

Selwood Anglican/Methodist Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123894
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	328016
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Karl Sampson 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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	659
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clare Cardnell
Headteacher	Stephen Kirby
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2006
School address	Berkley Road Frome BA11 2EF
Telephone number	01373 462798
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Age group	9–13
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Selwood Anglican/Methodist Middle School is a large 9 to 13 middle deemed secondary school serving the town of Frome and surrounding area. It has an 11-place speech and language resource base on site. Almost all students are of White British heritage and the percentage from minority ethnic groups or whose first language is not English is much lower than the national average. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is low. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. These include students who have moderate learning difficulties or who have social, emotional and behavioural issues. There is a slightly lower than average proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs. The school is a member of the Frome Community Learning Partnership.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Selwood Anglican/Methodist Middle School is a good school. There have been significant improvements made to all aspects of the school's life since the last inspection. As a result, Selwood School is an inclusive school which provides a good standard of education for all of its pupils. The pupils enjoy coming to school because the quality of care is high, the range of curriculum opportunities is wide and varied and lessons are carefully prepared and well taught. The school provides a positive, caring and nurturing environment in which all learners can thrive.

The school is well led by a headteacher who has a clear vision for the school's future. Together with a dynamic deputy headteacher and a committed senior leadership team, he has been the driving force behind the school's improvement since the last inspection. As a result, a culture of self-evaluation has developed in the school. All staff contribute to this process and capacity to improve is good. Staff are enthusiastic about the school's current direction and have embraced fully the headteacher's mantra that 'each child is my child'. All are committed to the school's priority to improve attainment and develop pupils' personal qualities to the full. This is reflected in a noticeably high level of morale and overwhelming support by parents. One parent summarised the views of many as follows: 'My child is very happy at Selwood and the school has a "feel good" factor for the pupils, parents and teachers.' Pupils enter the school with standards that are below average. However, standards are rising thanks to a clear focus on improving the skills that constrain pupils' progress, particularly reading and writing. During their time in the school, they make good progress overall and by the end of Year 8 attain standards that are at least in line with and, for some, above those normally expected. In relation to their starting points, pupils progress well and achievement is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable make progress at least as good as their peers because of excellent provision. This is exemplified by the work within the Language Resource Base (LRB). The school has focused successfully on developing teaching and learning. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is now good and improving throughout the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan lessons well and create engaging learning activities which are enjoyed by most pupils. This has been brought about by sharper monitoring and evaluation by senior and middle leaders and well-targeted professional development for teachers. This area is an excellent example of the good progress made since the last inspection. However, the school also recognises that some inconsistency in teaching quality still exists. This is most evident in the quality of marking, assessment and written feedback, which is variable across subjects and does not always make clear how pupils can improve their work. In some lessons, excessive teacher direction slows pupil progress. Consequently, opportunities for pupils to take greater responsibility for their learning and develop independent learning skills are restricted. The school is currently developing its systems to support school leaders in ensuring that improvements continue and become more deeply embedded.

Parents and pupils speak very positively about the care and support provided which supports pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils feel exceptionally safe, behaviour is good, attitudes to learning are positive and pupils exhibit confidence and respect for others, as evidenced by good relationships throughout the school. Pupils are active members of a thriving learning community in which they feel valued and respected. As a consequence they have a real sense of belonging and enjoy attending. This is further enhanced by a good curriculum which fully meets the needs and capabilities of all learners. Whilst there were a few

dissenters, many parents wrote to inspectors to say how delighted they were with the education and care provided by the school. In the words of one parent, 'Selwood has played a major part in my child's successful transition into a confident and able student.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all middle leaders develop their skills in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning to ensure that improvements continue and become more deeply embedded.
- Ensure that written feedback to pupils is of consistently high quality and shows them how to improve their work.
- Ensure students are given more opportunities to work independently of the teacher and take greater responsibility for their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' attainment on entry to Year 5 is below average. By the end of Year 6, standards have risen to be broadly average and are improving as a result of the good progress pupils make. Progress in English is particularly strong. This is a direct result of action taken over recent years to improve teaching and learning, with particular focus on literacy skills, especially writing. Standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2 in 2008 were lower than expected even though progress was good overall. A careful analysis of the data has enabled the school to put effective procedures in place to target groups at risk of underachievement. The school's latest analysis of performance suggests that the present Year 6 are on track to reach suitably challenging targets.

As pupils move through the school the rate at which they make progress continues to be good. By the end of Year 8, they reach standards across the curriculum that are at least in line with, and for some above, those normally expected. The school's careful and regular analysis of data on individual pupils and resulting intervention strategies demonstrate that recent improvements are being maintained. Effective care and excellent provision ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or learning disabilities and other vulnerable groups make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal development and well-being. They feel exceptionally safe and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and, as a result, it is a considerable strength in many lessons and allows pupils to learn effectively. As a result of good spiritual, moral and social development, students develop their personal skills and think about others. They relate very well to each other and their teachers and have positive attitudes to learning and to their school. Pupils take on a wide variety of responsibilities within the school. Playground leaders and peer mediators (Supporters of Selwood) are highly regarded by younger students, who value their advice and support. Pupils fundraise extensively for a number of charitable causes and take up opportunities offered to make improvements through the school council and raise awareness of sustainability issues through the 'Green Group'. Some aspects of cultural education are not yet fully developed and pupils' understanding of Britain as a diverse society is still evolving.

Attendance is good and improving because pupils enjoy lessons and feel well supported. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and good leadership and team skills through participation in a range

of extra-curricular activities. Pupils' appreciation of all aspects of health-related issues is good. Links with the community are strong and enhanced by a good range of activities, including very popular school productions. International links are also well established and promote pupils' appreciation of citizenship well. Pupils' preparation for future economic well-being is good and is supported by the skills they develop in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). These are complemented by their good interpersonal and leadership skills which give them valuable preparation for the workplace.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and pupils' commitment to learning and the large majority of lessons are good or better. In all lessons, there are good relationships fostered by the care and skill of the teachers. Pupils are taught how to learn with and from each other by working cooperatively in pairs and groups. In the best lessons, learning objectives are routinely shared so that pupils know what they need to achieve and are used effectively to review their progress. These lessons are characterised by carefully planned and well-structured learning activities which support the learning of all abilities. Pupils readily engage with these tasks, are well motivated, and well behaved. As a consequence, pupils make good and confident progress in their learning regardless of their starting points. Teaching assistants play a strong role in supporting pupils' progress. They work collaboratively with the teachers to plan appropriate interventions and make a genuine difference to pupils' success in learning.

In a few less successful lessons, inappropriate levels of pace, challenge and excessive teacher direction limit the extent of pupils' progress. As a result, opportunities for pupils to reflect upon the learning or to develop their independent learning skills are restricted. In most lessons, ICT is used effectively to improve the learning experience for pupils. Teachers provide good oral feedback and pupils are given clear guidance about how to reach different levels of attainment. Although work is often marked regularly, there is some inconsistency in the quality of the marking. While some excellent marking was seen, in some subjects the marking does not make explicit the next steps that pupils need to take to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good throughout the school and contributes effectively to pupils' motivation to learn. It is broad, balanced and inclusive and meets the needs of pupils well, especially building pupils' confidence and enjoyment, which results in good academic achievement. The curriculum is successful in promoting pupils' personal, social and emotional development both through timetabled lessons and additional support activities such as homework support and a breakfast club. There is a wide range of enrichment activities, including trips and special events as well as many opportunities for pupils to participate in sport, the arts and music. These activities are popular and contribute well to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, their enjoyment and their capacity to stay healthy and safe. Pupils confirmed the significant increase in such activities since the last inspection and were keen to point out how much they valued these opportunities.

Those pupils who are vulnerable or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported in class, taught in small nurture groups, or use the excellent resources in the Language Resource

Base (LRB). Whilst good in terms of enrichment, provision for gifted and talented pupils is not yet as comprehensive in subject areas. The school plays a full role in the Frome Community Learning Partnership (FCLP). As a result, strong partnerships exist between schools, as evidenced most recently in the development of a common understanding over assessment. Improvements in personal, health and social education (PHSE) and the introduction of an effective citizenship programme ensure that pupils are prepared well for this aspect of their future lives. Provision for modern foreign languages and for pupils' future economic well-being is excellent.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Adults who work in school have a good commitment to the care, guidance and support of all pupils. Staff look after pupils very well, ensuring that they have a safe environment, and support pupils in reaching their targets. The vast majority of parents agree with this view. As one parent said, 'My child is very happy and progressing well.' There is effective child protection and safeguarding, and robust health and safety systems are in place. The induction process ensures that all the pupils are helped with settling in to Year 5. Strong links with local partner schools also ensure that transitions into secondary school are managed effectively. Attendance is steadily improving as a result of the school's careful monitoring and the successful reduction in absence rates. Guidance for pupils overall is satisfactory, although it is better suited to support pupils' pastoral development than their academic progress. A range of personalised support programmes provides excellent support for vulnerable students such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school uses outside agencies effectively to provide specialised support ensuring that all aspects of a pupil's needs are tackled very effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management are bringing about sustained improvement in many aspects of the school's work. The headteacher exudes a quiet confidence, sets high expectations and is focused upon raising standards and achievement further. The inclusion and achievement of all learners is central to his leadership vision. One teacher described him as a leader 'on a mission, who walks the talk'. He is ably supported by a talented and committed deputy headteacher. Together they set challenging targets for the school, have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weakness and are unafraid to tackle difficult issues in order to bring about improvements. They are supported by a team of senior leaders who work very closely together to monitor, evaluate and improve the work of the school. Leaders and managers generally have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of further development. However, whilst the systems for monitoring the work of the school are good, the information gained is not always used rigorously enough by middle leaders to achieve consistency across curriculum areas. For example, although much good work has been done to improve teaching, some inconsistency still remains. Governors play an active role in supporting the school, holding it to account for its performance and ensuring that it provides good value for money. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good so that all feel valued and able to access appropriate levels of learning. Community cohesion is promoted well at a local and international level but is not as strong from a national perspective.

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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	3
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?	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	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	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?	2
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**

1 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Selwood Anglican/Methodist Middle School, Frome, BA11 2EF

We very much enjoyed meeting you on our visit to your school. Special thanks should go to the pupil ambassadors who helped us find our way around the school. It was very informative to hear your views and those of your parents and it helped us to reach our judgements. We found your school to be good and I would like to share with you our key findings.

You enjoy coming to school because you are well cared for, have a good range of curriculum opportunities and are well taught. Your headteacher leads the school very well, and is supported well by other staff and the governors. Staff at the school really care about you and give you good support to help you reach your targets. Standards and achievement have improved since the last inspection and the good quality teaching that you receive is helping you to make good progress. We saw excellent marking but it is not all currently at this high level and you are not always given enough advice about how to improve your work. You enjoy your lessons but sometimes you are not given enough opportunity to work independently and take more responsibility for your own learning. The extra-curricular programmes offer you a great range of activities and the vast majority of you take full advantage of them. You told us you feel exceptionally safe and we think your behaviour in and around the school and in lessons is good. You show really positive attitudes, respecting each other and your teachers. You have good opportunities to develop personally and academically.

- We have identified three areas to make your school even better. We have asked your school to:
- Continue to work with teachers to make teaching even better.
- Ensure that your work is consistently well marked so that you always know how to improve it.
- Ensure that you are given more opportunities to work independently of the teacher and take greater responsibility for your work.

You can certainly help the teachers with some of these things. You can also play your part in improving your school by continuing to work hard and to play an active role in how the school works. Thank you once again and good luck for the future!

Yours faithfully

Karl Sampson

Her Majesty's Inspector