

# Branksome Heath Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113703
<b>Local Authority</b>	Poole
<b>Inspection number</b>	289697
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anthony Shield

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8–12
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	507
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jane Foster
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jeff Royle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2001
<b>School address</b>	Livingstone Road Parkstone Poole BH12 3DX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01202 747966
<b>Fax number</b>	01202 732692

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<b>Age group</b>	8–12
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an average-sized middle school, with a higher-than-average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. Most of these are related to language development but some pupils have significant emotional and behavioural problems. Most pupils are White British, with relatively few pupils from other ethnic heritages. The school has been awarded Healthy Schools status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school and one with some strengths, notably in the care it takes to ensure pupils feel safe and are happy. As one teacher commented, 'Their happiness means we can get on'. The dedicated support the school commits to its most vulnerable pupils is exemplary and the school's commitment to including all pupils is very strong. As a result of the school's good care, support and guidance, pupils' personal development is good. The openness and friendliness of pupils is a particularly endearing feature of the school. The school's procedures for rewarding success have had a good effect on pupils' sense of self-worth. High expectations of behaviour are made clear. Although a few pupils find difficulty in meeting them, most behave thoughtfully and politely. In lessons, they show good attitudes, are keen to please their teachers and behaviour is usually good. A small number of pupils show less self-control when not closely supervised. Pupils take pride in their school and show a delightful willingness to exercise responsibility.

Standards of work are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. However, more-able pupils and those with learning difficulties make better progress than those in the middle-ability range. This is because teaching does not always challenge pupils in the middle sets well enough. In recent years, progress in mathematics has been less good than in either English or science but action taken has been successful in raising standards in mathematics. While attainment in Year 6 still reflects this differential, it is less marked and, in Year 7, attainment in mathematics is now better than in English. Pupils do not always take enough care in how their work is presented, reflecting a lack of attention given to this aspect by teachers.

The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, although much is good. Teachers manage pupils well and provide interesting activities. They consistently offer praise but some pupils still lack confidence in their ability to achieve. In addition, a lack of consistency in the use of assessment, including marking, means that pupils do not always know how well they are getting on or how to improve their work. The satisfactory curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, particularly sport. The success of the girls' football team is a source of particular pride for the school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher leads with integrity and has been successful in improving the image of the school in the community. He is well supported by his senior team and there is a good team spirit and commitment to improve amongst the whole staff. Monitoring, particularly in the recent past, is helping to lever up standards. Action taken to improve the management of behaviour and the teaching of mathematics has been particularly effective. However, assessment data is not being used with enough clarity to ensure the school is able to identify trends in the school's performance or to set priorities. Despite this, the school's self-evaluation procedures are satisfactory and involve all staff and governors. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment, including marking, to improve standards in English and mathematics, particularly for pupils in the middle-ability range.
- Raise teachers' and pupils' expectations of standards of presentation.
- Make assessment data more easily available to all staff and make better use of it to set priorities and identify trends in the whole school's performance.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Standards are broadly average and improving. By the end of Year 7, they are close to expected levels. Both boys' and girls' achievements are satisfactory. Although results in national tests in Year 6 dipped in 2006, particularly in mathematics, current standards are higher and closer to the average. Pupils tend to do better in English than in either mathematics or science. However, while some pupils write well, their standards of presentation are often not good enough. This is a factor in lowering standards in a number of subjects. Attainment in mathematics is improving and, in Year 7, pupils' performance in mathematics now exceeds their attainment in English.

On entry, while the full spread of ability is present, there are relatively few more able pupils and an above-average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. Progress through the school is satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties often make good progress when supported in class, but this is not consistent and, overall, their progress is satisfactory. More-able pupils also make secure progress. Most pupils in the middle-ability range make satisfactory progress but, where there is underachievement, it tends to be amongst this group. Targets in 2006 were met in English but missed in mathematics. In 2007, most pupils are in line to meet challenging targets.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are friendly and approachable, and are developing good social skills. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Behaviour has improved as a result of the school's concerted efforts to reward success and praise good behaviour. Most pupils get on well with each other and feel safe in school. They say there is a little bullying, and it is usually sorted out by adults. Pupils enjoy school, like their teachers and report there is very little they would like to change. Attendance is below average but is improving because of the school's determined efforts. Pupils' understanding of how to be safe and adopt a healthy lifestyle is good, despite an abundance of crisps in lunchboxes! They particularly enjoy after-school sports clubs. Pupils relish the opportunity to contribute to the school and the wider community through becoming, for example, school councillors or classroom monitors. Pupils develop a satisfactory range of skills to help them in future life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Pupils make satisfactory progress because activities are planned to make learning interesting and, where possible, fun. Pupils particularly enjoy practical learning. Teachers manage behaviour well and this, together with pupils' good attitudes, is leading to improved progress. Good questioning by teachers encourages an enthusiastic and lively response. Most classrooms are attractive environments, and well-managed support from teaching assistants ensures pupils with learning difficulties are confident to learn. Much teaching is good, though this is not

consistently so. While teachers are always encouraging, expectations of how pupils present their work are not always high enough. In most lessons, activities are well planned to match pupils' ability but, while there is challenge for the more able and good support for the less able, pupils of middle ability do not always have work which matches their needs. This is because teachers' knowledge of how well pupils are doing is not used consistently well to plan suitable work. Marking is improving and much is conscientiously done but it does not always guide pupils to improve.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum provides satisfactory breadth and balance and some aspects, such as the teaching of French to all pupils, is a good feature. The teaching of boys and girls separately in English has had a marked influence on progress. Although connections across subjects are consistently made, the school is rightly working to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects. The good range of extra-curricular activities and trips, including residential visits, supports pupils' learning and makes a valuable contribution to their personal development. Pupils speak enthusiastically and appreciatively about opportunities to hear about outside organisations, such as the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is well organised and individual support plans are well written.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school shows exceptional commitment to the care and support of its pupils. Levels of care are high and particularly so for the most vulnerable pupils and their families. This is an outstanding aspect of the school's work. The very effective partnerships the school has developed with external agencies ensure pupils have access to specialist support when needed. Careful attention is paid to pupils' welfare through regular and rigorous safety checks and effective child protection procedures. Pastoral support is good and, through its well-considered rewards and sanctions policy, the school has successfully encouraged pupils' personal development and improvements in behaviour. There are satisfactory procedures for tracking pupils' progress and providing additional support and guidance for pupils who might potentially underachieve. However, their use by all teachers is not fully rooted in practice.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The promotion of a friendly and happy school in which pupils feel trusted and respected has been pivotal to the school's purpose. In this, the headteacher has been very successful. He has led with the support of a committed senior team and governors. The school works hard and fruitfully to build pupils' self-esteem and, in this respect, the rewards policy has been key. The school has made significant gains in securing the trust of the parents and the wider community.

More recently, important efforts have been made to raise attainment and, although much remains to be done, improvements have been achieved because self-evaluation has been used satisfactorily to diagnose weaknesses and identify action. A determined approach to teachers' professional support and development and to rigorous monitoring has secured more consistently effective teaching. While assessment data is satisfactorily used to support individual pupils and

intervene where underachievement is identified, it is less successfully used to identify trends in the school's performance or to set priorities for further improvement. Governors take their responsibilities seriously and are playing an increasingly effective role in monitoring and self-evaluation through their close links with the school.

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## Annex A

## 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>
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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

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

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

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

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Branksome Heath Middle School, Poole, Dorset BH12 3DX

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We particularly enjoyed talking to you, and the friendly way in which you answered our questions and spoke about your school. Branksome Heath Middle School is satisfactory and has some strengths.

What works well in your school:

- The friendly and polite way you greeted us and welcomed us into your school.
- The care and support given to all of you to ensure you feel safe and happy in school.
- Most of you are growing up into sensible and polite young people.
- You work hard in lessons and get on well with the teachers.
- You enthusiastically take part in the good range of clubs and after-school activities. The girls' football team is doing really well!
- Most of you are well behaved.
- All the teachers are working hard to make your school better.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Help you to take more pride in your work and ensure it is more carefully presented. You can help them with this!
- Ensure teachers use information about how well you are doing in class to improve your standards, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Ensure that managers make better use of information about your progress to be clear about how they might make the school even better.

Thank you once again for your help during the inspection. Best wishes for the future!

Yours sincerely,

Mr Tony Shield Lead inspector