

Gilbert Inglefield Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109667
Local Authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	325001
Inspection date	14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Ian Middleton 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 (total)	527
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Cloke
Headteacher	Mr David Neeves
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2006
School address	Vandyke Road Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire LU7 3FU
Telephone number	01525 372266
Fax number	01525 851953

Age group	9–13
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Introduction

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

- pupils' standards and progress across Years 5 to 8
- pupils' participation in their learning and progress
- the school's capacity to sustain improvement
- the school's confidence to innovate

Evidence was gathered through discussions with senior leaders, other staff, pupils, representatives of the school council and representatives of the governing body, together with visits to lessons and review of relevant school documents. 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

The school welcomes pupils from lower schools in and around Leighton Buzzard. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The great majority of pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. An above-average proportion has a statement of special educational needs. The school has Investors in People, Investors in Careers, Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Gilbert Inglefield Middle is an improving school providing a satisfactory standard of education. Pupils, staff and governors contribute positively to the school's ethos and are confident that initiatives focused on raising achievement are proving effective.

Pupils make satisfactory progress across a wide range of subjects and achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils join the school at the start of Year 5 having achieved average results in tested subjects. Overall, boys and girls achieve broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Assessments of pupils at the end of Year 8 indicate that when pupils leave the school standards are in line with those achieved nationally. However, despite a previous trend of gradual improvement, the 2008 results were lower than schools working in a similar context. The school's evaluation, informed by an external audit early in 2009, indicated that while the rates of progress have improved for boys and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the more able pupils make less progress. The school's current assessment data indicates that strategies to address underachievement are getting pupils back on track to achieve their targets. However, the impact of new approaches on test results is not fully proven, particularly in mathematics, where pupils generally perform less well.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The excellent attendance of boys and girls reflects their enjoyment of school life. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school, making a positive contribution to the school as a cohesive community through good behaviour and by taking their responsibilities seriously, for example, the 'tlk2uz' support system led by Year 8. The school council has recently been involved in evaluating teaching and learning by feeding back to staff their reasons for identifying the 'best five learning objectives of the week'. However, the responsibilities given to pupils in lessons do not always make the most of their interpersonal skills or challenge their ability to follow up or prepare for lessons. In lessons visited, pupils collaborated well with each other and their teachers to resolve challenges together. Some pupils were observed participating enthusiastically in a discussion about the use of writing to reflect social and historical traditions. Others were seen interpreting open-ended tasks set by the teacher, for example using information and communication technology to develop individual reports about 'My patch'. However, some pupils remain too passive or teacher dependent.

The impact of teaching on learning is satisfactory overall. Records of internal monitoring and lessons sampled during the inspection visit indicate that a good proportion of teachers are able to perform well. Energy, enthusiasm and creativity are features of motivational teaching mirrored in pupils' responses in the best lessons. The use of assessment and marking in particular is fast becoming a consistent strength. However, information about the progress and personal development of pupils are insufficiently used to shape lessons in response to different pupils' needs or interests. A good sequence of activities is planned for lessons but is often the same for all pupils. During lessons, appropriate questions are asked, but the answers too rarely lead to further questioning provoked by pupils' answers. Nevertheless, the development of 'learning logs' in which individual targets are set in each subject on a regular basis provides a good foundation for more personalisation.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school fulfils all the requirements for the safeguarding of pupils. Supportive relationships develop between pupils and adults and between pupils. Pupils who find learning difficult are guided well. Links with outside agencies are

productive. Transition arrangements are a strength, ensuring that pupils transfer from lower and into upper schools smoothly. The specialist teaching of personal, social and health education, and careers education, contribute positively to pupils' personal development and understanding about future economic well-being. Pupils' awareness of issues affecting other children globally is promoted passionately through established links with schools in other countries. Expectations of pupils generally, to reflect and compare their own experiences and performance, are increasing through the curriculum and through self- and peer evaluation. The school's focus on bringing pastoral and academic support together is particularly effective in Year 5 due to the structured discussions between teachers and individual pupils, but this is not yet embedded practice across all years.

The curriculum is satisfactory, enriched by many opportunities to learn outside the classroom and extra-curricular opportunities popular with the pupils. For example, music, drama and sports activities contribute to pupils' enjoyment and achievement, and their awareness of how to develop a balanced and healthy lifestyle. Interesting topics contribute to the motivation and success of boys and girls in subjects such as English, where curriculum development has taken good account of pupils' responses. There are examples of curriculum links that stimulate and deepen pupils' understanding of key concepts. For example, a multicultural focus planned for all subjects is supported by opportunities to explore issues through the music curriculum that regularly embraces world music. However, more could be made of the generalist and specialist expertise of staff to develop regular opportunities for pupils to apply specific subject skills, knowledge and understanding in other curriculum contexts.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Management systems are effective in ensuring that resources provide satisfactory value for money and are efficient in enabling school life to run smoothly. Longer-term vision of the school's strategy to become consistently good or better is an area to strengthen. Capacity to improve is satisfactory. However, since the last inspection in 2006 the re-modelled roles of deputy headteachers, middle leaders and governors have been used to increase accountability in relation to raising standards. Improvements are evident, particularly in tracking pupils' progress and in making the best teaching more consistent through monitoring, evaluation and professional development. However, links between these two improvements remain underdeveloped. Self-evaluation is generally accurate and very well informed from within the school and through external moderation. The views of pupils and their parents are invited but a small proportion of parents' questionnaires indicated that communication could be clearer.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that improved standards are sustained in all subjects and by all groups of pupils, particularly in mathematics.
- Ensure that the range of information about individuals and their progress is used to personalise and pitch expectations of pupils in and between lessons.
- Ensure that the school's strategy to become good or better is communicated clearly to all and capitalises on the most effective expertise and innovations.

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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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	3

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
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?	3
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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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**

15 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gilbert Inglefield Middle School, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 3FU

Thank you for the enthusiastic and courteous welcome I received when I visited your school. I appreciated the opportunity to discuss your school with those of you I met, observe some of your lessons, and share your achievements. Your views, and those of your parents and carers, were very helpful in evaluating the evidence provided by staff and confirming their view that yours is a satisfactory school.

Here are some of the things we found out about your school.

- Your teachers and other staff are caring and supportive.
- You make satisfactory progress across a range of subjects while at the school.
- Your school is improving but test results are not as high as some similar schools.
- You support opportunities to get involved in extra-curricular activities.
- Your personal and social skills develop well and prepare you well for your future.
- You appreciate the advice given by teachers about how and what to improve.
- Your parents overall are satisfied with the school and support its work.
- You enjoy learning about topics and through approaches designed for you.
- Your experience of school life overall is positive and attendance is excellent.
- You contribute to making the school a safe and supportive community.

In order to improve further we have asked the school to do the following:

- raise standards further, particularly in mathematics
- use what teachers know about you and your work to involve and challenge you
- make everyone clear about what they need to do for the school to improve further

I wish you enjoyment and success at Gilbert Inglefield Middle School and in the future.

Yours faithfully

Ian Middleton

Her Majesty's Inspector