfactory. Teachers' introductions are sometimes too long. Too much time is spent listening to the teacher, leaving limited time for pupils to carry out independent work and they become restless. Teaching is not always responsive enough to the needs of individual pupils and instructions for tasks and the tasks themselves are sometimes too complicated. This leads to confusion and inconsistent progress. Work in English, mathematics and science is assessed regularly but assessment practice is not consistent for other subjects. There is good assessment in science, where pupils have a realistic understanding of what their National Curriculum levels mean and this adds an element of competition to their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory because it enables pupils to study a broad range of subjects. The curriculum has been reviewed and modified to include food technology in Key Stage 2 and a programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) both of which help to develop pupils' awareness of safe and healthy living. There is no regular period of time allocated for this, which, on a rolling timetable, erodes teaching time from other subjects and downgrades the status of PSHCE. Visits to local places of interest, visitors to the school and residential activities add to the pupils' learning, but the school does not ensure that the wider multi-cultural community is reflected through the curriculum. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards in some subjects, for example science and French, but the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to improve learning across the curriculum is underdeveloped. The school provides a good range of additional activities, particularly in music and sport. The musical performances produced for parents and friends are popular with the pupils and appreciated by the community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This aspect of the school's work is satisfactory. Good procedures support pupils with learning difficulties. Effective deployment of teaching assistants and careful testing and tracking of these pupils helps them to make satisfactory progress. Pupils feel well cared for and are confident about approaching staff with their concerns. The school council helps to support pupil well-being and older pupils assist those lower down the school. Robust procedures for child protection ensure support for pupils at risk. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good, with effective systems in place to ensure their health and safety. The school is beginning to make much better use of data to track the individual progress of pupils. Pupils have been set targets in English, mathematics and science. Most pupils understand their actual working level and their next target but knowing what to do to reach that target is often unclear to them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a clear commitment to making things better for pupils, and has appropriately motivated and challenged teachers to improve their professional performance. In order to raise standards, the school has enthusiastically become part of an intensive support programme, which is a Department for Education and Skills (DfES) initiative implemented by the Local Authority. This tracks the individual progress of pupils very closely. The programme has only just begun but has had a positive impact in focusing attention on improving progress. The school's governance is satisfactory. Although the governors have not been challenging enough in the past, this is improving. They are now better informed about the school's data through the governors' School Improvement Group. A falling roll has led to financial constraints but this situation is being managed well and the school gives satisfactory value for money. The role of middle managers remains under-developed and they lack strategic direction. The outstanding practice which exists in the school is not shared effectively. The headteacher has made good use of external consultants to monitor teaching. The school is now implementing its own independent programme of monitoring and evaluation. This is satisfactory but lacks sufficient focus on the learning gains made by pupils in lessons.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 October 2006 Dear Pupils Brooklands Middle School, Brooklands Drive, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 3PF Thank you for all the help you gave the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you. You were very polite and friendly. I want to tell you what we found out about your school and what you can do to help make things better. Yours is a satisfactory school and the things we liked about it are - You enjoy school, get on well with each other and behave well. - You know how to keep safe and healthy and take lots of exercise at lunchtime. - Staff take good care of you, and help you feel happy at school so you can concentrate on your learning. - The headteacher has made many changes to make your school better. What we have asked the school to do now - Help you all to do much better work in your external tests and in Years 7 and 8. - Make sure that the tasks set for you in lessons are suitable for each of you and you are all able to do them well. - Make sure all the managers in the school are working towards helping you achieve better results. Best wishes for the future. Margaret Jones HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools)