

# Newnham Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109661
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bedford Borough
<b>Inspection number</b>	324999
<b>Inspection date</b>	3 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Jones HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	596
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Malcolm Green
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Maxine Burrows
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 February 2006
<b>School address</b>	Polhill Avenue Bedford MK41 9DT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 303 403
<b>Fax number</b>	01234 303 404

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<b>Age group</b>	9–13
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how good is achievement for all groups of pupils across both key stages
- the quality of teaching and learning, especially in relation to behaviour management
- how well the school has responded to curriculum reforms and how well the curriculum meets the needs of the pupils.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, achievement and attainment information, including the Qualifications Curriculum Authority optional test results, observation of lessons, scrutiny of documentation provided by the school, observation of the school at work, discussions with senior managers, talking to governors and pupils and an analysis of parents' questionnaires. 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

Newnham Middle School serves a diverse area of North Bedford, which has a wide range of different ethnic and socio-economic groups. The school has a smaller-than-average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is larger than the national average. There is a larger-than-average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is broadly equal to the national average. The school has Healthy Schools accreditation and the Sportsmark award. The school is currently subject to reorganisation proposals.

## 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. It is improving and has a good capacity to improve further. The new headteacher has only been in post for five weeks but has made a good start and is leading the school with a clear determination to raise standards.

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Younger pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve results broadly in line with the national average in the Key Stage 2 tests. They make much better progress in reading and writing than in mathematics, with a marked and sustained improvement in writing. Older pupils make good progress and achieve well in the optional tests in Years 7 and 8, except in science where their attainment is below average. Those who require extra help with their learning make good progress due to the quality of skilled individual support they receive. Lower attaining boys do not make as much progress as lower attaining girls but the school is taking action to try to remedy this situation. Lessons sometimes lack challenge for more able pupils.

Personal development is good. Pupils are well mannered, friendly and are keen to express their views. Behaviour is generally good, although a very small minority of pupils engage in low level disruption during a few lessons and over-boisterous behaviour at lunchtime. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is good: it is improving, as a result of stringent monitoring. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good: spiritual development is a particular strength, with visits from representatives of different faiths and a planned faith conference to be hosted by the school. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding about how to keep safe and healthy but some do not always apply this knowledge to the packed lunches they bring to school. An active school council encourages pupils to participate in making decisions, such as, improving the facilities in the playground and interviewing new staff. Pupils feel their views are taken seriously. Pupils contribute well to the wider community by, for example, helping out at local lower schools' sports days and acting as playground buddies. Pupils feel well prepared for the transition to the upper school and older pupils have started to follow some enterprise activities and are learning how to manage their own finances effectively.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but inconsistent. Most teachers manage behaviour well and are effectively supported by skilful teaching assistants but some lessons lack the drive and challenge to push up levels of attainment. The best lessons are characterised by good behaviour management, effective use of information and communication technology and the active involvement of pupils in their own learning. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson, the teacher captured the attention of pupils by using a large photograph of a tiger on the interactive white board and lighting a candle to illustrate the poem 'The Tyger' by William Blake. Weaker lessons lack pace and challenge. There is too much teacher talk and not enough scope for independent learning. Pupils' understanding is not always effectively monitored during the course of lessons and so some pupils do not make as much progress as they are able. Although better use is being made of data to identify pupils who are falling behind, marking and assessment do not communicate clearly enough to pupils what they have to do to improve their work.

The curriculum is good with strengths in music, modern foreign languages and English. However, literacy and numeracy strategies are not embedded across the curriculum, so that progress in English and mathematics is not consolidated or reinforced in other subjects. The school is responding appropriately to curriculum reform and is beginning to do more to develop pupils'

understanding of their future economic well-being and careers education. The vast majority of pupils participate enthusiastically in the wide range of physical activities, educational visits and clubs provided by the school. However, the timing of trips, which involve a large number of pupils, is not considered carefully enough so that learning is not unduly disrupted.

Care, guidance and support are good. Two fifths of parents responded to the inspection questionnaire and, of these, three quarters were positive. Parents say that their children are well looked after and they believe that the school is a caring and supportive learning environment in which the many extra-curricular activities enhance and improve learning and self-confidence. However, a significant minority of parents expressed concerns about inconsistency in the school's systems relating to homework and behaviour management. Evidence seen in a few lessons during the inspection shows that there is some inconsistency in these areas. The school has thorough systems to ensure pupils are safe and secure. Pastoral support is particularly strong. Pupils are confident that they have an adult to turn to should they be upset. They know any bullying will be dealt with promptly and they say they feel safe in school. The role of the standards leaders is developing well, with them taking more responsibility for academic monitoring, the tracking of pupils' progress and targeted intervention to help pupils who are falling behind. This work is starting to have a positive impact on achievement.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although the school is moving in the right direction, the steps taken by the new headteacher have yet to be embedded and have their full impact on teaching, learning and achievement. The schools' self-evaluation is generally accurate but the monitoring of teaching and learning, until very recently, has been overgenerous. Finances are well managed and the school has achieved the Financial Management Standards award. The school's governors are supportive and are beginning to take a more active role in promoting the quality of teaching and learning. They have not yet completed any assessment of the impact of their equalities policies. Nevertheless, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are well integrated. Pupils are taught tolerance and respect and careful records are kept of any racist incidents. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Staff have a good knowledge of the local area which the school serves and they prepare pupils well for life in a diverse community. An action plan is currently being drawn up with the local cluster of schools to audit provision and create a comprehensive overview.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise achievement at Key Stage 2 in mathematics and science, particularly for lower attaining boys, and in science at Key Stage 3.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by more robust monitoring to ensure better lesson planning, more consistency and the development of independent learning skills.
- Improve the quality of marking and assessment so that pupils know exactly what to do to improve their work.

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.

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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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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



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

4 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Newnham Middle School, Bedford, MK41 9DT

Thank you for all the help you gave me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking with you. You told me you enjoy being at Newnham Middle School. It is a satisfactory school and is improving all the time. I thought you would like to know what is good about your school and the areas for improvement.

- The new headteacher is very determined that you should all work hard and achieve your very best and this is having a positive impact.
- You show 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 clubs, sporting and music activities provided for you.
- You told me that you feel safe in school and are well looked after. There is good guidance and support for those who need it.

I have asked the school to improve a few things.

- Younger pupils do not do as well as they might in mathematics and all pupils are capable of better work in science.
- Teachers do not make sure that the tasks they set are challenging enough for you and that you learn to work more independently.
- Teachers do not make sure that you are all clear about what you need to do to improve your work.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector