

Beauchamp Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109692
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	325008
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2008
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)	575
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew McConnell
Headteacher	Mrs Sally Ellis
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2005
School address	Hawk Drive Bedford Bedfordshire MK41 7JE
Telephone number	01234 300900
Fax number	01234 300901

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

Beauchamp Middle is an average sized middle school with a relatively stable school population. Pupils join from lower schools across the town and their social and economic backgrounds and eligibility for free school meals are similar to the national average. Pupil numbers have grown since the last inspection because of the school's increasing popularity. As at that time, the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average. There are also more pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than average. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is broadly average.

The school works with others as a member of the Bedford Learning Community. It holds the Sportsmark Gold and Healthy School awards and works in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire and the North Bedfordshire Training Partnership to provide initial teacher training. It is a Secondary, Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning Lead Practice School.

The school provides out-of-school care for children aged 5 to 13 and a breakfast club.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

As at the time of the last inspection, Beauchamp Middle provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Since then some aspects of its work, including the care, guidance and support it provides and its curriculum, have improved and are now good. Pupils' personal development and well-being continues to be good. Just over 80% of parents responded to the inspection questionnaire and the vast majority support all aspects of the school's work.

The school is a vibrant, busy and happy place. Pupils enjoy school life and are enthusiastic about the very wide range of extra-curricular and enhancement activities available to them. Their level of participation in these activities, many of which involve the local community or charities, is outstanding. The strong emphasis on pupils' personal development is evident in the concern shown by the pupils for others less fortunate than themselves, their willingness to take and share responsibility, and the racial harmony. The ethnically rich school community provides a positive resource for pupils and encourages them to develop an awareness and understanding of diversity within society. The school successfully encourages pupils to celebrate their heritage and values the contribution of all. Most pupils behave very well and are eager to contribute in lessons. They are good learners. Teaching quality is satisfactory and sometimes good. In the best lessons seen by inspectors, teaching promoted active learning, often with pupils sparking ideas off each other. However, teachers do not assess pupils' learning rigorously or accurately enough or always use assessment information to plan activities that match pupils' individual needs. In some cases, this means that the more able pupils are not stretched enough.

Standards in the school are in line with the national average and most pupils make satisfactory progress. Although there has been an improvement in mathematics, the school's leadership and management have not established a sustained upward trend in standards, particularly in English and of more able pupils. This is because of weaknesses in the systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning, improving teaching quality and tracking pupils' progress. In the latter area, the school has collected a great deal of data but not analysed or used this well enough to target its actions. Leadership, management and the school's governance are satisfactory. Governors are supportive of the school and keen to see it improve further. They, together with the senior leadership team and middle leaders, provide the school with satisfactory capacity to improve. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, especially in English and for more able pupils, by:
- strengthening the systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and targeting action to raise the overall quality of teaching
- increasing the rigour and accuracy of the assessment of pupils' attainment
- ensuring that information gained from tracking pupils' progress is used more effectively.

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

Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 has remained in line with the national average. Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 6 have improved steadily in mathematics but have been more variable in English and science. Although they improved in 2007 when they were better than at any time in the previous five years, the school's assessments show a decline in 2008. In English, standards in writing fell well below the expected level and, in all three subjects, too few pupils attained the higher level. There is a similar picture in Key Stage 3. Standards at the end of Year 8 in English and science are broadly in line with the levels expected at that stage of pupils' education, and those in mathematics are above. As in Key Stage 2, too few pupils achieve the higher levels in science and standards of writing remain too low.

During their time at the school, pupils make satisfactory progress. However, the rate is faster in mathematics than in English and science. Since the last inspection, the school has nearly eliminated the gaps in the progress made by different groups of pupils. As a result of the school's good care and support, the most vulnerable pupils, including those with learning, emotional or behavioural problems, progress as well as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy being at school and appreciate all that the school does for them. They are enthusiastic about many aspects, particularly about the clubs and activities. Attendance is good and the rate of exclusions is low. Behaviour is generally good in lessons and exemplary in assemblies. Pupils are courteous, lively, confident and helpful. They feel safe in the school and feel that the school deals firmly and effectively with any bullying.

Pupils' spiritual and moral development is good: pupils show good self-awareness and are able to reflect on their ideas, feelings, actions and consequences. They are very willing to take on responsibility through the buddy system, the house system and the school council. They are aware, without being self-conscious, of the diversity of cultures in the school and appreciate the opportunities this gives them. The high degree of racial harmony is a major strength of the school. Pupils understand what they need to do to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to stay safe, and apply this to their own lives through, for example, the very high level of their participation in sporting activities. On occasions, they prompt the school on what it needs to do to improve safety around the rather crowded buildings. Through the school's excellent links with the community, pupils are able to make a very positive contribution, for example, to work with the local church, a wide range of charities and recently to a Remembrance Day display in the local British Legion shop. Pupils' satisfactory levels of basic skills and their good personal development prepare them satisfactorily for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils are attentive and articulate and their approach to learning is consistently good. They listen and concentrate well and are keen to contribute in lessons. The positive relationships that exist between adults and pupils have a beneficial effect on pupils' motivation and learning.

Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and plan lessons in detail, though often with greater emphasis on the teacher's instructions and organisation, and not enough consideration of what pupils need to learn in order to make good progress. The best lessons seen by inspectors included clear learning objectives, varied and interesting activities and opportunities for pupils to share their ideas with each other. As a result, pupils worked hard, contributed actively and took pride in their work. Teachers' expectations are not high enough in too many lessons and there is insufficient challenge for the more able. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively in some lessons to support learning. On occasions, pupils are encouraged to assess their own work and reflect on their targets. However, this practice is not consistent or regular enough. Similarly, there is too much variation in the quality of marking.

Teaching assistants make an active contribution to pupils' progress. They effectively support learning, whether in class or in small groups, because they are well skilled and work closely with teachers to plan work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad curriculum meets all the statutory requirements and places a very strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. At present, the teaching week for Years 7 and 8 is shorter than recommended and one consequence of this is the relatively small amount of time devoted to the teaching of French. The wide-ranging extra-curricular programme and the numerous enrichment activities are a strength of the school and add considerably to pupils' enjoyment, self-confidence and achievement. Pupils are enthusiastic about the good amount of time devoted to physical education and feel that this, together with the very varied range of sporting clubs and activities, helps them to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They also benefit from a well-structured programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education. This is particularly effective in enabling pupils to explore complex ideas of national identity. Music and art also feature strongly in the school's daily life. The additional literacy and numeracy programmes, although successful for some pupils, have not had the desired impact on others. This is because the provision is not always made early enough, or sufficiently tailored to pupils' individual needs. The school is highly committed to raising pupils' aspirations and its involvement in the Aim Higher project and its careers education programme heighten pupils' awareness of future options, particularly in further and higher education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides an exceptionally caring and supportive environment for its pupils. All adults in the school are strongly committed to pupils' well-being and the Quest functions as a highly effective haven for pupils when they are upset or vulnerable. Staff monitor the records of pupils' personal development closely, and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who do not speak English as their first language are very well supported. Action to improve attendance and reduce the number of pupils excluded has been very successful. The school actively promotes equality and caters for the needs of all pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds effectively. It meets and regularly reviews all legal requirements for safeguarding. However, as at the time of the last inspection, the use of assessment to track pupils' progress and the setting of meaningful targets to challenge pupils to give of their best are not yet consistent features of the school's work. Similarly, although most pupils now know the standards

they have reached, they do not always receive sufficient guidance on what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and the senior leadership team are keen for the school to improve and are highly focused on promoting pupils' personal development and well-being. In this respect, they have been successful. However, they have not had the same success in improving academic achievement and actions taken in response to the last inspection have not been wholly effective. When judging the quality of lessons the school does not give enough attention to how well the pupils are progressing and consequently, it has a more generous view of the quality of some of its teaching than that of inspectors. In addition, the informal way in which teaching is monitored has not led to the precise identification of teachers' professional development needs that is necessary for improving teaching quality. In a similar vein, although methods for recording pupils' attainment and progress have improved, data on performance is sometimes inaccurate and not evaluated often enough to enable early corrective action to be taken.

Recent appointments to and restructuring of the senior leadership team have increased its capacity but, whilst the roles of senior leaders have been defined, the overlap in some areas of their work results in a lack of clarity, particularly in relation to overall responsibility for raising standards. The school sets ambitious targets for pupils' attainment in the Key Stage 2 tests and although it met most of these in 2007, it did not do so in 2008.

The school regularly reviews its work and has a broadly accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. Its willingness to reach out into the wider community is a particular strength. It is a focus for bringing local groups together and members of staff play an active part in the community. Governors are able to guide and challenge the school satisfactorily.

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
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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	1
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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**

7 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beauchamp Middle School, Bedford, MK41 7JE

As you will know, 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 comments and views and thoroughly enjoyed all our conversations with you.

We think that Beauchamp provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. The school is better than it was at the time of the last inspection. Both the curriculum and the care and support you receive are now good. The school provides an impressive range of activities to stimulate your interest and extend your learning. Some of these are part of the extra-curricular programme and others are included within assemblies and lessons. The Quest is clearly proving very successful and you told us how valuable you have found this. We think your personal development and well-being is good. It was encouraging to hear you say how much you are gaining from going to a school that is so culturally mixed. The school deserves praise for creating such a harmonious environment. You also deserve praise. We think that you are polite, thoughtful young people and you impressed us with your positive approach to learning. Many of you showed a maturity beyond your years. Most of the time, behaviour is good and sometimes it is excellent. The good relationships you have with the adults in the school and each other are important to your learning and add to your enjoyment of school life. Although, much of the teaching in the school is good, the quality varies.

Mrs Ellis and the governors are pleased that the school has improved and agree with us that academic achievement, although satisfactory, should be better. We think that raising standards is the top priority for the school. To achieve this we have asked your school to improve the quality of the teaching by more thorough checking. We want the school to make sure that its assessment of your learning is accurate and that teachers use this information to plan their lessons. This will help to ensure that lessons meet your needs and challenge you. Standards will not improve unless you play your part. This means that you should continue to work hard in lessons and keep pushing yourself to achieve that bit more. A small number of you should ensure that you behave well all the time and do not stop others learning. We wish you all the very best in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Rhona Seviour

Her Majesty's Inspector