

Hardwick Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124839
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328227
Inspection dates	3–4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Anthony Knight 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)	379
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Phil Bowcher
Headteacher	Mrs A Sands
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2006
School address	Mayfield Road Bury St. Edmunds Suffolk IP33 2PD
Telephone number	01284764994
Fax number	01284704492

Age group	9–13
Inspection dates	3–4 June 2009
Inspection number	328227

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Hardwick Middle School is an oversubscribed middle school that takes pupils from a mixed area, including the town of Bury St Edmunds and outlying villages. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is much lower than the national average. A few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and a very small number speak English as an additional language. The overall proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased and is now just below the national average. Most of these pupils have specific learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social needs. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs has also increased but is still below the national average.

The school operates in partnership with Cambridge University and regularly takes trainees from Homerton College and also from the Graduate Teacher Programme and School Centred Initial Teacher Training. The school has achieved the Sportsmark and Healthy Schools status. It was also recognised as a Secondary Centre of Excellence by the Geographical Association.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hardwick Middle School provides a good education for its pupils. Staff work excellently together and good leadership has enabled the school to make good improvements, particularly over the last two years. Committed and enthusiastic subject leaders are helping to drive improvement, through for example, the way they are increasing understanding about important aspects of teaching, such as involving pupils in assessing their own work. As a result, teaching has improved and is good, which is helping pupils make good progress and attain beyond that expected. While the best teaching is outstanding, the school is aware of the need to continue to ensure all teaching increasingly matches the best, through more analysis of how well pupils are learning.

Pupils behave well and enjoy their work, particularly in the best lessons where they are given opportunities to take the lead. They also welcome opportunities to take responsibility through, for example, their roles as language ambassadors, sports leaders and 'Tech Team' members. The school council contributes much to the school although it is right to want to develop its role even further. The school recognises the need to ensure pupils are given even more opportunities to take the lead within and beyond lessons and has good plans to extend the role of the school council.

Pupils' good personal development is supported well by a good curriculum, which provides pupils with a range of interesting experiences. Pupils understand about healthy living and are prepared well for life beyond this school. Good care, guidance and support enable pupils to feel safe and ensure they are given the pastoral help they need. Pupils who find learning difficult are being given increasingly effective support. Improved data and tracking are also enabling the school to identify where pupils make relatively less progress and provide well focussed interventions. However, the school recognises that there is more work to be done to ensure this assessment data is used effectively in all lessons so that work is always matched closely to pupils' different learning needs.

Financial management is secure and the school provides good value for money. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and demonstrates good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that all lessons increasingly match the best, by looking even more closely at how well pupils are learning and the extent to which all pupils have the challenge and support they need to make at least good progress.
- Increase consistency in the use of assessment data so that the work is always matched to pupils' individual learning needs.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to take the lead in lessons and contribute directly to the ongoing improvement of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Pupils make good progress, particularly during Years 7 and 8 and leave the school with attainment generally above average. However, progress is more mixed during the first two years while pupils are in Key Stage 2. While attainment in national tests for pupils in Year 6 in English has been consistent and significantly above average, with the highest achieving pupils doing particularly well, the standards for science and particularly

mathematics, have fallen over the last two years and in 2008 were broadly in line with the national average. On entry to the school in Year 5, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. Progress in mathematics and science is satisfactory during the first two years in the school. However, progress in these subjects increases during Years 7 and 8, where it is good.

Progress in lessons is now good across all years, although the school is aware of the need to continue to increase the progress made by pupils in Year 5, particularly in mathematics. The extra support given to pupils who find learning difficult is increasingly helping them to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school provides a happy environment where pupils develop good relationships with each other and with adults. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Many pupils take part regularly in a wide range of educational visits and extra-curricular activities, including productions, which helps them to grow in confidence and self-esteem. Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and demonstrate this through their choices of food and willing participation in sports. During lessons, most pupils behave well although a few become restless when the pace is too slow to fully engage their interest. Pupils' behaviour is good in and around the school and pupils feel safe. Pupils enjoy learning and generally work hard, particularly when lessons are well planned and matched to their needs. Attendance is good. Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school, undertaking responsibilities such as sports leaders, language ambassadors and school councillors. Pupils develop good basic skills, especially in information and communication technology (ICT), which prepare them well for their next school and the world of work beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Effective relationships between teachers and pupils encourage learning. Teachers try hard to make lessons interesting and the use of different teaching methods, including using ICT, help pupils to remain focussed. Pupils respond positively to opportunities to measure their own success and progress. They enjoy and benefit from speaking and listening opportunities, including discussing their learning with partners. These help them to improve their work and develop critical thinking skills, although opportunities for this are not consistently built into planning. There is also some inconsistency in the setting of homework and in marking. While feedback is always encouraging and supportive, sometimes it is not precise enough to help pupils understand what they have achieved or how to move forward in their learning. In the best lessons, pupils are clear about the purpose of the work they are doing and are given opportunities to learn for themselves. Pupils say that, 'It's very exciting in these lessons'. Lessons are less successful when there is insufficient challenge or support to enable all pupils to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curricular provision is good because of the wide ranging enrichment activities that help to improve pupils' learning and progress. Good extra-curricular activities, and the recently

introduced curriculum development days, provide well for the promotion of cross-curricular aspects of learning. Personal and social skills are developed well through trips and visits and there are good opportunities for pupils to develop their particular talents and interests. The curriculum fulfils statutory requirements and meets the varying needs of pupils. Bright and colourful displays of pupils' work reflect the good coverage of subjects. The school's partnerships with other schools are stimulating pupils' learning and are supporting very well their progress and personal development. The programme of personal, social and health education informs pupils of important healthy lifestyle issues and contributes to their good personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The staff know pupils well and place a strong emphasis on their pastoral care and support. All safeguarding procedures are fully in place and good attention is paid to the protection of children through rigorous monitoring and recording. The school has improved its procedures to monitor and promote good attendance. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support in classrooms from skilled teaching assistants and regularly monitored individual education plans. Good use is also made of voice amplification to improve the sound quality for all pupils. The school works closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils who are vulnerable or need extra help receive the support they need. Improved procedures for tracking pupils' progress have provided subject leaders with clearer records. However the effective use of this information is at an earlier stage in some subjects than in others.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There has been significant improvement over the last two years as a result of an appropriate focus on improving assessment information. Increased individual responsibility has also been achieved through clear lines of accountability and more systematic monitoring of teaching. Staff have risen to the challenges and embraced the new opportunities to share expertise within and beyond the school. For example, some staff contribute much to the development of their subject at a regional and national level. The school has generally an accurate view of the quality of its work although it recognises the need to increase the emphasis on how well pupils are learning, now that most teachers are making at least good use of effective teaching strategies.

The governing body has also developed considerably over the last two years and has welcomed the opportunity to contribute more directly to the work of the school. For example, governors are beginning to develop links with individual subjects and look closely at the progress being made in lessons. They are also giving appropriate attention to a more systematic development of community cohesion. For example, the good partnerships with other schools in the area are planned to be extended through the development of links with schools in another part of this country and abroad.

The great majority of parents express high praise for the school, although about a fifth of parents who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school did not always seek their views or take account of their suggestions. Slightly fewer parents are also concerned about the extent to which the school takes account of their children's views. The school is aware of these concerns and is providing more information for parents and more opportunities for pupils to contribute

directly to the school, for example, through the school council. Some parents are also concerned about behaviour. The school has taken appropriate actions to improve behaviour and, while it recognises that there are a few occasions when a small minority of pupils do not meet its high expectations, the inspection found behaviour to be good overall.

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
---	----------------

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?	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	2
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?	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	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**

5 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hardwick Middle School, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 2PD

We enjoyed coming to your school and would like to thank you for welcoming us and talking to us so openly.

We were pleased to see you enjoying some outstanding teaching and have asked the school to make sure that all teaching increasingly matches the best. To do this they will look closely at how well you are learning and make sure you always have the support and challenge you need to do your best. You can help by asking your teachers if you are not sure how you could provide a better answer or piece of work.

Your school has been improving the way it collects information about how well you are doing. This information is being used well in some lessons and we have asked all your teachers to use it to make sure the work you are given matches your individual learning needs. You can help by telling your teachers if you feel the work is either too easy or too hard.

We particularly liked the way you are given the opportunity to take the lead in some lessons and to contribute to the school through being a language ambassador, sports leader or tech team member. The school council is also doing much for the school. We have asked your headteacher to find ways to give you even more opportunities to contribute in lessons and to the work of the school. You have already helped to make the school good and have a key role in making it even better.

There are many good opportunities for you at Hardwick Middle School and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Knight

Her Majesty's Inspector