

Robert Bloomfield Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109652
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	302321
Inspection date	15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	797
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Ford
Headteacher	Mr Adrian Rogers
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2003
School address	Bloomfield Drive Shefford Bedfordshire SG17 5BU
Telephone number	01462 628800
Fax number	01462 628801

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- Are standards and achievement outstanding and if so why?
- What are the key factors in teaching which ensure that pupils achieve as well as they possibly can?
- What are the key factors in leadership and management that are contributing to the school's highly successful track record?

Evidence was gathered from analysis of school documentation, observation of lessons, conversations with learners and discussions with teachers, senior staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Robert Bloomfield Middle School is popular and heavily over-subscribed. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average but the percentage of those with a statement of special educational need is just above that usually found. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and those with English as an additional language is low. A below average proportion is entitled to free school meals. Pupils' attainment on entry at Year 5 exceeds levels expected nationally. The school has 'Healthy School' accreditation and Sportsmark Gold.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The accuracy and effectiveness of Robert Bloomfield School's self-evaluation is excellent and inspection evidence confirms that this is an outstanding school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and submitted many letters of support in addition to the inspection questionnaires. The vast majority say that they are well informed and fully involved in their child's education. One wrote, 'I am thrilled to see both of my children excelling in different areas for different reasons; on all counts the school has excelled in providing first class care and education for two very different children.' The headteacher's exceptional leadership and relentless energy have ensured that every member of staff shares the school's vision for the future and that there is no room for complacency. Senior and middle managers are exciting, inspirational leaders who continually seek ways to make the school even better. They work hard and well together driving forward continual improvement. Leaders at all levels are completely focused on raising standards and making sure that all pupils achieve as well as they possibly can. This is done highly effectively through the systematic monitoring of the quality of teaching, by regularly reviewing the curriculum and by supporting staff through a rigorous programme of training linked to the school development plan. Leaders strive incessantly to ensure that each pupil has an equal opportunity to achieve through effective assessment of their individual needs. No child is left behind in this school. Governors have an excellent understanding of school improvement and know how they can help to maximise achievement for pupils too. Pupils are firmly at the heart of all the school does. Leadership and management are outstanding, ensuring that there is excellent capacity to improve even further.

Pupils enter Year 5 with National Curriculum levels which exceed those expected nationally and make outstanding progress to reach very high standards by the end of Year 8. Pupils achieve very well in the Key Stage 2 tests at the end of Year 6 and reach significantly above average standards in English, mathematics and science. In recent years, Year 8 pupils have taken the previous year's national tests designed for Year 9 to assess their achievement. The school's own data show them to have achieved excellent results. However, this year, they have been entered for these Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests a year early and are on track to meet their highly challenging targets.

A number of factors have a positive impact pupils' achievement. One is the excellent teaching that focuses tightly on building upon what pupils already know, so that learning time is not wasted. Teachers use a common format when planning lessons and emphasise what pupils should achieve in lessons and how they should achieve it. Teachers ensure that pupils know the level at which they are working and how to reach the next level. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and written feedback gives helpful hints and tips on how to improve it. Teachers use a variety of teaching styles to motivate and absorb pupils in their learning. Interactive whiteboards engage them well in lessons and probing questions make them think. Pupils enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers. Currently the school is determined to improve its provision even more by focusing on ensuring that pupils learn more independently through group and paired work. Staff are working towards providing a more personalised approach to each individual pupil's learning.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding. Pupils are extremely happy in school. Smiling faces and excellent relationships observed both in and out of classrooms illustrate students' great enjoyment of school life. One said, 'There is never a moment when I don't want to be here.' Pupils behave superbly well and are polite and courteous. Their

attendance is excellent. Students feel safe in school and in the words of one, 'The staff at Robert Bloomfield are very friendly and are always there if you need to talk to them.' They say that bullying is extremely rare but is dealt with effectively if it happens. Peer mediators help pupils who need to talk. Pupils are aware of how to lead healthy lifestyles and excitedly spoke about how they ran a competition to find the most healthy lunch boxes. They awarded raffle tickets to pupils bringing in healthy food and the prize was a swimming trip. Pupils praised the wide variety of sporting opportunities open to them and showed that they are proud of the competitions they have won. However, another pupil said that it was the taking part that really mattered. Pupils explained clearly about the target setting process in their school. They know their target levels and know what they need to do to achieve them. This is because heads of year work tirelessly to ensure that the academic and pastoral guidance offered to pupils is first rate. Targets are linked inextricably with levels of attainment. The tracking of pupil progress is excellent and pinpoints those pupils in need of extra help or challenge. This has had a real impact on raising standards. It ensures that those pupils in danger of underachieving catch up successfully and that those who receive extra encouragement and support to reach the highest levels of attainment do very well too. This high quality academic guidance contributes extremely well to the outstanding care, guidance and support pupils receive. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and the systems to safeguard them are robust.

There is a highly effective and influential school council. Councillors act as exemplary role models for other pupils. Pupils have numerous opportunities to take on responsibilities both inside and beyond the school community. Pupils involve themselves in many aspects of community life by raising money for a number of charities, by putting on an annual Christmas concert and tea party for senior citizens and by visiting nearby schools. Pupils help to run the sports days for local first schools and Year 8 pupils go in to these schools to help the induction process. Year 5 pupils run a 'buddy' system with Year 4 pupils to aid transition into Robert Bloomfield. The school has a strong link with an orphanage in Kasisi. The school council was originally responsible for establishing this link. Economic well-being is very well developed through pupils learning to handle budgets and developing their enterprise skills. Pupils have high levels of basic skills. Year 8 pupils are now engaged in a series of 'options' on a Friday afternoon which allow them to follow courses to enhance their awareness of workplace skills. These include German, electronics, manufacturing, keyboard skills and the 'Sports' Leaders Award'.

Excellent links made across subjects and other aspects of the school's work contribute well towards the outstanding curriculum. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about how they had enjoyed learning about Shakespeare in English because work in drama had brought it to life. They had learned about The Globe Theatre in history for instance. English lessons also bring about an awareness of different cultures through carefully chosen texts. This was observed in an excellent lesson during the inspection. There are many opportunities for pupils to experience different enrichment activities which makes learning fun and interesting. During 'Science Week', there were sessions led by the Education and Business Partnership where pupils worked in teams on projects such as global warming and 'Life in the Future'. Some pupils have participated in the national 'maths challenge'. Those pupils with gifts and talents benefit from participating in master classes as part of the 'Children's University'. This gives further opportunities for pupils to pursue interests beyond the curriculum. Pupils praise the extra-curricular clubs provided by the school and appreciate the time given by their teachers. The provision for citizenship and for personal and social education is excellent. The curriculum has something to offer every child.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the plans in place to provide more opportunities for independent and personalised learning are implemented effectively.

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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

16 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Robert Bloomfield Middle School, Shefford, SG17 5BU

I would like to say thank you for the warm welcome I received when I visited your school recently. I was very impressed by the way you behaved and how polite and courteous you all were. No wonder your headteacher is so proud of you all. You spoke about how much you enjoy coming to Robert Bloomfield and praised all the clubs, visits and extra activities that are provided for you. I am pleased that you understand how to lead healthy and active lives and how some of you organise raffles to encourage all pupils to do this. This is highly commendable; well done. It was good to see that you care about others, raise money for charity and put on concerts for the elderly.

I am very pleased that you do so very well in tests and that you reach very high standards. The amount of progress you make whilst in this school is excellent. You all know what levels you are working at and understand how to do even better. This is because your headteacher and all his staff do a super job and care about you all very much. They all want the very best for each of you. Robert Bloomfield is an outstanding school. The vast majority of your parents agree and many of them wrote long letters telling me about how much the school has helped you to excel. Thank you to some of you who also wrote me a letter. The school governors also work very hard and do a brilliant job helping your headteacher.

I have asked that your headteacher and his staff put into action the plans they have to ensure that you learn things more independently for yourselves and that your learning becomes more meaningful to you as an individual.

I hope that you all continue to work hard and enjoy your education at Robert Bloomfield and I wish you all the success you deserve in the future.

Kind regards

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead inspector