



# Beccles Middle School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 124822  
**Local Authority** SUFFOLK  
**Inspection number** 293123  
**Inspection dates** 31 January –1 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Judith Matharu HMI

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 secondary	<b>School address</b>	Castle Hill
<b>School category</b>	Community		Beccles
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13		Suffolk NR34 7BQ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01502 713195
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	413	<b>Fax number</b>	01502 712518
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr S Elms
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr D Baker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 June 2002		

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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**

Beccles Middle School is a small middle deemed secondary school for pupils aged 9 to 13. It serves the community of Beccles and surrounding area. The majority of pupils are of White British origin. The school has a Specialist Support Centre on site for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school in Year 5 is below average. The school holds the Sportsmark Award and is the FA Charter School for the Eastern Region.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and its child-centred inclusive approach is central to all it does. It uses self-evaluation well and has a good capacity to improve. The school's philosophy when considering new developments centres on, 'Will this make a positive difference to our pupils' experiences?' Pupils really enjoy school life and appreciate all it offers. Their behaviour and attitude to their work are outstanding and their delight in learning evident in lessons. Attendance is good. A very large number of parental questionnaires were returned; these expressed almost universal satisfaction with the school and praise for what it provides for their children. The comment, 'The school really cares about the children, you can see it when you walk in. The atmosphere is all around coming from teachers and pupils together', typifies their views.

The staff team share a commitment to placing the needs of pupils, regardless of their abilities or aptitudes, at the heart of their work. As a result there is an impressive shared purpose across the school and the strongly inclusive approach ensures that all groups of pupils feel valued and able to contribute. All groups of pupils achieve well over their four years in school and leave achieving standards which are above those expected for their age. This represents good progress overall. Pupils enjoy learning and achieve well because of consistently good teaching which inspires their interest. Relationships within the school are very strong; teaching is skilled and enthusiastic and promotes a variety of learning styles. Feedback to pupils on how to improve their work however, is not consistently good in all cases at present. The curriculum is good and provides good challenge for all groups of learners. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding and the school's good reputation for working effectively with pupils with complex learning difficulties is well-deserved.

Pupils' personal development is simply outstanding. In particular their social development is exemplary, largely due to the consistent use of well-structured group work in a large number of lessons.

Care guidance and support are also outstanding, with pastoral care one of the strengths of the school. This is because pupils are well-known and strongly supported by pastoral staff who have regular contact with them throughout the day. Academic guidance is less well developed and systems to track and monitor progress are not yet consistent across the school.

Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership team has effectively ensured that its vision to put pupils' enjoyment of learning is at the heart of all the school does, and this has been embraced by a strong staff team who successfully translate this into their everyday practice.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Develop pupil progress tracking systems across the school to ensure consistency in all curriculum areas.

- Disseminate the good practice already in place that provides pupils with information about their current performance and what they need to do to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' attainment on entry is below average. Standards achieved in tests at Key Stage 2 are variable. These improved from 2003 to 2005, but dipped slightly in 2006 to slightly below average, particularly in English and Science. Satisfactory progress is achieved by pupils in years 5 and 6. However, analysis of data in school, lesson observations and scrutinies of pupils' work confirm that in years 7 & 8 pupils reach above average standards by the time they leave the school, demonstrating that pupils make good progress overall from year 5 to year 8. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similarly good progress.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. They really enjoy school and feel valued. They are clear that any bullying will be treated seriously and dealt with fairly. Attendance is good. Pupils are well aware of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles, and they are particularly appreciative of, and participate extremely well in, the wide range of sports on offer.

Pupils acquire a very good understanding of spiritual, moral and cultural issues. The school has good links with local churches and pupils benefit from stimulating assemblies that have a Christian ethos. They respond generously to charities, such as the recent non-uniform day to raise money for a local hospital. They develop a good knowledge of western art forms and are also introduced to non-western art and music, both in lessons and in the broad range of enrichment activities on offer. Pupils' social development is excellent. As a result of carefully planned group learning activities and the many opportunities for independent learning, they show mature and responsible attitudes towards each other throughout the school.

Pupils feel that their views are taken into account very well, and they are pleased to be involved in the appointment of staff. They offer ideas for new clubs and activities through the Sports Council, and the new Eco Council is providing another forum for their ideas to be considered. They develop an appropriate understanding of personal finance and workplace skills for their age.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with some of it outstanding. Teachers plan lessons very well. They have excellent specialist subject knowledge. In lessons where pupils make the progress expected of them, the pace of the lesson is brisk, tasks are closely matched to pupils' needs and the wide range of good teaching methods employed, for example the 'Thinking Hats' approach engages pupils' interest. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) well to support a range of learning styles.

Regular marking by teachers helps pupils to improve their work. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality of feedback in some subject areas. Behaviour in lessons is excellent due to the highly effective working relationships between pupils and teachers. Learning is seen as a fun activity, enjoyed by pupils and teachers alike.

Senior managers effectively monitor the quality of teaching and learning and inspectors agree with their judgements. Teaching assistants are effective because they receive good training and clear guidance. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are, therefore, well supported and achieve well.

Most teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and set targets to help them improve. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own and each other's work. There is, however, some inconsistency in the assessment practice of different subjects. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are sometimes not aware of their targets or how to further improve their work.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Curriculum provision is good because it provides a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities for all pupils and meets statutory requirements. Provision for pupils in the specialist support centre is excellent because of how well it meets the individual learning needs of this group. As a result, all groups of pupils, including those who are vulnerable and those who have learning difficulties and disabilities, are able to make good progress in their learning. Good opportunities are planned across the curriculum to support the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, thus contributing well to their future economic well being. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is now good, having improved since the last inspection. This contributes well to pupils' awareness of safe and healthy living. The curriculum is enriched by a diverse and extensive range of extra-curricular provision, especially sporting and musical activities. Exceptionally large numbers of pupils take advantage of these opportunities adding considerable enjoyment to their school experience.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding pastoral care, guidance and support. Vulnerable pupils are monitored and supported very carefully. Liaison between the school and outside agencies is excellent and ensures that pupils receive very good support. Child protection procedures are robust and the school ensures pupils' welfare and safety through careful attention to risk assessments.

Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding. The assessment of need is very thorough. Carefully targeted support, by both teachers and teaching assistants, helps these pupils to make good progress and achieve well. The pupil and parent support worker provides excellent help for families in need, and to groups of pupils who lack self-esteem.

The school tracks pupils' progress and identifies those who are underachieving, as well as those who are doing well but its practice is not consistent. Parents and carers are regularly informed about their child's progress, through written reports and at meetings, and they are appreciative of the school's efforts to work in partnership effectively with them.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and is passionate about its work. He is supported by a strong leadership team who share his vision and have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They work effectively together to promote a climate of enjoyment in learning which inspires pupils to respond positively to the many opportunities available. This sense of 'family' within the school permeates all of its work; pupils are well known individually and feel a strong attachment and loyalty to the school. Parents appreciate this too and many commented on the welcoming and supportive atmosphere.

Middle leaders are enthusiastic and committed; they share the sense of purpose and lead their teams effectively. They have a sharp focus on improvement and providing the best experience possible for all pupils. However the good practice developing in monitoring and tracking pupil progress is not yet consistently applied across the school. Year heads are key players in a very effective pastoral system which enables pupils to feel secure and achieve well in school. Governors are well informed and have a secure understanding of the school's work. They provide a good level of support and challenge. Overall, the school provides good value for money. The capacity to improve further is good.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

2 February 2007

Dear Pupils,

Beccles Middle School, Castle Hill, Beccles, Suffolk

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, watching you work and listening to your views on your school. You told us that your school is a special place, and we agree with you! We found that it is certainly good and there are some things that are outstanding.

We were impressed with all of these things:

- Your behaviour and attitudes to school are excellent. We were so impressed with the sensible way you work together, the good relationships you have with each other and your teachers, and how involved you are in so many school activities.
- You are very well taught. You told us that your teachers work hard for you and make learning fun and we saw lots of you having fun in lessons!
- You are very well cared for in school because all of the staff want the best for you. They do as much as they can to make sure you feel happy, enjoy school and achieve your best.
- You have lots of opportunities to do interesting things. Many of you told us how much you enjoy all of the sporting and musical activities on offer. You also told us you realise how lucky you are to have lots of staff who are prepared to organise these, which told us just how grown-up lots of you are!
- Mr Baker and his team lead and manage the school well and always try to put your needs first.
- Your parents think the school is doing a good job and appreciate everything it offers you.

Your school always looks for ways to improve. We have asked Mr Baker to find ways of giving you information on how well you are doing in your work and how to get even better. We have also asked him to ensure the teachers track your progress very closely to make sure you are doing as well as you can in every subject.

We feel sure that you will continue to do well and be successful in school. Continue working hard and having fun in your learning. It was a pleasure to meet you all.

Best wishes,

Judith Matharu

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools