



Lincroft Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109708
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 288478
Inspection dates 5 July 2006 to 6 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Paul Brooker HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Station Road
School category	Foundation		MK43 7RE
Age range of pupils	9 to 13		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01234 822147
Number on roll	709	Fax number	01234 825923
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Michael Carr
Date of previous inspection	10 March 2003	Headteacher	Mr. Michael Lavelle

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school draws its pupils from across a wide rural area and several villages north of Bedford. The catchment area is mixed, although generally advantaged socially and economically. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Lincroft Middle School is an outstanding school. Inspection evidence confirms the school's assessment of its strengths and areas for development. Pupils achieve well in Years 5 and 6; they make outstanding progress in Years 7 and 8 and leave the school with standards that are exceptionally high. High standards and good achievement are evident across the curriculum. Since the last inspection standards in Key Stage 2 national tests have improved in mathematics and science, but results in English have fluctuated. Transition arrangements between schools are good, but the school recognises the need to further develop collaborative work with its main primaries in order to ensure that all pupils make expected progress between Years 2 and 6. The school has a strongly inclusive ethos and provides outstanding care, guidance and support. The pupils' personal development is outstanding: they attend well, enjoy school and develop as mature and considerate young adults. The excellent curriculum meets pupils' academic needs and provides a remarkable variety of opportunities in sport, the arts and wider educational experiences. The quality of teaching is outstanding. There is a significant proportion of excellent teaching, although there is variation between the best lessons and those that are good or satisfactory, particularly in the quality of planning and marking. Nonetheless, pupils flourish socially and academically during their four years at the school and are very well equipped for the next stage of their education and for later life. The school's good reputation is reflected in the overwhelmingly positive views of parents and is well deserved. Leadership and management, including governance, are outstanding. The school moved swiftly to address the issues raised at the last inspection. The strong staff and excellent leadership ensure that there is outstanding capacity for further improvement. The school provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to strengthen teaching so that the outstanding practice, for example in planning and marking, is more widely developed. - Continue to develop strategies, including collaborative working with primary schools, to further raise standards in Key Stage 2 national tests.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry is above average. From their starting points at the end of Year 4, the pupils make good progress in Years 5 and 6, and outstanding progress in Years 7 and 8, and leave the school with standards that are exceptionally high. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make better than expected progress as they move through the school. This means that achievement is good overall. In many areas progress is outstanding and the standard of pupils' work across all areas of the curriculum is well above age-related expectations, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Standards of attainment in end-of-Key Stage 2 tests are consistently

well above average. Results in mathematics and science have improved since the last inspection; pupils' achievement in science is outstanding. However, standards in English declined in 2004 and 2005; results in English for a small but significant number of pupils in 2005 were below the levels predicted by their prior attainment in Key Stage 1 tests. The school has analysed the reasons for underachievement, in particular the pupils' uneven progress over the four years of Key Stage 2. It has subsequently taken suitable steps to improve attainment, including closer collaborative working with its main primary schools. Provisional results in the most recent tests in 2006 indicate that standards have risen significantly in English. The school has excellent data on pupils' attainment which is shared with other schools within the cluster. Procedures for regular formal assessment of the pupils' progress are well established and rigorous. The school makes very good use of assessment data to identify specific strengths and weaknesses and to guide suitable intervention and support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They develop excellent relationships, confidence and self worth. Pupils are really proud of their school and bubbled with enthusiasm as they discussed school life, especially after-school activities in sport, drama and music. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are exemplary. The school has an excellent ethos and staff take every opportunity to reinforce positive values. Across the curriculum there are countless examples of ways that the school enriches pupils' understanding and promotes reflection on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, so that their development in these areas is excellent. Work in art, religious education, English and media, for example, is a powerful testament to the pupils' positive values. Pupils are excellent ambassadors for their school; they endorse school rules and guidance to promote their health and safety and take part in updating the policies. The school council uses the pupils' voice to pursue specific issues, but all pupils are expected to take responsibility for their school community. Many act as peer mentors or counsellors; others have specific roles in supporting the learning of others; and some contribute formally to school self-evaluation. Pupils are also encouraged to look beyond their own community; charity work is well developed. Very good attendance and punctuality have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Their skills in literacy and numeracy are very well developed, and the focus on developing personal skills, including good team work, ensures that they are very well equipped for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Pupils make good and often outstanding progress in lessons and over time, although this has not been enough to secure outstanding progress in Key Stage 2. Excellent relationships enable teachers

to sustain a very good pace and to create a positive climate for learning, so that all pupils feel confident enough to contribute ideas and not to worry about making mistakes. Teachers are clear about what pupils need to learn in each lesson and share these objectives well, often including important aspects of personal development. Although not all lessons present pupils with consistently high levels of challenge, pupils enjoy their learning and are able to thrive socially and academically. There is a high proportion of outstanding teaching across a wide range of subjects. Outstanding and good teaching is characterised by very high expectations of pupils' effort, attainment and involvement. The best lessons make excellent use of time because they are expertly managed and present pupils with stimulating activities, many of which encourage them to work collaboratively to refine and develop their own thinking. Teaching is underpinned by good assessment. Feedback to pupils is sometimes exceptionally good, particularly when done orally and when clear targets are set for improvement. There is, however, some ineffective marking of work in books. In the small proportion of lessons where teaching and learning are less than good, tasks are not so engaging and teachers are not so careful to differentiate work and to make sure that all are involved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It meets statutory requirements and is well matched to the needs and aspirations of the pupils. The curriculum for pupils in Years 5 and 6 is exceptionally varied and benefits from a wide range of specialist teaching and excellent resources, for example in drama, physical education and language lessons. All pupils study French and then learn an additional language in Years 7 and 8. An excellent variety of activities enriches the curriculum. Pupils are offered a wide range of experiences, such as residentials, trips and visits, as well as many out-of-school clubs, including a very wide range of sports and music and drama productions. There is a very high take up of extra-curricular activities; over half the pupils actively participate and represent the school in sports of some kind. The performing arts are enhanced by good links with the local community through Asian dance groups, music groups and local theatres. Curricular links with the upper school are excellent. The school recognises the need to improve the continuity and progression in pupils' learning from Years 3 and 4, and has taken suitable steps to improve links with its main primary schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support for learners, including those pupils with learning difficulties, the gifted and talented and others with specific needs, are outstanding. Staff use rigorous procedures to monitor the academic and pastoral progress of pupils. Strong policies for behaviour, exclusion, anti-bullying and risk assessment are in place and underpin the school's safe environment. Pupils are closely involved in their review and revision. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are very clear and robust. Good systems

are in place to ensure a smooth transition between schools. Teachers know their pupils well and track their progress carefully. Individual targets are used well. As one pupil said: 'targets are good because teachers know how far to push you, but not too far to stress you!' External support is used well for the small number of vulnerable pupils and pupils with complex learning needs. Targets on Individual Education Plans are developed through the school's close collaboration with pupils and their parents. Good procedures are in place for home tuition where necessary.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The leadership provided by the headteacher and the governors is excellent. Innovative governor and staff training have led to a strong sense of teamwork and a belief in a common cause. The culture created in the school is inclusive and supportive, but one of constant self-evaluation and improvement. Leadership and management are strong at all levels. The roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team reflect the priorities for the school, which are well documented within a very thorough development plan. Middle leaders are given opportunities to flourish and are encouraged to implement new ideas and strategies. This close involvement in shaping developments creates a strong sense of collective ownership and the energy to improve. The school's leadership and the staff as a whole demonstrate tremendous capacity for sustained improvement. The school has developed very good procedures for checking and improving its work and has a clear and accurate overview of its strengths and areas for development. The school's self-evaluation is detailed and honest. Staff and pupils contribute positively to this process and are encouraged to lead initiatives to strengthen the school. The cohesiveness of staff enables the school to question and adapt current practice and to quickly implement new ideas. The school has swiftly and rigorously addressed the issues raised in the previous inspection. Financial management is good and excellent progress has been made with improving the school's accommodation. The school gives excellent value for money. The school consults parents and pupils, and responds to their views and opinions, which are overwhelmingly positive. The school fully deserves its good local reputation.

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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?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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	1	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?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	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	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	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	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	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	1	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 the contribution that you made to our recent inspection. Like other visitors to the school, we were struck by your warm welcome and your openness. We were left with an impression of a very friendly and successful school. Your opinions were important in confirming what staff, parents and governors told us. We were particularly impressed with: - the high standards of your work - how you take a pride in your appearance, your achievements and your school - your participation in lessons and in the wide range of out-of-school activities - your sense of responsibility and the consideration that you show for others - and your exemplary behaviour and positive attitudes, even when the classrooms were sweltering hot! Lincroft is an outstanding school. One of the most obvious strengths is that it is a very caring place for you to work and develop as young adults. You have a particularly wide and varied curriculum and you are very well taught. Some of your teachers are brilliant! The school is extremely well led by the headteacher and senior managers, and you are fortunate to have such a committed set of governors. Most of you work hard and make good progress in lessons. However, there is always room for improvement. Sometimes there are gaps in your learning and some of you do not do as well as you could in the Key Stage 2 tests. We have asked the school to work on: - making sure that even more of your lessons are excellent so that you all do as well as possible - strengthening some aspects of marking, including making sure that you all respond to the guidance that you are given. We are confident that you will continue to thrive, and wish you every future success. Yours faithfully