

Canford Heath Middle School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 113701 |
| Local Authority | Poole |
| Inspection number | 311341 |
| Inspection dates | 12–13 March 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Alex Baxter |

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

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| Type of school | Middle deemed primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 8–12 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 475 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Ann Harmsworth |
| Headteacher | P Harris |
| Date of previous school inspection | 29 September 2003 |
| School address | Learoyd Road Canford Heath Poole BH17 8PJ |
| Telephone number | 01202 676393 |
| Fax number | 01202 684557 |

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|--------------------------|------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large middle school mainly serves the local area. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who find learning difficult or have physical disabilities is slightly above average. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or with English as an additional language are below average. Pupils' attainment on entry generally matches the level expected for their age. The school holds the following awards: Artsmark, Sportsmark and Healthy Schools Status. There have been several changes in teaching staff in recent years and such instability in staffing continues.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school does not provide an effective education for its pupils. Senior managers, including governors, share this view, as do a significant minority of parents. Standards have fallen significantly since the last inspection and are below average in English, mathematics and science. These standards represent inadequate achievement by the time pupils leave the school. In addition, pupils' independent learning skills are weaker than they should be.

Leadership and management are inadequate. Self-evaluation is not effective. The headteacher and leaders acknowledge that they have not been able to sustain the higher standards evident at the time of the last inspection. Senior managers admit that they did not take decisive action early enough to address weaknesses. One reason for this is the lack of a systematic and consistently implemented strategy for tracking pupils' progress throughout the school. Because of this, even though senior managers know where there are weaknesses, in the absence of accurate information to agree appropriate action, they have not been able to act with sufficient rigour to raise expectations and bring about improvement.

The school has made improvements recently in some classes, for example, in addressing the legacy of prior underachievement of pupils of average ability in mathematics in Year 6. However, pupils' achievement across Years 4 to 6 remains inadequate. This is because the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent. In contrast, progress is generally satisfactory in Year 7, where pupils often experience more practical learning. Some more able pupils do well in Year 7 because they are encouraged to develop more mature attitudes to their learning. Current standards in Years 6 and 7 remain below average because pupils' skills in spelling, speaking, investigating in science and problem solving in mathematics are underdeveloped.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory and reflect the sound care, support and guidance they receive. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthily. They enjoy learning, but mostly when lessons are interesting and enable them to work practically. This is reflected in their good participation and prowess in sports and musical events, which are encouraged well by the headteacher. Behaviour is satisfactory. Most pupils behave well, but at times, although support has been improved, several pupils and parents still have concerns about the way issues are dealt with. A sound curriculum is enriched by a good range of clubs, sporting activities and visits. However, pupils throughout the school do not have enough opportunity to assume responsibility and to learn by finding things out for themselves. As a result, too many pupils lack the skills of enquiry and the basic academic knowledge needed for their future economic well-being.

The quality of teaching is inadequate and often fails to inspire pupils. Pupils' learning is very variable, depending upon which class they are in, and what subject they are studying. Strategies for assessing pupils' work do not provide an accurate picture of pupils' progress throughout the school. Even when some short-term assessments are accurate, they are not used with equal consistency by all teachers in their planning to meet pupils' differing needs. This means that

in too many lessons pupils' learning slows because work set is not accurately matched to their ability.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen leadership and management to make sure strategies introduced to improve provision and lift pupils' achievement are successful.
- Raise pupils' achievement and standards, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning, improving, particularly, the way teachers engage pupils' interest and match learning to their individual needs.
- Establish a coherent strategy for tracking pupils' progress throughout the school, so that teachers and their assistants can sustain pupils' achievement effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards in English, mathematics and science are slightly below average by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 7. This means that, in relation to their average starting points, pupils' achievement is inadequate. Too many pupils do not make enough progress through Years 4, 5 and 6, although they generally make satisfactory progress in Year 7, where some more able pupils do well. In national tests taken at the end of Year 6, standards were below average, significantly so in mathematics and science. Current standards are better in science and particularly in mathematics in Year 6, where several pupils of average ability have done well to bridge gaps in their previous learning. Standards in Years 6 and 7 in English, mathematics and science, although closer to what is expected nationally, remain below average. The number of pupils underachieving in mathematics in Years 4 and 5 has also been reduced. However, progress still varies too much across Years 4, 5 and 6 and remains unsatisfactory. Pupils' skills in spelling, enquiry and solving problems are not good enough. A significant number of pupils develop good skills in sports and music and show a greater interest and do better when undertaking practical activities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Most pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. Some say they find lessons fun. However, pupils' interest in learning varies, mostly when the work does not engage them or the teacher talks for too long. Although exclusion rates have been high, recent measures to reduce the number of excluded pupils have been effective. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a sound awareness of multicultural Britain. Most also show a good understanding of the needs of others and exhibit good manners by stopping to hold doors open for adults. A few pupils have behavioural needs and several parents have concerns about bullying and the way it is dealt with by the school, but during the inspection pupils showed sound relationships towards each other. Pupils show a good commitment to healthy lifestyles. They enjoy and participate fully in clubs and the school's annual health fortnight. Pupils undertake their responsibilities seriously, such as helping supervisors and other pupils at lunchtimes. Members of the school council, however, are not always allowed to make decisions themselves. Weaknesses in pupils' skills of enquiry and basic literacy and numeracy leave too many unprepared for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

There is too much variation in the quality of teaching and learning and this is slowing efforts to raise standards and improve progress. Although there are satisfactory elements in many lessons, there is not enough teaching which is good or better. In the best lessons, pupils make good progress because tasks and resources are matched to the range of ability of the pupils, and teaching assistants are deployed well. Most lessons are orderly, and pupils behave satisfactorily. However, teaching is often mundane or lacks real challenge because assessments and targets have not been used accurately or consistently enough to plan lessons that match pupils' needs, and pupils lose concentration quickly. Teachers do not always deal with pupils' inattention sufficiently well. Marking is also variable. Too many comments are simply expressions of praise and do not explain clearly how pupils might improve their work further. In most classes, relationships between pupils and teachers are satisfactory, so that pupils work cooperatively, and when working practically, with enthusiasm. Too often, lessons are dominated by 'teacher-talk' and pupils have limited opportunities to share views with others or to organise their own learning. Teaching assistants are not always used effectively enough to support specific learning activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils adequately and fulfils statutory requirements. Recent positive moves include teaching French to all years and providing a few additional activities for the gifted and talented pupils. The curriculum supports pupils' moral and social development and their awareness of their own and other cultures satisfactorily. However, there is limited provision for spiritual development and too few opportunities for reflection. Pupils are taught largely in mixed-ability groups, but teaching does not always ensure that work is matched to the full range of ability. There is adequate planning for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, but the implementation is inconsistent. Pupils have good opportunities to learn how to keep healthy. A strength of the school, encouraged particularly by the headteacher, is the good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, especially for sport and music, and the involvement of visiting speakers and groups.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Personal support for pupils is good. The school draws well on the expertise, support and opportunities offered by local agencies to give vulnerable pupils and their families effective support, and in many cases, to enable pupils to stay in school. The work the school does with pupils who have emotional and behavioural problems has led to a marked reduction in the number of exclusions. Attendance is monitored and promoted soundly. After a period of inconsistent practice, support for pupils who find learning difficult or who have physical needs is being strengthened and is now satisfactory. Day-to-day supervision by staff safeguards pupils' welfare satisfactorily, but inconsistent communication with pupils and parents too often leaves them feeling that actions taken have not been effective enough. Staff generally give sound oral guidance to pupils, but written guidance, including the use of targets, does not give clear enough advice to individual pupils to show them how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Self-evaluation is ineffective because senior leaders have not taken the necessary action to establish the consistent provision needed to ensure pupils' progress. Year-group leadership is constrained by the weak whole-school coordination of English and mathematics. Ineffective communication, frequent changes in staff and an under-developed unity of purpose hinder efforts to bring about improvement. Monitoring and support by the headteacher and local authority have brought about improvements in some classes. However, initiatives such as improving the use of assessment and targets to inform teaching and learning have not yet been implemented with sufficient consistency across the school. Not all staff challenge or support pupils to build on their skills sufficiently, particularly as independent learners. Key issues from the last inspection, especially raising of pupils' achievement and standards, have not been rectified; to the contrary, standards have declined. Governors have rightly expressed their concerns about the effectiveness of the school and, although challenging more strongly now, have not been successful in bringing about improvement. Without further outside help, the school does not have the capacity to improve.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 4 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | No |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 4 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 4 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 4 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 4 |

Personal development and well-being

| | |
|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 3 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 4 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 4 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 |

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

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 4 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 4 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 4 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 4 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 4 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 4 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | Yes |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Canford Heath Middle School, Poole, BH17 8PJ

Thank you for welcoming us, and special thanks to those of you who took the time to talk to us about the school. We were very interested to hear your views.

Unfortunately, we found that your school is not as good as it should be and needs to improve. We judge that the school should be placed in 'Special Measures'. This means that inspectors will continue to check the school and there will be extra support to help it improve.

- Too many of you, especially in Years 4 to 6, do not make enough progress and do not reach the standards in English, mathematics and science that you are capable of achieving.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors are trying hard to help you to learn better, but the school is not led and managed well enough to bring about the necessary improvement.
- The quality of teaching and learning varies too much. As a result, many of you find it difficult to learn and make enough progress.
- The school provides satisfactory care and learning opportunities for you. Most of you behave sensibly in school and enjoy and benefit from a good range of clubs.
- You like coming to school and attend regularly and know how to keep healthy.

To make sure that your school improves, we have asked the headteacher, governors and staff to help you to lift your achievements, especially in English, mathematics and science. We have also asked the school to improve teaching and learning and the way your progress is checked. To do this, the school's leadership and management will also have to be better.

You can help by always concentrating and giving of your best in lessons.

Thank you once again, and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter Lead inspector

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Lead inspector