

Chesswood Middle School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 125961 |
| Local Authority | West Sussex |
| Inspection number | 315372 |
| Inspection date | 5 February 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Sheila Browning |

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 | 479 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | David Romaine |
| Headteacher | D Newnham |
| Date of previous school inspection | 19 January 2004 |
| School address | Chesswood Road Worthing BN11 2AA |
| Telephone number | 01903 204141 |
| Fax number | 01903 215032 |

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

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards in mathematics and particularly in relation to girls; establishing whether pupils' personal development and well-being is as strong as the provision suggests in the school's self-evaluation; and whether assessment, including pupils' self-assessment, is being used well enough to bring about improvement in pupils' achievement and standards. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated 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 the report. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data and documents. In addition, interviews were held with pupils, members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior and middle managers.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school in a designated regeneration area. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with statements of special educational need is much higher than that found nationally. Most children are from White British backgrounds, though a few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Attainment on entry varies slightly from year to year, but is mostly below average.

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: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. It is popular and parents strongly support the school's work and praise its leadership. Parents say the school is 'attentive to children's needs' and 'my child is happy and really loves going to Chesswood'. The school is well focused on the needs of each child. Pupils' mature, thoughtful behaviour and their great care for one another reflect their outstanding personal development. As one pupil said, 'We like to help each other and try hard to get the platinum awards and to be on the roll of honour'. Pupils greatly enjoy school and this is clearly evident in their smiling faces. For example, Year 4, working with an opera company on their 'Opera Narnia', thoroughly enjoyed rehearsing in readiness for their performance.

Strong features include the school's flexibility in responding to individual needs and its good pastoral care. Both demonstrate the school's inclusiveness. A significant minority of pupils whose attendance had been very poor has improved significantly as a result of the excellent links with external agencies and partnerships with families. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are robust. Racial and bullying incidences are rare and pupils know they each have a named adult that they can talk to if they have a problem.

The headteacher is the key to the good leadership and management. He has high expectations for continued school improvement, and this vision is shared amongst an experienced and effective delegated leadership team. Staff know they are accountable and what is expected of them. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and successful action has been taken to improve pupils' achievement, which reflects a good capacity to improve further. Governors provide good support and challenge the school's performance. They have radically changed their working practices and are seeking Governors' Mark accreditation to ensure they are even more effective in their role.

Pupils' achievement across the age range is good because all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, receive good support from teachers and well-qualified teaching assistants. Standards are average by the end of Year 6 and, by Year 7, pupils are on the way to meeting, and often exceeding, the levels expected for their age. This reflects good achievement, given their generally below average starting points. The school recognises that although academic guidance is good, pupils are not involved enough in assessing their own learning. In a few mathematics lessons, pupils selected work set at different levels of difficulty and discussed the outcomes with 'talking partners'. This resulted in them having a clearer understanding of what they needed to do to improve further. Such good practices are not consistently followed throughout the school.

Pupils achieve particularly well in reading, science and information and communication technology (ICT). A high priority is given to reading, with dedicated library sessions, and pupils are encouraged to think in a 'scientific way'. ICT is well resourced, taught discretely and used to support learning in other subjects. Improving pupils' writing skills has been an ongoing priority which has resulted in rising standards. Information from the school's rigorous charting of pupils' progress is used very well to trigger additional support. Nonetheless, pupils' achievement in mathematics is relatively weaker than in English and science. The school has identified a group of more able and lower-attaining girls who are not achieving as well as the boys and has set about tackling this. Arrangements have been reviewed for teaching in ability groups, smaller teaching groups introduced and teachers' planning revised to broaden pupils'

learning experiences in mathematics. These changes are too recent to have shown a measurable impact on standards.

The curriculum is good. A wealth of popular extra-curricular clubs, from film club to nature watch, educational trips and visitors, enrich the curriculum. Special events, culture weeks, and science and activity days provide exciting learning experiences. All pupils learn French. Studies of different countries and 'virtual trips' to China, India and Spain, and links with other schools in Latvia, Honduras and Ghana, all make a positive contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development, including their spiritual and cultural development. As a result, pupils make a good contribution in their school and wider community. They care for the wildlife area, recycle paper and mobile phones and listen to and question local councillors and politicians. Pupils are well prepared for their future lives. Pupils have a very clear appreciation of the importance of leading safe and healthy lifestyles. They are proud of the vital role that the School Council has played in bringing back hot lunches and they are setting up a healthy snack stall.

Lessons are engaging; the use of interactive whiteboards and good quality learning resources have increased pupils' enjoyment and involvement in their learning. This is why teaching is good. Marking is often, but not always, linked to pupils' learning targets, and includes some helpful comments to move pupils on. Teachers use well-tried teaching methods and ensure pupils understand exactly what it is they are going to learn. Whilst lesson planning indicates work is generally well matched to pupils' differing abilities, this is not always the case. In some lessons, particularly in mathematics, the work set does not always offer appropriate challenge to all pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure work is always well matched to pupils' different learning needs so they are always fully challenged, particularly in mathematics
- ensure greater consistency in involving pupils in assessing their own work to help them improve their achievement and raise standards.

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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? | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 |

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 | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| 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? | 2 |
| 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

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| 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

5 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chesswood Middle School, Worthing BN11 2AA

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. How nice it was to watch you hard at work but really enjoying yourselves. You told me lots of things about your school which were very useful when it came to writing my report. I am writing to tell you that Chesswood is a good school.

Here are some other important things about your school:

- you make good progress, especially in your reading, science and ICT
- teaching is good and teachers make sure your lessons are interesting
- the curriculum is good and you told me about the excellent clubs, activities, visits and visitors that you enjoy so much
- the headteacher, governors and staff are all working hard to help you do your very best and make the school even better than it is
- your behaviour and attitudes to school are outstanding; you treat other people really well and get on so well together
- you know a lot about people from different cultural backgrounds and appreciate their differences
- the school takes good care of you, it is safe and you know so much about how to lead safe and healthy lifestyles.

Here are some things the school has been asked to improve:

- refine lesson planning to ensure work is always well matched to your different learning needs so that you are always fully challenged
- involve you more in assessing your own work.

You can do your bit by continuing to work hard and telling your teachers if the work you do is too easy or too hard for you. Also, you can help your teachers in checking how well you are doing.

Sheila Browning Lead Inspector

5 February 2008

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Lead Inspector