

Holywell CofE VA Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109712
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	310077
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
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 category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	547
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Billington
Headteacher	Miss C Mc Master and Mr D Hall (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2004
School address	Red Lion Close Cranfield Bedford Bedfordshire MK43 0JA
Telephone number	01234 750381
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Age group	9-13
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Holywell is a Voluntary Aided, Church of England middle school. It mainly serves children from the two villages of Cranfield and Wootton. A significant number of pupils come from overseas each year to be with their parents at Cranfield University. Five per cent of pupils have English as an additional language. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is above average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below the national average. Amongst its awards, the school has achieved Healthy School Status, Artsmark, Sportsmark, the Community Rugby Award and the Football Association Charter.

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 with good capacity to improve further. In recent years, the school has reached a plateau so that progress across the school is now only satisfactory. In 2007, the school did not meet its challenging targets, although standards in national tests have been above average for several years. Pupils are on track to come closer to meeting their targets in the 2008 tests. The satisfactory progress is largely due to satisfactory teaching. There are strengths in teaching, particularly in the good relationships teachers have with their classes and good classroom management. However, teachers do not always plan creatively to provide challenging work for the different abilities in their classes or track progress consistently. The monitoring of teaching and the work of departments by subject co-ordinators is not sufficiently rigorous. The curriculum is good and there are excellent enrichment activities and a good range of extra-curricular clubs and sports events.

The school does well to create a harmonious and cohesive learning environment amongst the different nationalities. As one Year 6 pupil remarked, 'We all get along really well.' Attendance is good. Pupils are keen to say that they feel safe in school and are very well looked after. The majority of parents agree that their children enjoy school and that they are safe and well cared for, although several had concerns about the school's communication with them. Personal development is good and pupils generally behave well. Pupils are curious and lively and really enjoy their learning. They are articulate and mature and seize responsibilities enthusiastically. Pupils lead healthy lives and grow in confidence during their time in the school. They make a positive contribution to the school and wider community through a range of organised activities. They are well prepared for future working life through participation in events, such as the Go to Work with your Parent Day.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher resigned at Christmas and the two deputies have taken over as acting headteachers. They are doing a good job in difficult circumstances, and in a very short time they have begun to take effective steps to improve achievement, such as improving the analysis and use of data and implementing a new behaviour policy. An extensive new building programme has been an extra barrier to the smooth functioning of the school. A new headteacher has been appointed and will take up post in September.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in core subjects by consistently tracking pupils' progress across the school and intervening appropriately when needed.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that all learners can achieve their full potential.
- Ensure rigour and consistency in the monitoring and evaluation of the work of subject departments.

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

Pupils make satisfactory progress across the school. They enter the school in Year 5 with above average results and by the age of eleven, they attain above average standards in English,

mathematics and science. Results have fluctuated over the last three years. In 2007, attainment was above average in English and science and average in mathematics. Pupils achieve satisfactorily throughout the school, although the more able do not always reach their full potential. Pupils with learning difficulties do as well as expected. Those whose first language is not English tend to do well.

The school did not meet its targets for English, mathematics and science in 2007. The biggest gap between the target and the result was in mathematics, which was 12% below target for level 4 or above and 16% below target for level 5. The targets for level 5 in English and science were missed by 10% and 13% respectively. The school recognises the need to improve the percentage of pupils who obtain the higher levels, and has put some revision and booster sessions in place to help. The Year 6 targets for 2008 remain challenging, although the school's assessment information suggests that they will come nearer to meeting them this year.

Pupils' standards in other subjects are generally above average, which reflects their attainment when they come into the school. They make satisfactory progress until the end of Year 8.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The overwhelming majority of pupils enjoy school, as shown by their good attendance. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good, as reflected in their tolerance for the views, values and beliefs of other pupils. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that there are few racist and bullying incidents. Where bullying does happen, it is low level and is dealt with promptly and rigorously. Behaviour is good and most pupils behave well in lessons. However, movement around the school can be boisterous. Pupils say they know the behaviour expectations clearly and are motivated by the house point system.

Pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and drinking, but the take up of healthy school lunches has decreased. The development of good awareness of these issues has been raised by initiatives such as Food Week and the input of a dietician. High numbers of pupils take part in extra-curricular sports activities and competitive matches against other houses and schools. Pupils make good progress in preparation for their future economic well-being. This is mainly because personal, social, health and citizenship education lessons have been re-planned to include work beginning in Year 5 and continuing throughout school. Pupils make a good contribution to their school community by serving as sports captains, house captains and form representatives. The school council plays an active part in school life helping to introduce a games area and they were involved in the interviews for the new headteacher.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory and no inadequate teaching was seen. Good features were observed, such as the specialist knowledge teachers have of their subjects. In addition, they have good relationships with pupils and manage behaviour in lessons well. In a few lessons, effective use is made of self and peer assessment, but too often teachers do not use assessment and tracking data to tell pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. There is some good use made of information and communication technology (ICT), for example in a Year 5 geography lesson where pupils used an interactive whiteboard to learn the location of different

places on a world map. However, planning of lessons is a weaker aspect because teachers do not plan to meet the learning needs of individual pupils. This leads to teaching which lacks imagination and not enough being expected of more able pupils. Pupils often drive the learning forwards themselves by asking questions and seeking further explanations.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a broad range of work and activities, for example, all pupils study French and those in Years 7 and 8 drama also. Pupils' exceptional enjoyment of school is the result of the wide range of excellent additional opportunities, which are planned to improve their skills and understanding, whilst at the same time making learning interesting and fun. Pupils have taken part in French Week, Big Arts Week, Science Week, and have been involved in projects such as those with the Northampton Shoe Museum and a car manufacturer.

Pupils' spiritual and moral understanding is developed well through assemblies, lessons and projects involving local clergy, such as the recent 'Wedding Experience.' There are a good number of educational visits every year, as well as visitors to the school who involve pupils in special events. Many of these help develop pupils' cultural knowledge, such as visiting poets, writers and artists. A recent visit from a theatre group gave pupils a taste of African drumming, storytelling and dance, and every year pupils produce an anthology of their own poems. Pupils appreciate the good range of opportunities to take part in activities at lunchtime and after school and these add to their enjoyment of school life. A wide range of sporting activities is provided for them. There are also a variety of clubs, which include gardening, girls' computer club and Holywellers (a Christian club).

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares well for its pupils. There are robust procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils. Pupils from many different minority ethnic groups attend the school and they are warmly welcomed into the school community. Racist incidents are extremely rare because the school stays alert to all forms of abuse and deals with them effectively. 'The Zone' is a lunchtime club that provides a safe environment for those pupils most at risk of bullying and those who lack confidence.

Pastoral leaders know their pupils well and track their personal development but tracking academic progress is still in its infancy. Pupils do not clearly know the targets or levels they are aiming for in specific subjects or what they need to do to achieve these. There is effective liaison with feeder schools, particularly to ensure effective continuity and progression in pupil's care, achievement and standards. The school works well with outside agencies to ensure that pupils are well cared for and make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteachers are in the process of introducing reforms and initiatives that are already beginning to have a positive impact on achievement. For example, there is an electronic system to track progress across the school and systematic reviews of subject performance. The senior management team has started to play a greater role in the running of the school. However,

they do not have a strategic overview of improvements required at all levels. Middle managers are beginning to take more responsibility for achievement and standards and the work of their departments with the introduction of subject self-evaluation and lesson observation. However, the quality of monitoring is variable, and there is still some lack of focus on the progress pupils are making and what they need to do to improve. The school's own self-evaluation is satisfactory but overestimates pupils' achievement. The governing body is supportive and well informed and is beginning to challenge the school and hold it to account. The school finances are well managed and the school has just met the Government's standard for financial management.

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Annex A

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
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	2

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

14 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holywell C of E VA Middle School, Cranfield, MK43 0JA

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school on 12–13 March. We enjoyed talking with you. You told us how much you enjoy your learning at Holywell Middle school. We thought you would like to know what was good about your school.

- You showed motivation and enjoyment in your lessons. Most of you behave well, get on well together and look after each other.
- You know how to keep healthy by eating the right food and taking exercise.
- You enjoy the excellent range of activities provided for you.
- You told us that you feel safe in school and are well looked after. There is good guidance and support for those who need it.
- The new headteachers are making improvements to the working of the school.

This is how we thought your school could be improved.

- You could make faster progress especially in English, mathematics and science.
- Your teachers could make sure the tasks they set are suitable for your levels of ability and you know exactly what to do to improve.
- Subject coordinators could keep a closer check on what is happening in lessons.

We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones HMI