



Lockyer's Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113862
Local Authority Dorset
Inspection number 289748
Inspection dates 16–17 January 2007
Reporting inspector Anthony Shield

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Blandford Road
School category	Community		Corfe Mullen
Age range of pupils	9–13		Wimborne BH21 3HQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01202 692779
Number on roll (school)	461	Fax number	01202 692779
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ernie Battey
		Headteacher	Anthony Argles
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
9–13	16–17 January 2007	289748

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized middle school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is broadly average. Most pupils are White British, with small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic heritages. The local authority is currently consulting on a possible reorganisation of its schools. If agreed, this would have significant implications for the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Lockyer's Middle School is a satisfactory and improving school with some particular strengths. The headteacher's leadership has been effective in establishing a strong culture of care and an encouragement to learn. Pupils are well prepared for the rigours of the upper school, and many go on to excel at this level. Pupils' personal development is good. Children are successfully encouraged to learn and develop into confident and mature young people. This culture of good relationships and emphasis on the nurture of pupils is appreciated by parents, the majority of whom are enthusiastic in their support of the school.

Standards are broadly average at the end of Years 6 and 8, and pupils' achievements, given their just above average attainment on entry in Year 5, are satisfactory. Standards have steadily improved in recent years, particularly in mathematics, and progress for many pupils in mathematics is good. However standards could be higher, especially in writing.

Teaching is satisfactory, though much good practice exists. An encouraging atmosphere for learning is created by teachers, and pupils are keen to do well. Classrooms are attractive and welcoming. Pupils approach tasks enthusiastically, especially when learning is exciting and relevant, but not all teaching is challenging enough. 'We don't always work as hard as we do in maths', was how one pupil put it. Planning often sets out what pupils will do rather than what they will be expected to learn, and does not always make clear what pupils of different abilities will achieve, or how they should improve. The curriculum satisfactorily provides for pupils' needs and there are good opportunities for enrichment through visits and clubs.

The behaviour of most pupils is very good. Pupils feel safe and are confident in approaching staff with any problems. The school's care systems are another strong feature, and for all staff the pupils' care and welfare are overriding concerns.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, ably supported by his deputy, has set a clear direction and his vision is widely shared. Strategies for raising achievement are in place and the school has seen a steady rise in standards in recent years. However, monitoring of teaching has not yet led to consistently good progress for all pupils. Weaknesses in the use of assessment data to set targets and track pupils' progress are being tackled but the use of this information by some teachers' remains underdeveloped.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the overall achievement of pupils, especially in writing.
- Provide more challenging and exciting learning by ensuring that what pupils are expected to achieve is clear, that the needs of pupils of all abilities are met, and that pupils know how to improve.
- Use assessment data more effectively to set targets for pupils, monitor progress and intervene when necessary.

- Ensure that the monitoring systems are more rigorously used to ensure more consistently good teaching.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are improving and are broadly average. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Results in national tests in Year 6 have shown year on year improvements, and in 2005 were significantly above average. In 2006, results improved further in mathematics and science, but fell back in English, and targets were not met. On entry, the full spread of ability is present, and overall, attainment is a little above average. Progress through Years 5 and 6 is satisfactory; a little better in mathematics than English. This reflects the attention the school has paid to developing mathematics teaching in recent years. In Years 7 and 8 progress remains satisfactory and standards by the end of Year 8 are in line with expected levels. Achievement in mathematics is good, but pupils' progress in English, particularly writing, is not so marked. As yet, approaches to developing literacy skills in all subjects are not well established although some good practice exists. The process for setting targets for pupils to aspire to has recently been revised. It has led to the setting of more challenging targets as teachers raise their expectations of what pupils might achieve, but this is yet to have full effect on pupils' results. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop into sensible and confident young people, because of the careful attention the school pays to personal development. Pupils are attentive in class and answer questions enthusiastically. They take pride in their work, and particularly enjoy the wide range of enrichment activities, clubs and sports. Pupils relish the opportunities to make a contribution through the school council, and respond well to fund raising activities. These activities, along with opportunities for teamwork, mean that pupils are well prepared for their future life. They know the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle, and particularly enjoy the wide range of sporting activities. Attendance is above average. Most pupils behave very well and are courteous and polite to others. While a very small number present behavioural problems, these are handled well by teachers. Pupils reported that bullying is tackled swiftly and effectively. They feel safe and are confident that there is a trusted adult for support. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, particularly their understanding of social and moral issues.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is characterised by good relationships and purposeful attitudes. Pupils are keen to learn and do their best, and the exhortation to 'make a teacher smile' displayed in one classroom is at the heart of the teachers' approach. Pupils reported that teaching is 'getting better because we are more involved', and they are increasingly encouraged to take responsibility for their learning, organising their resources and their thinking. Where the topic is well chosen to interest pupils, they respond with a zest for learning, as was seen in a Year 8 English lesson on ways to start a story. However, learning is not always so exciting or challenging, nor are expectations consistently high enough. Planning is not always clear about what pupils of different abilities are expected to achieve, and teachers concentrate too much on what pupils will be doing rather than on what they will be learning. As a result, pupils are not always sure what it is they are expected to learn or how they might improve. The quality of ongoing assessment and feedback during the lesson is a weakness; teachers do not always pick up when pupils have not fully understood. Marking is improving, but is not always constructive enough to show pupils how they can do better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has satisfactory breadth and balance. Good features include the use of specialist teachers and facilities for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Support for those who need additional help with their basic skills is good, and significant recent developments in information and communication technology (ICT) have enhanced the use of modern technology in all subjects. The well planned programme for pupils' personal development is successfully supplemented through special events such as drugs education workshops. However, the use of tutor time is not always consistently effective. Pupils speak very appreciatively about the commitment of staff to a wide range of clubs and enrichment activities particularly in sport and music. The residential experiences for pupils in Years 6 and 8 are another very valuable part of the school's commitment to all aspects of pupils' education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

At the heart of the school's work is its commitment to the care and support of pupils. Pastoral managers and form tutors provide thoughtful and sensitive care to all pupils. Child protection procedures are fully in place, and there are well considered transfer arrangements for pupils in both Years 5 and 8. Comprehensive and effective monitoring of both personal and academic progress has been recently introduced. However the use of performance data by all teachers to check how well pupils are doing, set realistic and challenging targets, and provide intervention for those at risk of underachievement

is not fully developed. Support for pupils with learning difficulties is well planned and carefully managed. Parents are well informed about their child's progress and have frequent opportunities to discuss this with teachers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is improving because of the vision and leadership shown by the headteacher and his deputy. A number of recent developments are beginning to accelerate the speed of improvement, but as yet they are not sufficiently well developed to have had appreciable impact on raising pupils' achievements. The school's distinctive and welcoming learning culture has been maintained despite some depressing features of the accommodation. Central to the school's purpose is the development of the whole child. The promotion of a friendly, supportive and encouraging atmosphere, based on respect, is a major strength. Although the school is not generously funded, prudent investment in ICT and other facilities has brought considerable benefits.

Although the school's development planning processes are sound, insufficient emphasis is placed in the improvement plan on raising the quality of teaching and learning. Evaluation of lessons does not focus sharply enough on the impact of teaching on learning and pupils' progress. Whilst there is an increasing understanding that the systematic use of performance information is a key element in the drive to raise standards, its use across the whole school is not yet fully developed. Self-evaluation procedures are satisfactory. Subject and year co-ordinators work well together but are not sufficiently involved at whole school level in self-review. Knowledgeable governors correctly identify where the school is improving and share the school's vision of the paramount importance of a rounded approach to a child's development. Given recent improvements, the school is satisfactorily placed to make further improvements.

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

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 disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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 the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 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.

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We particularly enjoyed talking to you, and were impressed by the confident way you answered our questions and spoke about your school. Lockyer's Middle School is satisfactory overall and has some strengths.

What we liked most about your school:

- The friendly and polite way you greeted us and welcomed us into your school.
- You work enthusiastically in lessons and take pride in your work.
- You are well behaved, and get on well with the teachers.
- Your teachers take good care of you.
- All the teachers are working hard to make your school even better.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Help you to achieve higher standards, particularly in your writing.
- Encourage teachers to make lessons more exciting and challenging for all of you and to make sure that you know what you are learning about and how you might improve.
- Use information about how well you are doing in class to set targets and give you extra help if needed.
- Ensure that managers check more carefully how well things are going to improve all teaching to the level of the best.

Thank you once again for your help during the inspection. Good luck in the future!