

Brooklands Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109655
Local Authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	337342
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Roger Whittaker

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 of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Myra Gray
Headteacher	Steven Harrington-Williams
Date of previous school inspection	10 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 19 lessons involving 17 teachers, held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff and groups of students and a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation documentation, minutes of the governing body meetings and school publications. They analysed 48 questionnaires from parents and carers, 208 from students and 20 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the attainment and progress of all groups of students, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- how successful leaders and managers have been in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection
- how rigorously monitoring and evaluation systems are used to improve the consistency of teaching for all groups of students.

Information about the school

Brooklands Middle School is a smaller than average middle school. Most students are from White British backgrounds. There are only a few students from minority ethnic groups and very few whose first language is not English. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Brooklands Middle School has made significant improvements since the last inspection and it now provides a good education for its students. It is a caring and happy school where good relationships and respect for others is valued by staff and parents alike. However, a period of instability in the staffing of core subjects in 2009 resulted in attainment at the end of Year 8 being significantly below national averages. The school has worked hard to address this situation and improved assessment procedures so that teachers are now more able to plan lessons to meet the needs of all groups of students. This has resulted in more consistency in the quality of teaching and in good progress by students in all years. The improving trend since the last inspection has resulted in average attainment. The school's assessment data shows students in the present Year 8 are on track to achieve slightly above average attainment. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective intervention strategies used by the school. The school's ability to arrest the dip in standards in 2009 and to put in place strategies for improvements, together with improving the attendance of students, demonstrates good capacity to improve.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. Much progress has been made in developing rigorous systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. Most leaders and managers are implementing these systems effectively. However, there is some inconsistency in driving improvement, especially in aspects of teaching and learning which are not developed fully by a small number of staff.

Students, particularly those who are vulnerable and who have specific personal needs, receive good care, guidance and support. The school has made changes to the curriculum to more closely meet the needs of all students. Students feel safe because there are always members of staff around who are ready to help; behaviour has improved since the last inspection. Students have good awareness of the need to stay healthy, but a minority of them do not take sufficient personal responsibility for adopting a healthy lifestyle. The school has created many opportunities for students to contribute to the school, local and international communities. It has worked hard at communicating with parents and carers, and takes account of their views when making changes to the school. The school has forged beneficial links with a range of partners, including both lower and upper schools, businesses and welfare agencies, which support students learning well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Ensure that teaching is consistently good by:
 - using assessment information to set learning outcomes that challenge students appropriately, especially the more able
 - evaluating students' progress in lessons and giving them clear feedback so that they know what they can do and how to improve.
- Ensure consistency in the quality of leadership and management by monitoring the implementation and review of planned procedures for improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Students make good progress in lessons because they are keen to learn. They want to succeed, contribute willingly and work hard. Scrutiny of students' work confirms that they are reaching standards that would be expected for their age nationally. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons and through intervention strategies which result in them making good progress.

Students enter Year 5 with attainment which is below national expectations. Attainment by the end of Year 6 has been in line with national averages for the past two years, demonstrating improvement since the last inspection. In science, attainment improved to above average in 2009. Through Years 7 and 8, students make good progress.

Tracking data for the present Year 8 students indicate that they are achieving in line with national expectations and the school's targets. Some students are on track to achieve above national expectations. However, more able students are not always set appropriately challenging activities to enable them to achieve as well as they can.

Behaviour in lessons has improved since the last inspection and is now good overall.

However, as parents indicated in their questionnaires, there are still a few students who drift off task and can disrupt the learning of others. In general, these situations are managed well by the teacher. Around the school students are polite and courteous.

Students were clear that the few cases of bullying are dealt with effectively and that they are confident that there is always a member of staff for them to ask for help. The school is increasingly giving students opportunities to visit upper schools and use links with business to raise their aspiration and prepare them for future education and training. Their good attendance reflects the hard work put in by the school to bring about improvement and reduce the number of persistent absentees.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

A large majority of the teaching observed during the inspection was good. Where teaching is good, learning benefits from good relationships between students and adults and co-operation among students when working in pairs and small groups. Lessons include a wide range of activities and interesting resources, as in a history lesson when students were able to play with and discuss toys used in Victorian times in order to improve their understanding of how children lived in the past. Students are given opportunities to assess their own work and that of others. Support staff work effectively, with planned strategies to complement the classroom teacher. However, where teaching is not as effective, learning outcomes and activities do not take account of students' prior learning and teachers do not provide clear feedback on what students can do and how to improve.

The curriculum has developed well since the last inspection, recognising the need to address the issue of writing, which is identified as a priority in the school's development plan. Intervention and cross-curricular work enables students to improve their writing skills. The school has broadened the curriculum by introducing more day and residential trips to enhance many curriculum areas. Visiting speakers and performers are also used effectively. Extra-curricular activities are good, with students saying that many of them attend and enjoy clubs and teams.

Students and parents are full of praise for the care, guidance and support provided by the school. Students are known as individuals, and a strong pastoral structure ensures intervention where it is needed. Evidence was seen of the good provision made for students who have diverse and challenging needs. The school has reduced the number

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of absences and the number of persistent absentees. Good arrangements ensure that students who join the school in Year 5 settle into their new school quickly and smoothly.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The enthusiastic headteacher, and the senior leadership team have a clear vision for the improvement of the school and have identified appropriate priorities. The roles of the senior leaders and managers are developing well as they increasingly monitor the work of the school. However, there is some inconsistency in monitoring the implementation of initiatives identified by the school to raise standards even more. The governing body are very supportive of, and enthusiastic about the school. There has been recent improvement in their strategies for holding the headteacher and staff to account for the actions and outcomes.

The school promotes equal opportunities well. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated. The school has recognised that some more able students are not achieving as well as they could and is beginning to address the situation. Students' progress is now tracked well and this information is used to set up intervention strategies. Systems for safeguarding are good. Staff have been recently trained and have a good understanding of child protection and risk assessment procedures. The school promotes community cohesion well and is implementing plans to fill gaps in students' experiences identified through a school-wide audit.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A small minority of parents responded to the questionnaire. Those that did were extremely positive about how well the school is led and managed and how happy they are with their child's experience of the school. Inspectors endorse these views by parents. A very few said that the school does not deal effectively with the small amount of unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team felt that the small amount of unacceptable behaviour seen during the inspection was well managed by the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brooklands Middle School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 48 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 236 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	46	23	48	3	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	50	23	48	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	29	30	63	4	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	42	27	56	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	44	27	56	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	29	30	63	4	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	27	32	67	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	14	29	30	63	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	33	30	63	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	50	21	44	3	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	27	31	65	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	50	24	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	44	27	56	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Brooklands Middle School, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 3PF

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and talking with you, and were impressed with the maturity with which you answered our questions. Yours is a good school.

These are the main findings of the inspection.

The standards you reach at the end of Year 8 are in line with national average. This means you are adequately prepared to move on to your next school.

You contribute well to the school and the wider community.

The teaching is good and you are often given opportunities to be involved in interesting activities.

Staff take good care to ensure that you are looked after well and supported through the school.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements.

Ensure that all teachers make it clear to you what you are intended to learn in lessons, that you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve.

Ensure that school leaders monitor the implementation of plans to help you learn better.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Roger Whittaker

Lead inspector

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