

Beccles Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124822
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	340665
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Bill Stoneham

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	432
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Muriel Garbutt
Headteacher	David Baker
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Twenty-one lessons, each involving a different teacher, were observed. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation documentation, governors' minutes, external reports, school publications and 174 inspection questionnaires returned by parents and carers. In addition meetings were held with the headteacher, various members of staff, governors and groups of pupils. The team looked in detail at the following:

how well the pupils are taught and whether lessons were consistently challenging

- how well the pupils achieve and their levels of attainment
- how well assessment and other data are used to set challenging targets
- how well the curriculum meets the needs of different pupils
- how well leaders and managers at all levels have promoted sustainable improvement at a time of re-organisation.

Information about the school

Beccles Middle School is a middle deemed secondary school. 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 special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, but the proportion with statements is considerably higher than the national average. In addition to moderate learning difficulties, other special needs and/or disabilities include behaviour, emotional and social difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The school holds the Sportsmark Award and is the FA Charter School for the Eastern Region.

The school is subject to the local authority's reorganisation plans. It is due to close in August 2012. After this time pupils will be educated in primary schools until the end of Year 6, when they will transfer to a high school to complete their compulsory education.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Beccles Middle School offers a good level of education. Some features are outstanding, including care, guidance and support, safeguarding arrangements, partnership work and the excellent quality of the popular headteacher's leadership. The headteacher and all members of his staff have worked hard to maintain a stable staff and to raise attainment. They rightly recognise that, with re-organisation imminent, the next two years will be challenging. All staff are determined to minimise the disruption to pupils. Pupils join the school with below average levels of attainment. By the time they leave their attainment is close to the national average, with a significant minority doing even better than this. The staff's excellent knowledge of the pupils, allied to the pupils' outstanding behaviour in lessons and around school, and the consistently good teaching offered, facilitates good levels of progress. The use of data to set targets and monitor pupils' progress has improved. However, teachers' use of prior attainment data to inform lesson planning lacks consistency because the work set is not always tailored to the requirements of each individual pupil. Some inconsistency also exists in the quality of marking. A good curriculum is offered and some interesting innovations have been made in Years 7 and 8, especially in terms of promoting responsibility and encouraging team work. Extra-curricular provision is strong with most pupils participating. The array of sporting activities makes a good contribution to healthy lifestyles and pupils enjoy many other opportunities to further develop their understanding through the gardening club and a chicken club. The latter offers an excellent spiritual dimension to the pupils' lives. Overall, the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school is developing the pupils' knowledge of their own community but staff acknowledge that more needs to be done to promote national and international understanding. For this reason community cohesion is satisfactory.

Outstanding care, guidance and support and excellent partnership work are key contributing factors to the good progress pupils make. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress. They achieve well because of the good and effective work undertaken by the school's special unit for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and the work done with autistic pupils. Pupils feel safe and valued and are confident that any issues will be dealt with promptly and effectively by staff.

The school has improved well since its last inspection and there is a steely determination to ensure that factors beyond the school's control do not impede the pupils' education. The school offers good value for money, with a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Further improve attainment by:
 - ensuring that all teaching staff are provided with accurate information about the pupils' prior attainment so that lesson can be better planned to cater even more successfully for individual need
 - ensuring greater consistency in the quality of marking.
- Ensure that the national and global aspects of community cohesion are fully implemented and the outcomes evaluated.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well because the quality of their learning in lessons is good. Pupils say they enjoy being at school, and this was clear from the lessons seen during the inspection. Classrooms are characterised by a good learning atmosphere resulting from the very good quality of the relationships that teachers have established with their pupils. Progress is good for all groups of pupils. Higher attaining pupils and those with special needs and/or disabilities, including those in the specialist support centre, do especially well.

A key reason why pupils' achievements are rising is the emphasis that has been placed on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils at all levels are improving their writing skills and a significant minority, especially in Years 7 and 8, write lucidly and can tailor their work for different audiences. Most other outcomes are good. Attendance is close to the national average, reflecting the school's strenuous efforts to bring about improvement, particularly for the few pupils who are too frequently absent.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2 3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Pupils learn effectively because they are taught consistently well. Where the quality of teaching is less consistent, the school has identified the causes and is taking the action needed to secure improvements. Teaching assistants are well briefed and give good support to pupils requiring their help. Pupils in the specialist support centre achieve well because of the individual attention they are afforded. Pupils benefit from their teachers' good subject knowledge and they generally know what they need to do to succeed and what they need to do to improve. However, there are some inconsistencies in marking and teaching staff do not make optimal use of pupil attainment data to plan lessons that ensure all learning needs are effectively met.

The good curriculum meets all requirements well and is suitably enriched to offer the pupils even greater opportunities. The personal, social and health education programme and the variety of clubs that are available add to the pupils' enjoyment of school.

The school offers a welcoming environment for pupils, parents and carers. The quality of care, guidance and support offered is difficult to fault and the school's dealings with various agencies and families greatly enhance pupils' progress and learning. This is especially so for pupils in the specialist support centre. Liaison with other schools is strong. The school was recently recognised, alongside partner schools, as a flagship organisation for a national project on school transfer.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2 2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

School leadership is strongly focused on maintaining, and improving standards. The headteacher provides a strong and clear sense of direction and the high morale of the staff is a reflection of his hard work and endeavours. Middle leaders are increasingly held to account. In turn, they are increasingly proficient in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision and pupils' progress. Thorough procedures are in place to

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monitor the quality of teaching and learning and the staff work well together to drive improvements. As one parent commented: 'The leadership is excellent. The teachers are all dedicated to giving children the best opportunities.' The contribution of the governing body has improved since the last inspection and they now play a good role in helping the school to improve outcomes. They are involved in monitoring and evaluating strengths and weaknesses and they also help to ensure that safeguarding procedures are effective.

The school works hard to keep parents and carers informed about their child's progress and ways in which they can support them. Every pupil is important and considerable work is undertaken to ensure that all pupils are given opportunities to succeed. The school promotes equality of opportunity well. Its excellent work with its parents and an array of partners helps to secure this. High quality partnership work also does much to promote the successful education of the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, an outcome acknowledged by many parents and carers in their responses to the inspection questionnaire.

The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory with the school acknowledging that it needs to heighten the pupils' awareness of events beyond their own communities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The table on the next page shows that parents are very supportive of the school and all that it offers. A view that is echoed by the inspection team. A small minority of parents raised issues about communications between school and home and about the

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management of misbehaviour. The inspection team thought that the procedures for communicating with parents are robust and student behaviour was excellent. The main issue raised by parents and carers related to concerns about the re-organisation set to take place at the start of the next academic year. Many expressed the view that they were worried about the impact on their child's education.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Beccles Middle School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 174 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 432 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	97	56	71	41	5	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	91	52	79	45	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	82	47	80	46	10	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	86	49	76	44	9	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	92	53	77	44	4	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	77	44	85	49	10	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	69	40	97	56	6	3	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	75	43	81	47	9	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	88	51	75	43	8	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	74	43	86	49	10	6	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	69	40	83	48	15	9	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	107	61	59	34	5	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	110	63	57	33	6	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



10 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beccles Middle School, Beccles, NR34 7BQ

Thank you for making us so welcome during our recent visit. We were pleased to see the progress you are making and we were most impressed by your excellent behaviour. We were also impressed by the range of sports teams you have and the additional activities you undertake, for example your gardening club. It is rare for us to visit schools where so much attention is lavished on chickens: they certainly looked to be happy and contented birds!

We concluded that you receive a good education. You have an excellent headteacher and the school offers you outstanding care and support. The good progress you make in your studies is helped by the excellent partnerships that the school has with many organisations that contribute directly to your education. You are also helped by your teachers and other adults in the school who work together well for your benefit. You help by your excellent behaviour and by most of you attending regularly and punctually, though some of you need to improve your attendance.

We have suggested a few areas for improvement. We would like to see staff mark your work with greater consistency and plan lessons more effectively to meet your own individual needs. A further suggestion is to increase your knowledge and understanding of national and international events. You can help your staff by maintaining your hard work. Thank you again for making us so welcome. We enjoyed meeting you and would like to wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Yours sincerely

Bill Stoneham

Lead inspector

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