

# Branksome Heath Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113703
<b>Local Authority</b>	Poole
<b>Inspection number</b>	338222
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Simms

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8–12
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	472
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Clive Hardy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stuart Fox
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Livingstone Road Parkstone Poole BH12 3DX
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors spent the large majority of the time looking at learning. They observed 23 lessons or parts of lessons and 19 teachers. They held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, subject coordinators, pastoral workers and other staff. They spoke with several groups of pupils and with governors. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at much school documentation, including school development planning, pupils' assessment and tracking records, documents related to safeguarding, governors' minutes, attendance data and records of the monitoring of teaching. They also scrutinised 80 questionnaires from parents and carers, and those from staff and pupils.

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

- how rapidly attainment and achievement are improving
- the relative progress of different groups of pupils, in particular:
  - boys' and girls' progress
  - attainment and progress in English, particularly in writing, and especially of boys
  - how well pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve
  - how effectively leaders' evaluations of the school's performance are focused on the impact of provision on the quality of pupils' learning
- the capacity of leadership and management to sustain and accelerate improvement.

## Information about the school

This medium-sized middle school includes a higher-than-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most of these are related to language development but a high proportion of these pupils have significant emotional and behavioural problems. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English. The local authority is changing the age of transfer across the borough, so the school is subject to educational re-organisation in 2013. The headteacher and most senior staff are new to their posts since the school's last inspection. The school holds the Healthy Schools Plus award and it has Activemark status.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

This satisfactory school is improving steadily and has some significant strengths, including its good pastoral care, guidance and support for pupils and their families. Staff are working hard to ensure that pupils' experiences are increasingly enjoyable and productive, and they have already improved pupils' behaviour and attendance. Staff are committed to providing equally for all pupils, including those who present significant challenges. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding develops well because the school provides good opportunities to extend their horizons through experiences such as residential camping weekends, which help them to socialise and become more independent. Good contributions to the school community, such as being 'mini-mediators' or school councillors, give pupils valuable opportunities to understand responsibilities and develop self-esteem.

Attainment is rising and progress is accelerating in response to recent initiatives to improve learning. Pupils make good progress in reading and satisfactory progress in mathematics and science. Writing is identified rightly as the school's main issue for improvement and is the reason why attainment in English lags behind that in other subjects. Boys achieve less well than girls in writing because they are not always engaged and interested in the tasks, though this is improving. Variations in teaching quality throughout the school result in inconsistent rates of progress. In some lessons, good teaching results in good progress, but this effective practice is not being shared well enough across the school. Sometimes progress in lessons slows because work is not well matched to pupils' levels of attainment. These lessons do not stretch the more able pupils sufficiently. There are also variations in the quality and usefulness of teachers' marking.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs appropriately and has a number of good features. Specialist facilities, for example in science, enable Key Stage 2 pupils to benefit from a wider range of experiences than is usual for their age. Native speakers provide good models for learning modern foreign languages. An extensive, well-delivered physical education curriculum, including dance, helps develop good skills in this subject. Pupils who have not made the expected progress are clearly identified and are given carefully targeted additional support to help them progress faster. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because the support provided for them is planned carefully to address the gaps in their learning.

Satisfactory leadership, management and governance are strengthening the school and beginning to accelerate the pace of change. Accurate self-evaluation has identified the right priorities for improvement and there is a clear focus on accelerating pupils' progress. The progress made so far shows that the school has a satisfactory capacity to

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sustain improvement. Nevertheless, senior leaders' monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are not rigorous enough because not enough time is given to checking pupils' work and teachers' planning to give a longer-term view of progress.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment and accelerate pupils' progress, with a particular focus on boys' writing, by:
  - providing higher levels of challenge for more able pupils in all subjects
  - raising teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' written work, including their handwriting and presentation
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in other subjects
  - ensuring that literacy lessons consistently engage the interest of boys.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching across the school by:
  - ensuring that senior leaders' monitoring and evaluation of teaching regularly takes into account lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' books, teachers' planning and the quality of marking
  - utilising teachers' existing strengths to spread good practice across the school
  - ensuring that teachers use assessment information to plan work which matches the needs of all groups of pupils
  - improving teachers' marking so that it shows pupils clearly how to improve their work in all subjects.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Pupils make satisfactory progress from low starting points. Their attainment is rising and is close to expectations for their age by the time they leave. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons support their learning effectively. In a Year 7 personal, health and social education (PHSE) lesson, for instance, pupils responded well to the opportunity to discuss ideas, in pairs and small groups, about why criminal behaviour occurs. Here, as in a high quality Year 6 dance lesson related to West Side Story, pupils' thinking was stretched well to develop good social understanding about crime and gangs, as well as subject learning. Good preparation and planning in Year 4 design and technology lessons led to good levels of experimentation, analysis and enjoyment in learning about pneumatics and textiles. Useful support from other adults in several lessons leads to lower ability pupils achieving as well as others. On some occasions, as in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, more able pupils' progress is limited because tasks are not sufficiently challenging. Occasionally, the behaviour of a few boys interrupts learning, as in a Year 6 music lesson. Most pupils can explain their ideas orally but have difficulties putting them in writing. Lack of confidence about writing, which has hampered pupils' progress in the past, is now being addressed through new approaches to learning.

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Pupils say they feel very safe and are confident that the adults will look after them well. They engage in many extra-curricular sporting activities which keep them fit and healthy. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the challenge of the 'feet off the ground' apparatus in their playground, where feet must stay on the equipment for as long as they can. Activity of this kind has led to the higher award of Healthy Schools Plus status.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

Good, mutually respectful relationships between adults and pupils help to create a calm and purposeful atmosphere for learning. Good practice exists in all subjects and year groups but it is not consistent. In good lessons, pupils respond well to opportunities to talk, developing interesting ideas in groups or pairs. In others, questioning styles are limited, offering few pupils an opportunity to speak. In English and mathematics, assessment, including marking, has improved and is often informative and helpful. In other subjects, books are not marked well enough to explain how pupils can improve weaknesses in writing. In good lessons, pupils are well motivated and behave well, while in other lessons work is not planned well enough to keep all pupils actively engaged.

<sup>1</sup> 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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The curriculum is improving. It incorporates a number of specific programmes to improve the pace of learning, particularly for pupils who fall behind. It is not always planned well enough to stretch more able pupils, but provides effective support for lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is insufficient focus on using other subjects to promote better writing, especially among boys. Activities such as singing in the choir provide a good range of extra-curricular opportunity for pupils to participate beyond the classroom. Pastoral care workers play an important part in providing good care, guidance and support, particularly for vulnerable pupils, who speak highly of these and other adults who help them. Good guidance when pupils move into secondary education helps most settle quickly, while liaison with feeder schools has improved, leading to smoother transition into Year 4.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The new senior team, supported by governors who are providing increasing levels of challenge, has implemented changes to systems and curriculum design which are properly targeted at improving pupils' attainment and achievement. The impact of these can be seen most in Years 4 and 5 where pupils' progress has started to accelerate. Development planning focuses on the right priorities, such as improving the proportion of good teaching, but the planned timescales for bringing about improvements are not always sufficiently challenging. The school is committed to equality of opportunity for all and provides good avenues for all parents and carers to get involved with their children's learning. The mathematics workshop which took place during the inspection helped those who attended to understand new learning styles. Although the number of families who respond to these opportunities is increasing, take-up is sometimes disappointing. The school's close working partnerships with external agencies and individuals to support vulnerable pupils are particularly helpful in developing their confidence and self-esteem. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and governors take their responsibilities seriously for ensuring the health and safety of staff and pupils. The school promotes community cohesion well, using its links with the Caribbean and China to develop the international dimension. Interactions with an ethnically diverse school in Reading help pupils understand life in different parts of Britain and pupils from all backgrounds get on well together in the school.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

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<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are satisfied with most aspects of the school's provision and the outcomes for their children. Those who made additional positive comments wrote about their children's good achievement, good levels of support, how quickly pupils entering at non-standard times settle down and the good after-school and curriculum opportunities provided. Those expressing concerns about the school's management of unsatisfactory behaviour formed the highest proportion of negative comments. Inspectors discussed this with senior staff, who agreed that they do not always 'publicise' what is done about poor behaviour, and that they would reconsider when it might be appropriate to inform individual parents about sanctions. Inspectors also discussed this with pupils, who showed a mature understanding of these issues. They commented on how they feel it is appropriate to reward pupils whose behaviour has improved, but may not yet be as good as many others', because this helps them understand how their better behaviour is valued. Inspectors judge that the school does deal properly with unsatisfactory behaviour when it occurs. A few parents commented on more able pupils not being challenged enough and inspectors agree that this is sometimes the case.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Branksome Heath 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 80 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 472 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	35	47	59	3	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	32	40	44	55	4	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	16	55	69	10	13	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	23	51	64	10	13	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	18	23	59	74	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	25	53	66	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	24	56	70	4	5	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)	16	20	49	61	9	11	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	20	52	65	10	13	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	13	47	59	13	16	8	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	10	54	68	11	14	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	14	18	59	74	2	3	3	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	28	52	65	4	5	1	1

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



4 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Branksome Heath Middle School, Poole BH12 3DX

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school when we came for the inspection. We enjoyed being there, especially talking to you in your lessons and in groups. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

Yours is a satisfactory school which is steadily improving. Your behaviour in class is often good, but it is sometimes rather boisterous around the school. We enjoyed the way you talk to each other about your work in groups and pairs when teachers give you the chance. We were pleased to hear how well you can explain things by talking about them. Most of you achieve as you should and we have asked the school to improve your progress even more, especially in writing. Your reading, mathematics and science learning are all coming along steadily, but many of you have difficulties with writing, especially boys. We were pleased to see how the 'Big Write' is starting to improve this. We have asked the school to make sure you write about lots of interesting, enjoyable things across all your subjects, so that you get better at putting your good thoughts down on paper.

Teachers and other adults do a good job of keeping you safe and they look after you well. Some lessons help you make good progress, while in others you make slower progress. We have asked the school to improve the teaching so that your lessons are consistently good. We found that the staff have improved the way they assess your learning so that they give you good advice about how to do better, especially in English and mathematics. We were pleased that you could tell us about your targets in these subjects. We have asked the school to improve the marking of your work in other subjects, especially when you write, so that will help too. You can help your teachers by reading carefully what they say in their marking, and by doing what they advise.

Thank you again

Yours sincerely

Janet Simms

Lead Inspector

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