

Streetfield Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109677
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	325005
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Rhona Seviour 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)	438
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Brown
Headteacher	Mrs A Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2009
School address	Dunstable Road Caddington Luton Bedfordshire LU1 4BB
Telephone number	01582 661342
Fax number	01582 478770

Age group	9–13
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Streetfield Middle is an average sized middle school with a relatively mobile school population. Pupils' social and economic backgrounds vary widely and around a third of the pupils come from areas where the socio-economic disadvantage is above average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. Reflecting the decline in the local population, there are fewer pupils in the school than at the time of the last inspection. Since then, the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased and is now close to the national average. Just over a third of the pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities or a statement of special educational needs. This is well above average. The school has a specialist base for six pupils with autism. On entry, pupils' attainment, based on their Key Stage 1 assessments, is broadly average.

The school is a member of the Chiltern Learning Community. It holds the national Sportsmark and Healthy School awards and the FA Charter standard and works in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire to provide initial teacher training.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Streetfield provides a satisfactory quality of education and some aspects have improved since the last inspection. The school is particularly successful at maintaining an outstandingly caring and inclusive environment in which all pupils feel valued. The relatively transient nature of the school population is a challenge for staff but, because of the high priority given to their pastoral needs, new pupils settle very well. The excellent relationships that exist between staff and pupils provide a secure foundation for pupils' good personal and social development. Pupils' enjoyment of their education, their awareness of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and their contribution to the school community are exemplary. In their responses to the inspection questionnaire, parents, like the pupils, were overwhelmingly positive about the school's work.

Although standards have risen since the last inspection, these remain broadly in line with the national average and further improvement is a priority. During their time at the school, most pupils make satisfactory progress. The progress of those with emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties or statements of special educational needs is good. Teaching quality varies across the school and is satisfactory overall. The best lessons take full account of pupils' different abilities and include a wide range of activities to stimulate pupils and help them learn independently. Weaker lessons lack the pace, variety and challenge pupils need to make good progress. Marking is often superficial and rarely indicates precisely what pupils need to do to improve. Similarly, the use of target setting to drive up standards is not consistent across the school. Even when pupils have targets to aim for, they do not always understand how to achieve them. The school has a good curriculum, with some outstanding features. The vast range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities is a notable strength that adds to pupils' motivation and enthusiasm for school life. It also extends their understanding of the wider world and contributes to their good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. School leaders have developed a school community that is harmonious, orderly and calm with excellent pastoral care. They ensure that there are close and mutually beneficial links between the school and the attached specialist base for autistic pupils and that the school engages well with the local community. Pupils and parents have confidence in the school leadership, particularly the headteacher. These are very significant achievements. Despite their undoubted commitment, leaders have had less impact in raising academic standards because they have not always evaluated aspects of the school's work, including its teaching and pupils' academic guidance, rigorously enough. In addition, the use of data to improve pupils' academic performance and to aid evaluation is at a relatively early stage of development. The governing body succeeds in supporting and challenging the school but its small size limits its capacity. Nonetheless, the school's leadership and governing body provide it with the sound capacity it needs to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise academic standards by providing teachers with clearer direction, guidance and strategies about how to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Ensure that marking indicates precisely how pupils can improve their work in order to reach their targets.
- Ensure that senior and middle leaders analyse and interpret pupil performance data rigorously to aid evaluation and help secure good progress.

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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards at the end of Year 6 remain broadly average. Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment in English and science has improved slightly and more pupils now reach the higher level. Standards in mathematics remain similar to those in 2005 and, although the percentage of pupils achieving the national expectation rose in 2008, the percentage reaching the higher level fell. At the end of Year 8, standards in the core and foundation subjects are broadly in line with what would be expected at that stage of pupils' education.

During their four years at the school, pupils make satisfactory progress. As at the time of the last inspection, there is some variation between subjects and year groups. For instance, the rate of progress in English during Years 5 and 6 is faster than that in Years 7 and 8. In contrast, progress in mathematics accelerates in Years 7 and 8 and, in science, it is consistent over the four years. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or a statement of special educational needs achieve well.

Since the last inspection, the school has not met all the challenging targets set for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 and raising standards remains a priority. Some actions, including new subject leadership, improved teaching plans and better tracking of pupils' progress, are beginning to make an impact. Other actions, including more emphasis on target setting, are still at an early stage of development and it is too early to judge their impact.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development is a strength of the school and supports their learning well. Pupils are keen to succeed and eager to develop new skills. Many demonstrate high levels of maturity and reflect thoughtfully on social issues. They have a strong sense of fair play and wholeheartedly support charitable fund-raising initiatives. They show a good understanding of their responsibilities as members of both the school and the wider community and understand what good citizenship means. Pupils speak very positively about the school and are confident the staff will help resolve any difficulties such as bullying. The overwhelming majority of pupils thoroughly enjoy their education and participate very enthusiastically in all that the school has to offer, particularly the extensive range of sporting and musical activities. Sport makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' high levels of fitness. In addition, science, food technology and the personal, social and health education programme also help pupils to develop an excellent appreciation of healthy lifestyles. Pupils' behaviour is good and the level of exclusions is very low. Although a small number of pupils do not attend school regularly, attendance levels are satisfactory overall.

Pupils' positive work ethic and ability to work with others stand them in good stead for the future. The development of leadership skills is a very successful feature of the school's work. For example, older pupils act as peer mentors, team captains help to organise games in their classes and year groups and class representatives make their views known in year and school

council meetings. Through these, and many other activities, pupils make an excellent contribution to the school community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school works hard to recruit teachers and to provide opportunities for their professional development. Nonetheless, the quality of teaching varies. In lessons, pupils feel confident to ask questions and offer their opinions. They settle to tasks willingly and work with good concentration. Teachers are skilful in tackling any instances of challenging behaviour so that lessons are not unduly interrupted. In some classes, teachers use interactive whiteboards and drama skilfully to stimulate pupils' learning. The best lessons begin with a sense of urgency and teachers ensure that pupils are clear about the precise skills and knowledge they will acquire. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations of how much the pupils will learn and use a wide range of strategies to engage and challenge them. The pace of some other lessons is too slow and activities undemanding. Although pupils are sensible, trustworthy and capable of working independently, there are too few opportunities in lessons for them to follow their own lines of enquiry and find things out for themselves. Marking, although completed regularly, varies widely in quality. Very little refers to pupils' targets or indicates clearly and precisely to pupils what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum with some outstanding features. A significant strength lies in its success in supporting pupils' personal development and widening their horizons. A good balance of time is devoted to the core and foundation subjects, including French. In addition, the provision of specialist teaching, for example, in physical education, art and design and technology enriches pupils' subject experience. The accelerated curriculum in Years 7 and 8 enables pupils to begin early study for GCSE examinations and vocational qualifications in the upper schools in Year 9. The programme of personal, social and health education and citizenship includes a good range of activities to increase pupils' economic awareness and, in Year 8, to help pupils consider their future education and careers. Although pupils have lessons in information and communication technology (ICT), there is not enough opportunity for them to develop and apply their ICT skills to their learning across the curriculum. The range of enhancement activities and extra-curricular opportunities is outstanding. These include trips, residential experiences and theme days that extend pupils' experience beyond their immediate environment and add to their subject knowledge.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's care and support for its pupils are outstanding. Staff are highly committed to maintaining an inclusive learning environment and this is evident in the exceptionally strong emphasis on pastoral care. Much attention is paid to easing pupils' transition to the school and integrating those who join other than at the usual times. The most vulnerable pupils receive excellent support. There are effective systems for managing pupils' behaviour and strategies to improve attendance are beginning to make a positive impact. The programme focusing on

the social and emotional aspects of learning is targeted carefully to boost pupils' self-esteem. There is good provision to meet a wide range of learning, emotional and behavioural needs and the strong links between the school and the attached unit for pupils with autism are mutually beneficial. The school works successfully with outside agencies and parents and meets all the legal requirements for safeguarding the pupils.

In contrast to the high quality of care and support the school provides, its academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory. Systems for tracking pupils' academic progress have improved and the school is becoming better at identifying pupils who are underachieving. It has recently strengthened its approach to the setting of targets in the core subjects and, the 'Assessing my Progress' initiative is beginning to give pupils a better understanding of what they need to aim for. However, this initiative is at a very early stage of development and does not embrace the foundation subjects. At present, pupils do not receive clear enough guidance through target setting and marking about the next steps they need to take.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders have a shared commitment to improving provision and succeed in providing opportunities for pupils' personal and social development and breaking down barriers to the achievement of vulnerable pupils. There is a strong sense of teamwork throughout the school. The good quality of aspects of the school's work has been maintained since the last inspection and, in some cases, improved. However, leaders have found it more difficult to raise academic standards and, in 2008, the school did not meet all the targets it set for pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6. In part, this is because some actions, including a recent initiative to improve target setting, are at an early stage. It is also because leaders and managers have not focused sharply on ensuring that expectations of pupils' academic achievement are consistently high enough. Leaders monitor the school's work closely but their evaluation of its impact on pupils' achievement is not rigorous enough. In particular, data on pupils' performance is not always used effectively to aid evaluation. Consequently, the school judges some aspects to be better than they are. The school engages very well with its local community but does not have an explicit policy or plan for promoting community cohesion. The vast majority of parents are supportive of the school's work but few are willing to contribute to its governance. Although the small governing body fulfils its responsibilities adequately, there are not enough governors. The school manages its resources well and provides satisfactory value for money.

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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	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	1
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	1
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?	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?	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	3
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**

16 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Streetfield Middle School, Caddington, Luton LU1 4BB

We recently visited your school and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. First, I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your help during our visit. We appreciated your very thoughtful comments and views and thoroughly enjoyed all our conversations with you.

Streetfield provides you with a satisfactory quality of education and some aspects have improved since the last inspection. We were impressed by the outstanding range of activities that help you develop as responsible and considerate young people. The excellent relationships between you and the adults in the school add to your enjoyment of your education. You are very polite and your behaviour is good. When there is any misbehaviour in lessons or at break time, you feel confident the staff will tackle this well. We noticed your enthusiasm to play an active part in school life and to take on leadership roles, for example as buddies, class, year and school councillors and sports captains. This is preparing you well for the future. We agree with you that many of your lessons are interesting and lively. However, we feel some are not challenging or varied enough and do not give you enough opportunity to think for yourselves.

Mrs Phillips, the staff and governors are very committed to the school. Like you, they enjoy being at Streetfield and this is why it is such a happy school. We think that your academic achievement, although satisfactory, should be better. To help with this, we have asked your teachers to make sure that they have high expectations of what you can learn in lessons and to mark your work so that you know what you need to do next to improve. We also want the school to make sure that you know how to achieve your targets and that teachers make better use of information on your progress.

Your parents told us how much they appreciate the work of the school. At present, the school needs governors and we hope more parents will be prepared to take on this role. A small number of pupils do not come to school regularly. They are missing some wonderful opportunities and we hope they will make more effort to attend. Finally, we would like to congratulate you for raising so much money for charity and wish you success in your education.

Yours sincerely

Rhona Seviour

Her Majesty's Inspector