

# Ferndown Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113878
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	289754
<b>Inspection date</b>	24 April 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gehane Gordelier HMI

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 secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	636
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gordan Edgar
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gillian Allen
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 January 2002
<b>School address</b>	Peter Grant Way Ferndown BH22 9UP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01202 876556
<b>Fax number</b>	01202 897065

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Ferndown Middle School is smaller than average when compared with other secondary schools, but is the second largest middle school in Dorset. The school serves areas of high as well as low levels of social deprivation and the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or for whom English is an additional language is very small, as are the numbers of looked after children. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is in line with the national average and the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is low.

The school is part of the East Dorset Partnership. It has also retained the Investors in People Award for 10 years. The school has attained both Sportsmark and Sports Activemark. In March 2006, the school was awarded the status of being a National Healthy School.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Ferndown Middle is an outstanding school where pupils make extremely good progress and develop into confident, articulate, mature and very well rounded young people. Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school. In the parental questionnaires, one parent expressed a view which was shared by many: 'Thank you, Ferndown Middle, for giving my children the best opportunities available...it is a fantastic school, with enthusiastic and caring teaching and a firm discipline policy.'

There is an exceptional team spirit in the school with adults leading by example; adults and pupils alike feel valued, extremely well cared for and supported. The excellent relationships between adults and pupils and the high quality of teaching and the curriculum contribute to pupils' extremely good attitudes to learning, high levels of attendance and exemplary behaviour. Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles and keep themselves safe. They contribute extremely well to their local community and have influenced changes in and around the school, good examples of this being the changes made to school meals and the school uniform.

The work of the highly effective governing body as well as the very good levels of parental support also contribute to the excellent quality of education pupils receive. The newly appointed headteacher has quickly gained the trust and respect of pupils, parents and staff, and the overall quality of leadership and management of the school continues to be excellent. However, while coordinators and middle managers are developing their roles well and contributing effectively to raising standards, their action planning is not always as good as it could be. Some of the planning documents do not clarify sufficiently well how it is hoped that pupils will benefit from the actions aimed at bringing about improvement. Furthermore, the success criteria in these documents are not always sufficiently measurable.

Despite having no key issues identified at the time of the last inspection, the school has continued to improve. This is particularly noticeable in the improvements in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT), although pupils would welcome more access to ICT as a learning tool. The school has continued to be rigorous in its process of self-evaluation and has been unrelenting in its efforts to continue to improve. Consequently, key leaders and managers have an accurate view of how well the school is performing and those areas which could be further enhanced. The school has an excellent capacity for further improvement. The staff are highly committed and extremely hard working. Furthermore, they actively seek the views of parents and learners and take account of feedback to help improve facilities at the school as well as the quality of education. The school council provides pupils with a powerful collective voice and has taught them that they can influence change. The school has developed some excellent partnerships with local schools, businesses and a university. These links also enhance the quality of the curriculum, teaching and learning and have helped to ensure that staff who are newly appointed to the school are of high quality. The links with the first and upper schools have helped to improve the transfer process and parents and pupils speak very positively about how well this process is managed. One parent states: 'The transition process to the school was excellent and created an excellent start for my child in Year 5.'

The school invests in its staff and provides teaching and support staff with high quality continual professional development. This helps to ensure that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, achieve equally well because the teaching and additional support

pupils receive are consistently of a good standard. Teaching is becoming increasingly outstanding and assessment for learning is a developing strength within the school. Teachers are making very good use of data and assessment information to ensure that work is set at the right level for pupils and is suitably challenging. The pupils themselves are becoming increasingly involved in evaluating their work and in knowing how they can further improve.

The school has made very good use of the Primary and Secondary National Strategies to develop and enrich the curriculum, which is now outstanding. This, together with the excellent level of care, guidance and support, is enabling pupils to achieve standards that are significantly above the national average and to develop extremely good skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

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

- Ensure that all action planning clarifies the intended outcomes for learners, and that success criteria are sufficiently measurable.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils arrive at Ferndown Middle with standards in English, mathematics and science that are broadly in line with national averages. Pupils progress extremely well in Years 5 and 6 and as a result they attain standards that are well above the national average in all three subjects. This excellent progress is maintained throughout Key Stage 3 and at the end of Year 8 pupils leave the school with very high standards that are significantly above average in English, mathematics and science.

There are no significant differences in the progress made by different groups of pupils, but the school has recognised that there could be room for further improvement, especially with the standard of boys' writing. Nevertheless, standards observed during the course of the inspection indicate that the vast majority of pupils in Year 8 are already in line to meet, if not exceed, their predicted targets for the end of Key Stage 3.

The school makes extremely good use of data to track and monitor pupils' progress and set realistic and challenging targets. This level of information is used very well by class teachers and is shared with pupils. Pupils contribute to the assessment of their learning very well. This enables all pupils to have a very clear view of how well they are progressing and the level at which they are working. By the beginning of Year 6, if not sooner, teachers and pupils are working effectively in partnership to ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve further.

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

### **Grade: 1**

The excellent teaching, care, support and guidance that pupils receive lead to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being as well as their high levels of enjoyment of learning. Comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programmes are taught sensitively, thoroughly and to a very high standard. Pupils are very aware of the dangers of alcohol and substance abuse; they know how to keep themselves safe and use the internet and school equipment safely and sensibly. They are able to assess levels of risk to themselves and to others very effectively. Pupils benefit from at least two hours of physical education a week and this is further enhanced by after-school clubs and activities. Pupils demonstrate an extremely good

understanding of how to be healthy and make healthy choices; many would welcome even more opportunities to undertake additional sporting activities.

During the course of the inspection, pupils demonstrated the confidence and ability to express opinions clearly and politely, showing high levels of consideration for others. Pupils work very well independently or as part of a team and readily offer to help each other. Pupils who have been part of the buddy system have valued the support they have received from their peers. The quality of pupils' spiritual development is good and visitors to the school such as the local Methodist minister contribute effectively to pupils' spiritual development within assemblies. Pupils develop an extremely good appreciation of other cultures and faiths through activities in English, religious education, geography, PSHE, music and art. The links between the school and a school in Japan further complement this aspect of pupils' education.

Pupils engage actively and enthusiastically in their learning and are encouraged to think creatively and show initiative. The manner in which they do this and behave in class and around the school is exemplary; not a single pupil was observed misbehaving during the course of the inspection. Pupils contribute extremely well to their community and some have been involved in the appointment of new staff. They contribute extremely well to the school being a wonderful place to work and learn. The school prepares pupils very effectively for their future economic well-being through the standards pupils achieve, by having increased and improved the provision for ICT as well as providing helpful career guidance in Year 8. The school has also helped to raise pupils' awareness of the world of work through visitors who come to the school to speak to pupils. However, the school recognises that even more could be done to further raise pupils' economic awareness and financial literacy.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching is at least good in all major respects and is exemplary in significant elements. The school makes excellent use of specialist teaching in both key stages and uses a range of set and mixed ability teaching. The best teaching and learning is characterised by teachers demonstrating excellent subject knowledge, especially when this is matched with high levels of understanding of the different ways in which pupils learn. The best lessons included not only clear learning objectives, high expectations and very good demonstrations, but also an excellent use of visual resources, a good range of different activities, opportunities for pupils to discuss and share ideas, as well as the time for them to think creatively and apply newly acquired skills and knowledge. In all of the eight part lessons which were observed, pupils were encouraged to evaluate their progress and consider ways they could further improve their work. This in turn accelerated the rate of progress made in all lessons by all pupils. Those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities received very good additional support provided not only by their teacher but also teaching assistants.

In a small minority of lessons, there was an over-reliance on pupils' auditory skills to support their learning and there was insufficient use of visual prompts or aids. Where teaching could be improved further, links to other areas of learning or real life experiences were limited. There were also at times missed opportunities for pupils to write or make notes to assist with subsequent writing. While teachers make good use of ICT to support their teaching, pupils would welcome more opportunities for them to use ICT as a tool during class-based lessons.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The implementation of the Primary and Secondary National Strategies has helped the school to become more creative with its curriculum provision, including the teaching of French and food technology as from Year 5. There are also more cross-curricular links to ensure that subject content is planned and taught within a more meaningful context. Pupils develop good ICT skills in discrete ICT lessons as well as in their learning across the curriculum. Pupils have also benefited considerably from links with other schools including a school which has specialist status for art. More than 250 pupils benefit from high quality peripatetic music tuition resulting in pupils developing high levels of skills.

The curriculum is enriched by visits abroad as well as to places of interest in the United Kingdom. Pupils appreciate the very good extra-curricular activities available to them after school. There is also additional provision through a breakfast club, which includes early morning lessons as well as breakfast. This is helping targeted pupils to make additional gains where needed.

The school recognises that, while most curricular planning is of high quality, in a minority of cases further improvements to the planning could be made.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school demonstrates equally high levels of academic as well as pastoral care, guidance and support. The most vulnerable pupils receive extremely well planned and well organised additional support. Individual education plans are detailed, specific to needs and are of high quality. These are reviewed with pupils and parents on a termly basis. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities progress as well as their peers.

The school has ensured that all adults, be they staff or volunteers at the school, have been checked and cleared to ensure their suitability to work with children. The school undertakes regular risk assessments of the grounds as well as for visits outside the school grounds.

The excellent links with the first school have helped to smooth and ease transition from Year 4 to Year 5. The extremely good support includes mediation courses for vulnerable pupils.

The school has a register of those pupils who are gifted and talented and ensures these pupils receive appropriate levels of support and enrichment. Consequently, there is an appropriate level of challenge for these pupils during lessons.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Despite changes to the leadership of the school, the quality of leadership and management continues to be excellent. The newly appointed headteacher, together with the governing body and senior leadership management team, has a clear vision for the school. In a very short space of time, they are already working very effectively as a team and providing the school with a continued clear sense of purpose and direction.

There is a good and improving shared level of leadership throughout the rest of the school and this contributes to staff feeling valued and very well supported. Consequently, leaders and managers at all levels are impacting on raising standards and helping to further improve the

quality of teaching. Newly qualified teachers receive excellent support from mentors as well as leaders, managers and coordinators. This has enabled them to quickly develop additional skills.

There is an annual programme of monitoring and evaluation to which all leaders and managers contribute. The outcomes help to inform subsequent action and improvement planning. However, these are not all of an equally high standard and it is only recently that lesson observations have included judgements about standards and progress. Some subject action plans do not make it clear how actions or new initiatives will be of benefit to learners and the success criteria are not always sufficiently measurable.

The governing body provides the school with an excellent level of support in the way in which it discharges its duties.



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## Inspection judgements

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<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>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

25 April 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ferndown Middle School, Ferndown, Dorset BH22 9UP

I am writing to thank you for your contribution to the inspection and to share the main findings with you.

The inspection judged your school to be outstanding; this is because you work very hard, you are extremely well taught and the curriculum, as well as the quality of care, guidance and support you receive, are all excellent. Furthermore, those responsible for leading and managing the school do this extremely well. As a result, you are making outstanding progress from the time you arrive at the school until you leave. While at the school, you develop an excellent range of personal, social as well as academic skills and your behaviour is exemplary.

Your school already knows the things it could do even better. However, I have asked your school to improve some of the documents which are used to identify how your education can be made even better.

It was a real pleasure visiting your school and I really enjoyed speaking to some of you and listening to your views. I was very impressed with how mature you are and how well you were able to express your views. I wish you every happiness and success.

Yours sincerely

G Gordelier Her Majesty's Inspector