



Bromsgrove, Catshill Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116958
LEA Worcestershire
Inspection number 284357
Inspection dates 18 January 2006 to 19 January 2006
Reporting inspector Catherine Munt HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Meadow Road
School category	Foundation		Bromsgrove
Age range of pupils	9 to 13		Worcestershire B61 0JW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01527 872431
Number on roll	382	Fax number	01527 837113
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr John Doidge
Date of previous inspection	15 September 2003	Headteacher	Mr Phil Spurr

Age group 9 to 13	Inspection dates 18 January 2006 - 19 January 2006	Inspection number 284357
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Catshill is of average size for a middle school. Pupil numbers have declined in recent years. The majority of the pupils are of White British origin and the proportion entitled to free school meals is below average. Pupils take the Year 6, Key Stage 2 national tests at the end of their second year in the school. They leave at the end of Year 8. The school has experienced some difficulty in the past in recruiting staff but the position has stabilised recently. When it was inspected in September 2003, the school was judged to require special measures. The headteacher took up his fixed-term post in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The headteacher leads this rapidly improving school most effectively. In a short time, his exceptional and supportive leadership has helped the school to transform itself from a hard working but fairly solemn organisation to one where staff are still working hard but are smiling and are telling inspectors how exciting it is to work here! The headteacher is well regarded by the governors, the staff and the pupils. Teaching, administrative and support staff undertake their responsibilities more proficiently than in the past but some require further support and training. Inspectors agree with the school's judgements on how it is performing.

There have been substantial improvements in the pupils' learning this year and in the progress that they are making in lessons. Their behaviour is good. Despite these improvements, the standards achieved in the national tests were lower than in similar schools.

The school has developed effective links with its local schools and with outside agencies that provide additional support for pupils. The headteacher's strong emphasis on team work and rigorous accountability has led to sustained progress being made in addressing the key issues identified at the last inspection. This shows that the school has the capacity to improve.

The quality of teaching and learning is at least satisfactory and often good: outstanding teaching was seen in several subjects. In a small number of lessons, teachers did not check on the pupils' progress effectively enough. Procedures are in place to increase the time allocated to teaching at Key Stage 3. Pupils require further opportunities to develop a sound understanding of the different cultural groups within British society.

The school provides satisfactory value for money. However, declining numbers have put pressure on the budget and this requires a long-term plan to ensure that standards continue to rise while expenditure remains within planned spending limits.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consolidate strategies used by teachers to check on the pupils' learning; ensuring that swift and appropriate action is taken where they have not understood, in order to raise standards further.
- Continue to support the development of management skills at all levels.
- Increase opportunities within the curriculum to help the pupils to develop a better understanding of different cultural groups within British society.
- Increase teaching time in Key Stage 3.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Major improvements in teaching are now bearing fruit and the pupils are making much better progress in lessons. However, the improvement in the proportion of good and excellent teaching now evident throughout the school was too late to influence the results of the 2005 national tests, which were below those of comparable schools. Similarly, the use of data to monitor pupils' progress effectively was underdeveloped during the pupils' time in Years 5 and 6. Consequently, a high proportion of these pupils, particularly boys, did not perform as well as they should have.

Standards were at least in line with expectations in the lessons seen during the inspection, with some higher attainment in Key Stage 2. In lessons, all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, made good progress, sometimes from a low starting point. Standards are rising because focused teaching is challenging the pupils and accelerating their progress. Higher attaining pupils are starting to meet their potential, particularly in mathematics and science, as the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 in the national tests confirms. Assessment data is being used effectively in the core subjects to set challenging targets and to ensure that pupils who are falling behind receive timely support. The good quality of recent work by pupils of all ages shows what they are capable of achieving when stimulated. For example, Year 6 pupils interrogated a densely written university report on children's reading, correctly inferring the questions posed by the researchers to reach their conclusions.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong which they express when they feel that friends have been unfairly treated. They work well with others and know how to relate to adults, including visitors to the school; the inspectors were impressed by the number of pupils who greeted them pleasantly. Overall, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. However, whilst the school teaches about other world cultures in several subjects, the pupils do not have a sense of the range of cultural backgrounds of groups that make up modern Britain. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Attendance is above average. The majority enjoy school, and explain this intelligently, citing academic, social and cultural factors. They feel safe at school, and well sheltered from outside interference. Pupils report that most instances of bullying are resolved by the school. They understand the requirements for staying healthy, taking a reasonable amount of weekly exercise and eating reasonably well; however, few packed lunches included fruit on the first day of the inspection. Many pupils contribute effectively to the school community through responsibilities within school, for example, the school council, and reach out to the wider community through charity activities and cultural events. Pupils develop suitable skills to support their future working life: they learn to work cooperatively and acquire appropriate numeracy and literacy skills, but more could be developed in this area.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall and this is why the pupils have made rapid progress in their learning this year. Although much is good and outstanding, there is also a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Most lessons take place in a calm and orderly atmosphere, with consistent procedures that ensure that pupils know what they are going to learn and what they have to do. Consequently, the majority of pupils have a good attitude to work and make good progress. Teachers know their subjects well, prepare lessons thoroughly and explain tasks and concepts clearly. They have high expectations of their pupils so that lessons proceed at a brisk pace and the pupils are totally engaged. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those who are not achieving as well as they should, are given good support. The best teachers are skilled at asking a series of developing questions that challenges the pupils' thinking. The objectives of the lessons are revisited frequently so that pupils are closely involved in what they have learned and develop good habits of independent learning. Some outstanding teaching seen in this inspection provided moments of real inspiration and excitement both for the pupils and the visiting inspectors! In less effective lessons, teachers' expectations are low, pace is slow, and it is not clear to the pupils what they are supposed to be learning. In some cases, the teachers have not checked effectively that the pupils have understood tasks or learned the main points of the lesson.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. A recent appointment at senior level has been made to improve this area of the school's work further. Whilst it is broadly satisfactory with increasingly good provision for English, mathematics and science, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop a sound understanding of the different cultural groups within British society. The length of teaching time for pupils in Key Stage 3 is below the usual 24 hours per week. Suitable plans are in place to remedy this and to increase the opportunities to use computers and other technological equipment in lessons. A good example of pupils using a digital camera to record and analyse practical work enriched a physical education lesson. Pupils in a design and technology lesson responded very well to a carefully devised programme of practical and theory work that involved using sewing machines, making transfer prints and engaging in thoughtful self-evaluation.

An interesting programme of visits, visitors and residential trips plays a positive role in the pupils' personal development. Pupils are also able to take part in a suitable range of extra-curricular activities, including sports clubs and choir.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes all necessary measures to ensure that the school site is secure, and that the pupils are safe within it. This includes clear assessment of physical risks and measures to minimise bullying behaviour and to deal with any instances firmly. Child protection procedures are well established and understood, and the school has good links with other social welfare organisations that enable it to support vulnerable pupils. The pupils are set challenging targets which are well monitored and used to ensure that underachievers are identified and suitable support provided. Form tutors, as well as teachers in their general role, provide good support for pupils to enable all of them, including those with learning difficulties, to achieve well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that leadership, management and governance have improved considerably from poor in 2003 to satisfactory now, with good elements. The appointment of the headteacher has brought a renewed sense of purpose to the work of the school. He has simplified the management structure of the school and has reallocated responsibilities equitably between the members of the senior management team, the heads of year and the administrative staff. His exceptional and supportive leadership has boosted morale and channelled the industry and keenness of the staff to bring about rapid improvement. The effective promotion of teamwork among senior managers has provided a blueprint for the rest of the staff and has given a clear steer to the work of the school. This clarity is helping the managers and coordinators to work more purposefully and to greater effect than previously. Inspectors were told time and again that working in the school is both challenging and exciting. The corridors and classrooms buzzed with the enthusiasm of staff and pupils. Where training needs, such as those of some managers, or weaknesses, such as the inaccurate budget projections, have been identified, suitably detailed plans are promoting rapid and sustainable improvement. The views of parents, pupils and staff have been canvassed and their opinions taken into account during this time of rapid change. Governors have focused on making improvements to the accommodation but, until recently, they had insufficient information to use resources and finances to maximise the benefit to the pupils. This has been identified and the latest minutes show a considerable improvement in the information that they receive. Systematic procedures to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's work are becoming firmly established, enabling the school to effect further improvement without additional assistance.

The reduction in the number of pupils has put pressure on the school's budget. The governing body has drawn on additional funds from the local authority to supplement this year's budget and sustain small classes. Although this is an effective short-term measure, the school, rightly, is considering options for the longer term to ensure

continuing financial security alongside its plans to raise standards and improve the provision further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

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

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	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	3	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	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	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	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	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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	Yes
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

Thank you for welcoming us when we came to visit you. We could see that you and your teachers have worked hard to improve things.

All that hard work has really paid off and the school no longer needs special measures. Well done! We saw how much better things are now. You enjoy most of your lessons and are helping your teachers by joining in well and by behaving more sensibly in class. The improvement in your behaviour, combined with the more exciting lessons that we saw, is helping you to learn more effectively. Your work is showing great signs of improvement but test results need to improve quite a bit more yet. You told us that you feel safe in school and that you know how to keep fit and healthy. However, we did not see much fruit in your lunch boxes!

The teachers and the governors are working hard to improve the school and Mr Spurr has done a good job by helping everyone to see what needs to be done first and by ensuring that the staff get the training and support that they need to take on new responsibilities. We have suggested several things to help the school to become even better.

Teachers should check frequently to see how well you have understood the lessons, giving you extra help when you have become confused.

Staff should continue to get the training that they need.

You should have more opportunities to find out about the different groups that make up our society.

Increase teaching time for the older pupils so that it is the same as in most middle schools.

Finally, we are sure you will be saying thank you to Mr Spurr and all of the teachers for the great job they have done in improving your school.

With my best wishes for your future