

Marston Vale Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109653
Local Authority	Bedford Borough
Inspection number	324997
Inspection date	3 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Lindsay Hebditch 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	9–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	488
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Adele Moore
Headteacher	Mr Jim Godfrey
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2006
School address	The Crescent Stewartby Bedford Bedfordshire MK43 9NH
Telephone number	01234 768224
Fax number	01234 768224

Age group	9–14
Inspection date	3 June 2009
Inspection number	324997

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. It also investigated the following issues: the progress made by boys; pupils' attitudes, punctuality and behaviour; and assessment and individual target setting. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records. Other evidence included completed parental questionnaires, the scrutiny of curriculum and planning documents, observation of the school's work and interviews with staff and pupils. 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 this report.

Description of the school

Marston Vale Middle School is a smaller than average sized school located in the village of Stewartby to the south-west of Bedford. Pupils are drawn from local villages and demand for places is high. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is low. Most pupils are of White British origin and there are few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is close to the national figure. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or speech, language and communication difficulties. There are slightly more boys than girls in the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Marston Vale Middle School is a good school. It has outstanding features in the exceptionally high standards achieved by pupils in mathematics and in the quality of care, guidance and support. It enjoys an excellent local reputation and provides a safe, calm environment in which students enjoy their education and achieve their potential. The vast majority of parents praise the school for the quality of education it provides and the commitment of its staff to meeting the needs of every pupil. One parent summed up the views of many by commenting that, 'I feel that the school helps all children, irrespective of their ability and needs; my child is making remarkable progress.'

Achievement and standards are good. Pupils enter the school with standards that are broadly average. They then make good progress so that by the end of Key Stage 2 their standards are above average. This progress is maintained in Key Stage 3 so that pupils are well prepared to make the transition to the local upper school. The excellent standards that pupils reach in mathematics are a strong feature of the school. Standards in English, particularly in relation to written English, are above average and in science they are average. Girls generally achieve better than boys but the school's wholehearted efforts to improve boys' achievements have been successful and the gap in performance is narrowing. The school's commitment to inclusion is demonstrated by the fact that pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who find learning difficult make the same good progress as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils say how much they enjoy school and this is reflected both in their high standards of behaviour and in the courtesy they show to their peers and adults. Attendance is broadly satisfactory. However, figures are reduced particularly by the authorised absence of pupils due to family holidays taken during term time. This also has an impact on the amount of support they require so they can catch up with work when they return. The school is now introducing a broad range of initiatives to involve parents more fully in helping to reduce absence. The school's behaviour management procedures are highly developed, enabling teachers to focus publicly on good behaviour while privately addressing behaviour which requires improvement. There are extremely rigorous procedures to combat bullying; incidents are rare and are dealt with robustly if they do occur. The school places a high priority on health and fitness and most pupils try hard to eat healthily. The introduction of a daily enrichment period has been a successful initiative, providing all pupils with an additional opportunity to undertake supervised physical exercise. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong and demonstrate good awareness of social and moral issues. The school's pupil council has a genuine influence on school decision making, for example the adoption of a 'friendship bench' for younger pupils. The personal finance education group and recently introduced careers education programme, ensure that pupils have excellent opportunities to develop their economic awareness.

Teaching and learning are good. Most teachers are highly experienced and knowledgeable about their subjects. This enables them to concentrate on pupils' learning and thus helps pupils make good progress. The best lessons are well planned and capture the attention of pupils because they are relevant, challenging and fun. The use that teachers make of information and learning technology to support learning is exemplary. Assessment is accurate and the marking of students' work is mostly thorough, providing appropriate guidance on how work could be improved. The monitoring of learning, which was identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection, is now a strength of the school. Targets for individual pupils are set routinely

but a small amount of inconsistency occurs with regard to the quality of these targets and sometimes pupils are not absolutely clear about what they need to do to achieve them.

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of all pupils. Improving pupils' literacy and numeracy is at the heart of all curriculum planning; the development of personalised learning through projects such as 'My Maths' and 'Reading Coach' are helping boys in particular to make better progress. The school has identified where further improvements to the curriculum are required and is revising its arrangements for setting in English, mathematics and French so that pupils of all abilities receive sufficient challenge. There is an excellent range of enrichment activities and participation rates are high, adding much to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school has effective procedures for safeguarding learners which meet current statutory requirements. Strong links with external agencies mean that specialist support is always available for any pupils, including vulnerable children, who are facing difficulties in their lives. The school has an excellent record of reintegrating pupils into school who have experienced difficulties elsewhere. Pupils who find learning difficult receive outstanding support through a very wide range of well-considered additional learning activities and 'booster' classes which help them to match the good progress of other pupils. Transition arrangements from local primary schools, and to the nearby upper school, are managed extremely well, enabling pupils to settle in quickly to their new surroundings.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and the senior leadership team have a clear vision for the school, which focuses on enabling every individual pupil to achieve their potential. This vision is embraced wholeheartedly by staff and, despite uncertainty over the future of the school, morale is good. Management roles and responsibilities are defined clearly in the school and the strong focus on professional development has increased the capacity of middle management. The promotion of equality is outstanding and the school's contribution to community cohesion is good. Quality assurance is robust, including good systems for lesson observation and subject performance review. Governors are supportive but provide an appropriate level of challenge to managers where necessary. The school has a good record of meeting its key performance targets. The school benefits from good, well-maintained accommodation and excellent resources, particularly in computing, music and sports, which pupils appreciate greatly. The school has made good progress since the last inspection. This, together with its realistic self-evaluation and comprehensive development planning, provide it with good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attendance throughout the school.
- Ensure that the school adopts a more consistent approach to target setting for individual pupils.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

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

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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 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?	1

Leadership and management

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

4 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marston Vale Middle School, Stewartby MK43 9NH

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. I enjoyed talking to you and have made sure that I have reflected your views in this report. I hope that many of you will find time to read it because you should feel very proud of what it says about your school and the hard work that you have put in to make it a success. Many of your parents took the trouble to complete the questionnaires I sent out and I would be grateful if you could pass on my thanks to them for replying. Their comments and yours were very helpful in helping me to reach my overall judgement about the school.

Marston Vale Middle School is a good school but some aspects of it, such as the quality of guidance and support you receive and the standards you reach in mathematics, are exceptionally high. I was very impressed by the way you launch yourselves into school life and felt that the very good progress you make in lessons is the direct result of this.

Your headteacher and senior leadership team have plans to make the school even better. I identified two things that the school should do to help them in this, the first of which you can do a lot to help with yourselves:

- improve attendance throughout the school
- ensure that the school adopts a more consistent approach to target setting for individual pupils.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Well done!

Yours faithfully

Lindsay Hebditch

Her Majesty's Inspector