

Olney Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110352
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	310268
Inspection date	20 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Nicola Davies

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	374
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helena Newbold
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Waspe
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2004
School address	Yardley Road Olney MK46 5DZ
Telephone number	01234 711323
Fax number	01234 714389

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the progress of pupils particularly in mathematics and science and the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning, personal development and well being. Evidence was gathered from the analysis of pupils' test results, observation of lessons, parents' questionnaires, discussions with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils and scrutiny of samples of their work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a three form entry school in the small town of Olney. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is lower than average. Most pupils join the school from the local infant school and attainment on entry is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This well led and managed school provides its pupils with a good education which they enjoy enormously. One parent summed up the views of many when she wrote, 'Since starting Olney Middle School, our children have been well taught, made great progress and have been extremely happy'. Parents and pupils particularly praise the outstanding curriculum which means that, as pupils commented 'school is always exciting'. Parents enthusiastically describe the 'fantastic' range of activities both in and out of class, ranging from tug of war to working on Shakespearean drama. Basic skills are well planned and this is complemented by specialist teaching in art, religious education, music, and modern foreign languages which adds further value to pupils' learning. A particular strength is the way that pupils use information and communication technology (ICT). They make very good use of the school's excellent ICT facilities on a daily basis. This may be researching and designing a leaflet to outline the dangers of smoking as part of personal, social and health education, or making their own animated films linked to their work in English. In one recent activity younger children watched eggs hatching and the recording was turned into a time lapse video by older pupils. The impact of this very rich and well resourced curriculum is that pupils, as one commented, 'love learning'. The curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' excellent behaviour and uptake of healthy and safe lifestyles, as well as their outstanding personal development and well being. The planned opportunities which they have to work with older and younger pupils enhances their sense of community and along with their good basic skills, prepares them extremely well for the next phase of their education. In this way, the school successfully brings to life its motto 'Enjoying today, working for tomorrow'.

Standards at the school are significantly above average, as reflected in national assessments at the end of Year 6, and pupils make good progress overall. The school has successfully experimented with the curriculum to tackle areas which it has identified as being weaker and raise standards further. For example, at the time of the last inspection, standards in writing were not as good as those achieved in reading. Curriculum changes, including the excellent use of ICT, means that pupils now write very well. For example, the 2007 national test results show that nearly all pupils reached the expected levels in writing and more than half exceeded these. The school has now turned its attention to mathematics and science where it has identified that the progress of pupils, particularly those who are more able, can be further enhanced. It has, therefore, made curriculum changes to ensure that pupils consistently build on their skills as they go through the school. This has been accompanied by improvements in the way that pupils' progress in these subjects is tracked. This work is already showing success. For example, the school's records show an increase in the percentage of pupils working at higher levels in mathematics by the end of Year 6. This is not yet fully consistent and, on occasions, activities for pupils in mathematics and science lessons are not challenging enough. The school has recognised this and has developed a range of strategies to share the existing good and outstanding practice across the school. This approach is an illustration of the way the clear-sighted headteacher, deputy and other senior staff thoughtfully evaluate the school's progress and effectively promote continuous improvement.

Pupils relish their time at the school and appreciate the good quality of teaching, the excellent curriculum and facilities, and the good care, support and guidance they receive. They are well cared for and those who find aspects of reading, writing and mathematics more difficult are supported well to make good progress. Staff encourage all pupils to 'build their learning power'

by providing help, guidance and opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves. Teachers regularly set research homework across the whole school and boys and girls from different year groups work together to explore how they could make improvements or present their ideas in different ways. This approach to homework excites pupils and contributes to the impressive independence they show in their approach to tasks.

The school works hard to include parents. For example, homework is downloadable from the school's informative website and teachers respond promptly to parents' questions or concerns through the school's email query system. Such procedures mean that parents are involved well and are very positive about their own child's education. Whilst there are yearly opportunities to make general comments on the work of the school, a minority of parents do not feel enough account is taken of their views. The school's track record of sustained improvement since the previous inspection demonstrates its good capacity to find an innovative solution to this shortcoming, whilst continuing to further enhance other aspects of its work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that activities in mathematics and science lessons consistently challenge more able pupils.
- Involve parents in more regularly identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses.

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Annex A

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

Achievement and standards

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

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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

29 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Olney Middle School, Olney, MK46 5DZ

It was lovely to meet you recently. Thank you to all of you who took time to show me around and tell me about your school. I really enjoyed sharing in some of your lessons. I was particularly impressed with the way you are using information and communication technology to do your research and really enjoyed catching a glimpse of the animations some of you were working on. The blueberry muffins you were making smelt delicious. I wasn't able to watch how you make these but your teachers have promised to send on the recipe.

I spent quite a while talking to your headteacher and other adults as well as reading about the school before I arrived. The staff at your school have a very clear idea of what they do well and what they want to work on next. The plans they make have been very successful. For example, the standards that you reach in writing have improved tremendously since the last time inspectors visited you. They are currently working on making sure that activities in your mathematics and science lessons are really challenging and this will help you make even better progress. I have also asked the school to think about how it can get your parents more involved in evaluating what the school does well and what improvements it could make.

You and your parents were rightly full of praise for all the exciting activities you do in lessons and at other times. One of you told me that school is 'never boring' which is one of the reasons that you do well and develop into such confident and independent young people. The outstanding curriculum is a real strength of the good education you receive at Olney Middle. Spending the day with you, I understood why you are so enthusiastic about school and why you love learning. This was a real pleasure to see and well done to you all.

Thank you again and best wishes for your continued success.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector