



# Fairlands Middle School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 123888  
**LEA** Somerset  
**Inspection number** 281584  
**Inspection dates** 17 May 2006 to 18 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Carole Raymond HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary	<b>School address</b>	Masons Way
<b>School category</b>	Community		Cheddar
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9 to 13		Somerset BS27 3PG
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01934 743186
<b>Number on roll</b>	533	<b>Fax number</b>	01934 744457
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs H Fuller
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28 February 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Peter Elmy

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Fairlands Middle School caters for children from nine to thirteen years, many of whom are bussed in from villages around the town. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and their ability on entry is average to above average; the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is low compared to the national picture. Very few pupils receive free school meals, although this figure masks small pockets of rural deprivation within the catchment area.

At the time of inspection, several teachers and the majority of pupils in Years 6 and 7 were out of school on residential courses. Those remaining in school followed a well-planned alternative curriculum as Years 5 and 8 continued with their normal timetable.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The school judges itself to be good and inspectors agree. It is a school that is improving and has many strengths. These include high standards and good achievement, particularly in Key Stage 3, and the care it gives pupils. Pupils' personal development is an outstanding feature.

Leadership and management have continued to improve over the last year under the strong leadership of the new headteacher. The school's self-evaluation shows an accurate and very clear understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. The school has tackled effectively issues for improvement since the last inspection and acted with urgency to remedy the disappointing mathematics results in the 2005 tests in Key Stage 2. The areas for improvements listed below are satisfactory, but not as good as other things the school does; they are already identified as priorities in the School Improvement Plan. The school provides good value for money and there is good evidence that the school has the capacity to continue improving its performance.

### What the school should do to improve further

- To improve standards still further the school should:
- help pupils to understand more clearly what they need to learn in each lesson and help teachers to provide the best strategies to enable such learning to take place
- develop the capacity of middle managers to review their subject through using performance data and monitoring lessons
- improve the consistency of marking and assessing pupils' work and providing feedback.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards are above average and progress is good, accelerating in Key Stage 3. The standards reached in the Key Stage 2 tests in 2005 were broadly average, whereas for several years they had been significantly above average. In the past year, the school's main priority has been to raise standards in Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics which lagged behind English and science. The drive to do this has been successful, for the school's records show that standards are higher this year. There is a more consistent performance between these subjects and in most respects; the school is on course to meet its challenging targets. It recognises, however, that the most able girls need still more challenge in mathematics. The pupils are well prepared for their transition to Key Stage 3, where they make very good progress and achieve high standards by the time they leave for their upper school. The pupils' presentation of their handwritten work is a relatively weaker aspect of their attainment, something that the school has identified. But, overall, the pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points and capabilities.

Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties make good progress. The school is particularly effective in supporting pupils who are vulnerable and, through making them feel more secure in the school, enabling them to make outstanding progress in their learning.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural developed is outstanding. Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and enjoy lessons, particularly those where they are actively involved, taking responsibility and working cooperatively as groups. They like coming to school, as is shown by their good attendance, and the school is working hard to improve the punctuality of a small number of pupils.

Relationships are very good and behaviour in lessons and around the school is calm and safe, with cases of exemplary behaviour in some lessons where pupils are listening for long periods of time. Occasionally, Year 6 pupils feel intimidated by older and bigger pupils, for example during playtimes, but they are quick to say that staff deal with any instances quickly. Pupils are confident communicators, feel safe to express their views and are good at listening to others, pupils and adults. The school council and other meetings between staff and pupils are very good examples of how the pupils feel safe and able to challenge the school about aspects of provision. For example, they want to lead healthy lifestyles and have raised a number of issues with the school, for example improving access to drinking water and the poor quality of changing and shower facilities in physical education.

Across all year groups pupils think about the needs of others and have a clear sense of their responsibility as members of a community. This is reflected in their participation in a wide range of fundraising events, often helping to decide which charities will benefit. For example, a small group of Year 8 pupils are making plans to organise and lead a whole-school event for Sports Relief. Their proposal to the headteacher was well informed and showed that they had considered a wide range of factors, including which day of the week might cause least disruption to their learning. This aspect of making a contribution to the community is an outstanding feature.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and pupils make good progress as a result. In some lessons, teaching is outstanding; questioning challenges pupils to think about their responses, and allows them time to plan their replies so that they are thoughtful and detailed. This is especially notable in English.

The wide range of teaching methods and activities used in the good lessons helps pupils to enjoy and engage in their learning. In these lessons, teachers show the pupils what they need to learn and how they should be able to demonstrate what they have

learned throughout the lesson. The school is aware that this practice is not consistent across all lessons. Peer assessment is used well and was particularly effective in an exemplary drama lesson, where pupils were used as 'experts' to observe and evaluate how well pupils were meeting the learning objectives. Pupils' involvement in self-assessment is not as well developed and is an area the school is looking to improve.

Teachers' use of assessments to plan new learning is developing. However, information is not yet being used well enough to set new challenges as approaches to marking and assessing pupils' work and providing feedback are inconsistent across subjects.

The very effective contribution to pupils' learning that learning support staff make is a particular strength. The progress of vulnerable pupils and groups of lower-achieving pupils is greatly aided by their work. Extension work for groups of gifted and talented pupils meets their needs well and enables them to work independently and make very good progress.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

A broad and balanced curriculum meets all the statutory requirements and engages pupils. All pupils have access to French and German, and flexible arrangements allow for specific groups to improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy or personal behaviour. The support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is a particular strength. The provision for vulnerable pupils is exemplary. The use of ICT to support learning is developing: resources have improved but their use across subjects is not yet well developed. Careers education is not provided for all students at Key Stage 3.

Pupils talk enthusiastically about their involvement in a wide range of enrichment activities led by teachers, parents and outside agencies. For example, a warhammer club led by parents engaged pupils from all years in model making, and others played sport or musical instruments. Pupils enjoy the various opportunities to take up responsibilities around the school, for example organising and supervising meal times, and they execute these well. The programme of residential visits, in this country and to France, adds significantly to the pupils' experience. An alternative programme for those Years 6 and 7 pupils who were not on a residential visit during the inspection, provided a range of experiences which allowed pupils to develop new friendship groups and learn new knowledge and skills, about, for example, paper making and recycling. This clearly showed the school's commitment to promoting equality opportunities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school takes very good care of its pupils. Pupils feel safe and secure, and know that there are many adults they can turn to for help. Pupils taken ill during the school day are well looked after and reassured. Very clear child protection procedures are in place, are understood and followed carefully. Adults know pupils well and pupils feel they receive good support and guidance. In many instances, these are outstanding, particularly for pupils in vulnerable situations and these pupils make very good progress.

Those pupils identified as gifted and talented received additional support across a range of subjects.

The school listens and responds well to pupils' views. The school council provides a strong voice for pupils and is very effective in enabling pupils to participate in decision making. The Homelink book encourages and enables parents to keep in touch with the school on a regular basis and the school has plans to develop these links still further, providing workshops for parents to learn how they might support their children's learning.

The school is using data well to set targets in core subjects; in some subjects, for example music, pupils are setting their own targets. However, procedures for assessing pupils' work and providing feedback are inconsistent across subjects.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are good and improving. The headteacher, appointed in September 2005, has gained the confidence of staff and provides strong leadership. He has led the way in pushing up standards and sharpening the management procedures of the school. He has focused well on the main priorities for improvement, although these have not been communicated clearly to all staff.

The school's self-evaluation provides an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. The process of review involves all staff and takes careful account of the views of governors, pupils and parents. The senior team have a very firm grasp of the data about the school's performance and have acted upon it. They have also undertaken a comprehensive programme of lesson observations that has provided much valuable information to help it improve. In the observation of two lessons that were carried out jointly with inspectors, the senior managers were accurate in their evaluation of what was seen – further evidence that they have a clear view of the school. However, their records of lessons observed are not focused sufficiently on what the pupils learn.

Subjects are led well and the subject leaders have been well supported in taking an increasingly important part in reviewing their areas of work. The school rightly recognises that its middle managers can develop their role further by improving their analysis of data and extending their observation of the teaching of others.

The governing body has a good understanding of the school and supports its improvement strategies well. Governors are careful stewards of the school's finances and have ensured that funding has been well directed to agreed priorities. They do not ensure that pupils have a daily act of collective worship. The school has tackled its issues for improvement since the last inspection effectively. It has also acted with urgency to remedy the disappointing mathematics results in the 2005 tests in Key Stage 2. This is good evidence that the school is in good hands and has the capacity to continue improving its performance.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	No
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know how much we enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for making us feel so welcome. We enjoyed talking to you, hearing about your ideas and feelings and looking at your work. We believe your school is a good school because:

- it helps you to make good progress and reach high standards
- you are good communicators and feel confident to share ideas and listen to others
- you tell us you feel safe and that the school takes good care of you
- it knows what it is good at and what it would like to improve.

We believe that in order to challenge you still further, the school needs to:

- help you understand more clearly what it is you are to learn in each lesson and ensure teaching enables this to take place
- make sure that the marking and assessment of your work provides you with feedback on what it is you have to do to improve.

We hope you go on doing well and enjoying school.