

Linslade Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109668
Local Authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	325002
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Victoria Godley

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)	590
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin young
Headteacher	Mr Colin Bromley
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2006
School address	Mentmore Road Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire LU7 2PA
Telephone number	01525372640
Fax number	01525851437

Age group	9–13
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Linslade is a mixed middle school for pupils aged 9 to 13 years of age. Most pupils come from socially advantaged homes. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Most pupils are of White British backgrounds and the number of pupils with English as an additional language is very low. The school works in partnership with local first and upper schools and also with schools within a local authority Learning Community. The school has Healthy Schools status a Sportsmark and is a Values Education School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Linslade Middle School is a good school and pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Strong pastoral care and a welcoming, supportive ethos based around clear values result in pupils feeling safe and happy. They thoroughly enjoy school and are extremely well behaved. This is evident in their regular attendance and the excellent attitudes they have towards the school and learning. They have a keen sense of right and wrong and, whether in or out of lessons, they treat each other well. They enjoy having responsibilities and a distinctive element of the school is that pupils are encouraged to contribute to the running of clubs. Opportunities such as these play an important role in developing pupils' strong sense of responsibility and commitment to the school community. Pupils are developing a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and how important this is to their growth and development. With their mature social skills and good academic progress, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and future lives.

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Pupils achieve well in the acquisition of basic skills. Pupils make consistently good progress in response to good teaching to reach, by the end of Year 8, well above average standards in mathematics and science and above average standards in English. The drive to ensure pupils make the same progress in English as in the other two core subjects is supported by school predictions for 2009 indicating that pupils are on track to make these improvements. The school's detailed tracking system and regular school assessments demonstrate the positive impact of the school's effective response to any change in performance. Pupils with learning difficulties and those deemed gifted or talented receive good support and achieve well.

The school provides good a quality of teaching and learning. In most lessons work is well planned to match the needs of different groups and they learn at a good rate. At the same time, however, there remain lessons where students do not play a sufficiently active part in their learning, where pace slows and the level of challenge is not always high enough to engage the full range of abilities. The good curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' enthusiasm for learning.

The leadership and management of the school are good because there is a focus on raising standards and extending the opportunities provided for pupils. All staff are involved in school improvement and give their support to developments. Governors are very supportive of the school. They manage resources very effectively to ensure the school provides good value for money. Community cohesion is satisfactory. Local links are strong but pupils do not have a thorough understanding of the wider world and their understanding of some multicultural aspects of British society is underdeveloped. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school is well placed to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' good progress in English to match that of mathematics and science in both key stages.
- Improve the quality of teaching ensuring the fast pace, high challenge and active involvement of pupils in the best lessons is seen throughout the school.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to interact with children from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in Britain and beyond.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils in Year 5 enter the school with above average standards in their Year 2 national tests. Information from first schools indicates that pupils are still working at above average levels on arrival in Year 5. Pupils make good progress throughout Years 5 to 8, so that by the end of Year 8, standards have risen to well above average in mathematics and science. Standards in English in Year 8, while securely above average, are not as high as standards in mathematics and science. This is because progress in English, although good, is slower than progress in mathematics and science. Evidence from lesson observations and analysis of school assessment data clearly shows that standards are rising in all core subjects and the rate of progress is quickening throughout the school. There are no significant differences in the current good progress rates of both girls and boys. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in line with their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

With few exceptions, pupils are mature and extremely well behaved both in lessons and around school. They are polite and attentive and when appropriate, confident, outgoing and imaginative. They show a strong concern for others. 'We look out for each other', said one, speaking for many. This is a pervasive feature of relationships in school, but is seen formally, for instance, in a well developed buddy system and highly effective use of pupils as coaches in sports clubs. Excellent contributions to others in school are supported, if not quite matched, by actions to help the wider community. There are some admirable charitable ventures for United Kingdom and overseas causes and valuable involvement in the immediate locality, for example, with visits to homes for the elderly at Christmas. Pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles and personal safety is good and they follow what they know to be wise choices.

Pupils' enjoyment of school is outstanding. This is confirmed by excellent attendance rates. Pupils are remarkably positive and loyal about school life and show real enthusiasm in many lessons and out-of-hours activities. They make full use of the opportunities for sport, music, art and other extra-curricular provision to extend their areas of enjoyment and build up additional skills.

Their spiritual, moral and social development are all good. Pupils' understanding of other cultures, including minority ethnic communities in the United Kingdom, is satisfactory. Skills for the next stage of education are developed well and provide a good basis at this stage for later economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers and support staff form good relationships with pupils, who are confident and keen to learn. Pupils ask questions to develop their understanding, enjoy their lessons and consequently, progress in lessons is good. In the most successful lessons, teachers use these relationships to provide opportunities for cooperative work and cater for a variety of learning styles. Lessons are well structured and carefully planned, allowing pupils' knowledge and skills to build steadily, and teachers to keep a close eye on the progress of individuals. In contrast,

however, there are also satisfactory lessons where activities are not tailored sufficiently to challenge and engage the full range of abilities. In these lessons there is less opportunity for pupils to actively discover for themselves. Further reducing this variability in lesson quality remains an area for development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned, engages pupils and makes learning interesting. It is appropriately balanced and makes a good contribution to the development of key literacy and numeracy skills which prepare pupils well for future success. Teachers are committed to making good use of meaningful cross-curricular links to enhance learning. This is an evolving area of the school's work, with further developments planned. Curriculum provision for information and communication technology, as well as for design and technology, has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good. The school has successfully developed a wide variety of extension activities to challenge pupils identified as gifted and talented. For example, links with a local university have led to 'master class' opportunities on academic, creative and sporting themes. The large majority of pupils participate in a good range of lunchtime and after-school clubs and enjoyment levels are very high.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares for pupils extremely well and gives them good guidance and support. Pupils' excellent personal development stems from staff showing caring attitudes which are backed up by very effective policies. All statutory requirements are met and understood by staff. School practice on behaviour management, attendance, safeguarding and guidance are very clear, effectively shared with pupils and implemented with remarkable consistency. There are excellent procedures for improving attendance beyond its already high levels.

Pupils' strengths and weaknesses are known in some detail by the school and staff are quick to make the most of individual or group successes. Specific sporting abilities, mastery of other languages or musical ability are built on and monitored well along with progress in core academic subjects. Booster classes or individual mentoring are provided where pupils are in danger of lagging behind. Good guidance is offered to promote academic progress but some inconsistency remains in the way staff present challenge in lessons and in the quality of guidance given to pupils on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is supported very well by the senior leadership team. The school's self-evaluation is detailed and accurate and identifies clearly the areas for further development. There have been impressive improvements in standards and progress because the leadership team are building effectively on the staffing stability the school now enjoys. The good systems of rewards and recognition ensure that pupils feel well supported and valued. Leadership at all levels takes account of the views of pupils and parents and regularly seeks their opinion through annual surveys. Parents have an overwhelming positive view of the school and its good reputation. The school works closely with its local community but ensuring pupils are more

fully aware of the different ethnic and social backgrounds of children in Britain and beyond is less well developed. The governors bring a range of expertise, which they use well to support the school's plans and developments. They are well informed about the school's strengths and areas for development.

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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?	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?	2
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?	1
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	1
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 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

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	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	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**

8 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Linslade Middle School. LU7 2PA.

Thank you for your warm welcome when we recently visited your school. It was a great pleasure that so many of you took the time to talk to us and share your views about your school. We agree with you and your teachers that Linslade Middle School is a good school. It is a school of which you are all extremely proud. Some of the things we found were:

- you are making good progress in lessons and this is reflected in the good standards you achieve
- Mr Bromley and your teachers are continuing to make improvements and these are helping you make good progress
- your behaviour in class and around school is outstanding
- the values you follow as a school are what you and your teachers try to reflect day by day
- you enjoy the good opportunities to take part in a wide variety of activities at lunch time and after school
- you enjoy the range of healthy options at break and lunchtime.

In order for Linslade Middle School to continue to improve we have asked your teachers to:

- help you make even more progress in English
- provide exciting and challenging work in all subjects which enables you to be actively involved in your learning.
- provide opportunities for you to interact with children from different backgrounds in Britain and other countries.

You can help by continuing to work hard in lessons and do your best. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Godley

Lead inspector