

Newnham Middle School

Polhill Avenue, Bedford, MK41 9DT

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Senior leaders and the governing body are ambitious for the school and are successfully raising standards and improving teaching.
- Pupils are making good progress throughout the school. It is particularly fast in Years 7 and 8.
- By the end of Year 8 pupils are reaching standards that are well above those typically found in this age-group in English and mathematics.
- Pupils from different groups including those with special needs, those from ethnic minorities and those with English as an additional language are making the same progress as other pupils.
- There has been a steady improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection and the teaching is now typically good or better.
- Dedicated subject teachers plan interesting lessons that foster a love of learning and ensure that pupils are keen and eager to learn.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in class and around the school and they respond well to the high expectations set by their teachers.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel safe in it. Attendance is consistently above national averages.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in reading is not as consistently good as it is in other subjects.
- Teachers do not always ensure that lessons are adapted to meet the needs of all groups of pupils, especially in Years 5 and 6.
- Teachers do not always check that pupils are making best use of the guidance they are given when teachers mark their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 23 lessons in Years 5, 6 and 8. The majority of pupils in Year 7 were out of school on a residential visit. Seven of the lesson observations were done jointly with members of the school senior management team. Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, especially of those in Year 7.
- Inspectors attended an assembly and visited the school's breakfast club. They also heard some pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with two groups of pupils, senior leaders, the heads of key stages, some subject leaders, four members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at the information kept by the school on the quality of teaching and learning and the records of standards reached by pupils and their progress. They also looked at a range of policies including those for safeguarding and for managing the performance of staff. The school's judgements on its own performance and the plans for school improvement were also studied.
- Inspectors took account of 52 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and in questionnaires completed by 18 staff. Inspectors also talked with some parents on the telephone.

Inspection team

Gillian Scobie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Stanton

Additional Inspector

Kathy Twin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is in line with national averages. This is, in this school, additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language are both above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for Year 6, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school organises a breakfast club for its pupils, managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in Years 5 and 6 by ensuring:
 - tasks are always carefully matched to the learning needs of different groups of pupils, particularly less-able pupils
 - pupils respond to the advice and guidance they are given when teachers mark their work so that they improve their work.
- Improve achievement in reading across all groups of pupils by making progress as good as it is in other subjects by:
 - ensuring the newly developed reading strategy is used consistently across the school
 - carefully checking the progress of individual pupils and providing them with support that is directed towards specific aspects of reading where their skills are known to be weak.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Most pupils start Year 5 with average levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics and, by the end of Year 8, their attainment in English and mathematics is well above that which is typical for pupils of this age. They make particularly good progress in Years 7 and 8 in both subjects.
- Standards at the end of Year 8 have improved since the last inspection. At the end of last year pupils' attainment in mathematics was similar to that in English. The latest school assessments, completed in October 2013, show that standards in English are now slightly better than in mathematics, although standards in reading are not as good as they are in writing.
- Pupils' progress accelerates as they move up the schools and is faster in Years 7 and 8 than it is in Years 5 and 6. Over time, pupils' progress in reading has not been consistently as good as their progress in mathematics and writing. However, progress improved markedly in 2013 and in the current Year 6 the majority of pupils are making at least the expected progress in English and mathematics. For many pupils, their progress is even better.
- Pupils enjoy reading and look forward to the organised reading sessions each week when they all read independently. There is extra help and support for those who find some aspects of reading difficult to master. However, this help is not always directly focused on the specific aspects of reading they find difficult.
- The implementation of a whole-school writing policy has had excellent results and there has been a rapid and sustained improvement in pupils' writing across the full range of subjects. As a result, pupils are now making good progress in writing.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are making good progress, in line with other pupils, and the gaps between their attainment and other pupils have closed.
- The attainment of pupils supported through pupil premium funding has improved since the last inspection. The gap between the attainment of these pupils and the rest of the school has narrowed and school records show that their rapid progress has meant they are now working one and a half terms behind their classmates in English and two terms behind in mathematics.
- Good individual support and guidance for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has ensured that they make good progress in mathematics and English, in line with the progress made by other pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching across all four year groups has improved considerably since the last inspection and teaching is now typically good or better. Teaching is still stronger in the upper part of the school than in the lower part, and when teachers teach within their specialist areas.
- The school works hard to ensure that all year groups are taught by subject specialists who present their subjects in an enthusiastic and lively way that captures the pupils' interest. Although there are exceptions, activities are usually well matched to pupils' abilities and interests and as a result they are keen to learn and willing to persevere with difficult tasks in order to

make good progress.

- In many lessons, accurate assessment and detailed marking help pupils to improve their work by giving a clear explanation of what they do well and what they need to do to reach the next level of learning, but this is not yet consistently the case across all year groups.
- The teachers know their pupils well and usually ensure that work is carefully planned and adapted so that pupils of all abilities can make good progress. This is particularly true of most lessons in Years 7 and 8. Elsewhere, tasks are not always matched effectively to the learning needs of the less able.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations of their pupils and there is a good level of challenge in most lessons. Questions are used effectively to probe pupils understanding and help them to develop their ideas.
- Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the full range of subjects for all year groups. This approach is used particularly well in Year 8.
- Teachers and other adults work closely together to support pupils who find learning difficult. Care is taken to build the confidence of these pupils, particularly disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and encourage them to persevere when in difficulty. This helps them make the same progress as other pupils. Several make more than the progress generally expected for this age group.
- Homework is set regularly and used well to extend and consolidate class work and pupils' learning. It is often set at the beginning of the week and this encourages pupils to become more independent in the management of their time.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic, respond well to challenge and keen to do well. They particularly enjoy group work and willingly share their ideas and this leads to a lively classroom environment that fosters their love of learning.
- There is a positive ethos in the school and pupils respond well to the high expectations of good behaviour modelled by their teachers. They are courteous to visitors, members of staff and each other in lessons and around the school. This was particularly noticeable during a very wet lunch break when pupils were not able to play outside.
- Pupils are proud of their school and say they would recommend it to their friends. Pupils in Year 8 feel they have been offered a wide range of responsibilities and feel well prepared for the next step in their education.
- Pupils feel safe at school and their parents and carers agree that the school keeps their children safe. Incidents of bullying are rare but when they do occur pupils are confident that they will be dealt with quickly and effectively by their teachers.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe and have a clear understanding of potential dangers. This is fostered in school through a programme of social and emotional education and emphasised in appropriate lessons, such as when they are accessing the internet.

- Attendance is good and has been above national averages for the last three years.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, governing body and key leaders have consistently high expectations for the school and are fully committed to school improvement through their relentless focus on raising standards.
- Senior leaders have brought about a steady improvement in the quality of teaching and learning over the last two years through their rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching. Decisions about pay increases are linked directly to evidence of the teacher's impact on achievement. The implementation of an effective recruitment strategy by the governing body has ensured that the appointment of new staff has been closely matched to the changing needs of the school.
- The school's evaluation of its own performance is accurate and leads to a carefully planned and effective development plan. Realistic and practical targets have been identified that will move the school forward and, as a result, standards are improving.
- Since the last inspection the school has worked closely with representatives from the local authority to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This has led to a measurable improvement both in the quality of teaching and the rigour with which teachers' performance is checked.
- Teaching programmes are well-planned and sustain pupils' interest and foster a love of learning. There is a strong focus on developing and reinforcing literacy and numeracy skills across the school and as a result pupils make good progress by the time they leave. A full and varied range of extra-curricular activities ensures that a large number of pupils pursue their interests in sport, music and participate in a range of clubs. There is a well-managed computer, crafts and games club that offers support for those pupils who may require a structured environment or a quiet retreat in their free time.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding for specific individual support in English and mathematics so that relevant pupils can develop and improve their basic skills. There has also been some expenditure on materials to support learning and help pupils to take part in the extended curriculum. This has had a very positive effect on these pupils' progress and the gap between their attainment and others has narrowed markedly in the last twelve months.
- The school works well with parents and regularly holds learning partnership evenings with a focus on showing parents ways in which they can encourage and support pupils' learning at home. Regular reading workshops have encouraged parents and carers to visit the school to hear pupils read. Parents appreciate the welcoming 'Breakfast Club' the school hosts and believe that it helps their children settle quickly in school when they arrive in the morning.
- The school's arrangement for safeguarding pupils meets statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is a well-established group that demonstrates its own ambition for the school and a commitment to school improvement through a continuing focus on strengthening the quality of teaching and learning. Governors have a wide range of skills and have had significant training in how to interrogate the school data effectively. They offer well-informed support and systematic challenge to senior leaders and subject heads to help them improve standards across the school. They visit regularly, know the school

well and are actively involved in formulating and implementing the school development plan. Governors know how the pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding is spent and its impact on the achievement of eligible pupils and aim to finally close the gap during this academic year. Sports funding will be used to support the existing support for physical education through the provision of specialist teachers. Governors have a clear overview of the management of staff performance, including that of the headteacher. They report that recent staff appointments have improved the rigour of the school's checks on teaching and learning. The governing body makes sure that the school meets the national requirements for safeguarding pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	109661
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	425173

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	496
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Wood
Headteacher	Maxine Warner
Date of previous school inspection	November, 2011
Telephone number	01234 303403
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