

Allenbourn Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113859
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311409
Inspection date	6 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Mary Massey 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	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	602
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Howarth
Headteacher	Gordon MacRae
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2002
School address	East Borough Wimborne BH21 1PL
Telephone number	01202 886738
Fax number	01202 856058

Age group	9–13
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Allenbourn Middle School is a popular, over-subscribed school serving the market town of Wimborne and the rural areas to the north of the town. It is housed in new buildings which opened in 2003. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups or with a first language other than English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is close to the national average. The school has a specialist dyslexia unit for pupils from East Dorset. This accounts for the number of pupils with statements of special educational needs being above the national average. Whilst the majority of learners move on to a local upper school at the end of Year 8, a proportion leave the school at the end of Year 7 to start secondary school in neighbouring authorities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'Allenbourn is a fantastic school'. This is how one parent described the school and this view was echoed by many others. Another said, 'I am delighted with every aspect of the school and so is my daughter'. Pupils, too, feel lucky and proud to be able to attend a school where the care provided by staff and the quality of teaching and learning are outstanding. They describe lessons as interesting and enjoyable and the school as a happy and friendly place where everyone feels safe. Pupils feel they are trusted to behave sensibly and rise to that challenge. The good relationships between staff and pupils lead to a very calm and purposeful atmosphere.

Achievement and standards are outstanding. Pupils arrive at the school with broadly average ability, make exceptional progress and reach very high standards in national tests at the end of Year 6. They then continue to make excellent progress in Years 7 and 8. The majority of subjects are taught by specialist teachers in purpose-built accommodation. An outstanding curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs. The range of opportunities for pupils to develop their musical and sporting skills outside lessons is impressive. Staff have the enthusiasm and energy to run a wide variety of clubs and school trips that support learning and provide broader experiences of the wider world.

The headteacher believes passionately that the route to high achievement and a successful future for pupils lies in the quality of teaching and learning that the school provides. His regular classroom observations encourage staff to develop their skills so that they provide interesting, paced lessons where pupils are actively involved in their learning. Pupils can confidently explain their targets and what they need to do in order to reach them. They willingly support one another in their learning and are encouraged to work independently. Parents value the commitment and dedication of teachers. They describe them as reassuring, approachable and willing to listen to their views.

Both teaching and support staff involve themselves in outstanding care, support and guidance for pupils which helps them to develop into responsible and confident individuals. Activities in and out of the classroom develop pupils' personal skills so they are very well prepared for the future. They willingly take on responsibility, for example, by serving on the school council, by acting as peer mentors or by organising fund-raising events, and so they make a positive contribution to the community. Pupils show commitment to a healthy lifestyle. Their social, moral and spiritual awareness is excellent but, in this largely White British school, their understanding of the range of cultural diversity in Britain is more limited.

High expectations and a sharp focus on teaching and learning lie at the heart of the headteacher's vision for the future of the school. Systems for analysing data and monitoring progress to identify the strengths and areas for development in the school are exceptionally thorough and detailed. This very effective self-evaluation process takes place within subject departments as well as across the whole school and leads to a clear understanding amongst all staff of ways forward for further improvement. Governors visit the school regularly and provide support and challenge for the school's leadership. Outstanding leadership and management generate enthusiasm, energy and commitment amongst both staff and pupils. As a result, Allenbourn is an outstanding school with an outstanding capacity to improve further

What the school should do to improve further

- Engage pupils in curricular and extra-curricular activities that improve their understanding of Britain's diversity.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement and standards are outstanding. Pupils have broadly average attainment on entry to the school. They make very good progress in Years 5 and 6 and attain standards that are well above the national average in national tests. Evidence from the high schools to which most of the pupils transfer and analysis of current data for pupils in Years 7 and 8 show that they make outstanding progress towards challenging targets. The school's exceptionally thorough and regular analysis of all pupils' progress and attainment identifies early those pupils who are doing less well. This allows the school to focus extra support sharply on those pupils who need it. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve as well as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They enjoy school a great deal and attendance is well above the national average. They relish the wide range of opportunities they are given and the choices they are offered to follow their interests and take on new challenges. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is excellent and pupils show high levels of consideration for others. They act safely and responsibly, both in lessons and during breaks and lunchtimes. On the very rare occasions when bullying happens, pupils are confident that it will be dealt with quickly and effectively.

Pupils have a very clear understanding of right and wrong and of their responsibilities towards others. They make a positive contribution to the community, both in and out of school, through their peer support system, the school council, and a range of charitable work locally and further afield. One pupil was very clear that, 'We learn quite a lot about what happens to the people ... We don't just give them money'. They develop skills that contribute to their future economic well-being, for example, through a recent mini-enterprise project to develop healthy products. This kind of activity and the high take-up of sporting opportunities mean that they have a very good commitment to healthy lifestyles.

Pupils' spiritual, social and moral development is very good, but they have only limited experience and understanding of other cultures, and especially of Britain as a diverse society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding overall. Pupils thrive and make exceptionally good progress. In lessons, tasks are sufficiently challenging and varied for pupils to retain their interest and motivation, so that they achieve well. When pupils are asked to work independently, the atmosphere in classrooms is quiet and purposeful. Teachers know their subjects well and are skilled at matching their teaching to pupils' learning needs. They provided regular, constructive feedback which allows pupils to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The school places a strong emphasis on information and

communication technology to enhance the quality of teaching. Teaching assistants are very well deployed to support pupils' learning.

Pupils are set appropriate targets. The emphasis on pupils assessing their own and each other's work has benefited them and has also provided an opportunity for parents to learn what their child needs to focus on next.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. Its variety and richness, both in and out of the classroom, ensure that pupils can achieve very well, not just academically but in their personal development. One pupil said, 'It's such a diverse place. There are so many things to do.' Purpose-built facilities and an increasing amount of specialist teaching mean that, as pupils move through the school, they gradually become used to a secondary-style curriculum. This helps them to achieve very high standards. The range of extra-curricular activities is extensive. These include music, golf, table tennis, gardening club, mountain water experiences, and a wide variety of school visits.

The unit for pupils with dyslexia provides a curriculum that is very well matched to those pupils' needs so that they make very good progress and can move on to high school without further such support.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The professional commitment of teachers and support staff and very high quality management mean that there are robust systems for supporting pupils personally and academically. Academic guidance is very strong. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, are set appropriate targets and supported to reach them successfully. Safeguarding arrangements and risk assessments are rigorous. Pupils are confident that there is always someone to talk to if they are in difficulty, whether this is a 'peer supporter' or an adult.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The quality of leadership and management is exceptional. Systems for monitoring and evaluating pupils' performance and teaching and learning are exemplary. These are embedded firmly across all departments and lead to focused identification of areas for development, clear planning and effective implementation. Staff with management responsibilities are trusted to use their initiative to find creative and innovative ways to raise standards. Appropriate training is provided in response to need and staff are encouraged to develop their careers further. The headteacher regularly observes lessons and his judgements about the quality of teaching are both accurate and perceptive.

Governors have recently led work with staff to develop a clear vision and a new strategic plan for the future. The majority are regular visitors to the school and are involved in activities such as departmental reviews, school trips, lesson observations and the school council. This represents an outstanding commitment.

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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?	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

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	2
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

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 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

7 June 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Allenbourn Middle School, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 1PL

I am sure you will remember when I came to inspect your school on 6 June. I would like to thank you for the friendly way in which you welcomed me and told me about how much you like Allenbourn. I was very impressed by the responsible and confident way in which you behave and how well you look after each other and make new pupils feel welcome. I would like to tell you about my findings.

Allenbourn is an outstanding school. Pupils make very good progress and achieve excellent results because teaching is very good and the curriculum matches your needs very well. Teachers work hard to make sure that lessons are interesting and enjoyable and allow you to be active in lessons. All of the pupils I spoke to could tell me how well they were doing and what they needed to do in order to do better.

Your school is not just about examination results, though. There are lots of activities for you to join in outside lessons. This helps you grow into considerate, thoughtful and healthy young people who are prepared well for the future. Your school is a safe place to be and everyone I spoke to said how much they enjoyed being at school –both staff and pupils. There is one area I have asked the school to improve, and that is to increase your understanding of all the different races and cultures of people in Britain today, by providing activities both in and out of lesson time.

You have an excellent headteacher and staff who care very much about your well-being. I hope you will continue to support them in making Allenbourn such a splendid school.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Massey HMI