

Horringer Court Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124806
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	359777
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2011
Reporting inspector	John Mitcheson HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	297
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Culpin
Headteacher	Tania Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	16 April 2008
School address	Glastonbury Road Bury St Edmunds IP33 2EX
Telephone number	01284 755626
Fax number	01284 704494
Email address	admin@horringercourtmiddle.suffolk.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. They observed 21 lessons and 20 teachers. They held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including 99 questionnaires from parents, 88 from pupils and 10 from staff.

Information about the school

This average-sized middle school serves pupils from in and around Bury St Edmunds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion with minority ethnic backgrounds is very low and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has met the Government's floor targets over the last three years. The school has a number of links to universities and colleges involved with teacher training. It holds the Healthy Schools, Activemark and Sportsmark awards.

Following the last inspection in 2008 the school was monitored by Ofsted in 2009. It was judged to be making good progress towards raising achievement. It is currently working in partnership with two other local schools to become an academy by August 2011.

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	3
Achievement	3
Teaching	3
Leadership and management	3
Behaviour and safety	2
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school that has made a number of improvements, most notably to pupils' behaviour which is good. Pupils say they really enjoy school, feel safe and free from bullying. They talk enthusiastically about the broad curriculum provided and the wealth of enrichment activities during and after school.
- Pupils achieve well in English because the quality of teaching and leadership is good. Pupils achieve less well in mathematics because the quality of teaching is too variable. The proportion attaining the expected levels in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 is below the national average and the school's own target. By the end of Year 8, results in tests administered by the school indicate that most pupils have caught up and meet or exceed the expectations of them.
- The large majority of teaching is securing satisfactory or better learning and progress, but it is inconsistent. When teachers plan different activities matched to pupils' abilities and interests they thrive and thoroughly enjoy learning, but some teachers' planning lacks rigour. When all pupils are taught the same tasks, those that are more able are insufficiently challenged and lower-ability pupils find tasks too difficult. Questioning is not always used effectively to check pupils' understanding or engage all learners. Many pupils' presentation of their work is weak and their books are untidy.
- The headteacher provides clear and coherent leadership. She has addressed weaknesses in behaviour noted at the time of the previous inspection and made some improvements to the quality of teaching. Subject leadership is variable but some is good. Pastoral leaders provide good support for pupils' well-being

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and their safety. The school generates a wealth of assessment data but its use by senior leaders in raising achievement and by teachers in planning lessons is not yet firmly embedded.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, and where leadership and management is no better than satisfactory, may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2 by:
 - ensuring that the majority of mathematics teaching is good or better
 - ensuring teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support learners
 - closely monitoring the quality of pupils' learning and progress
 - embedding improvements led by the recently appointed subject leader.

- Gain greater consistency in the quality of teaching and pupils' learning by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching
 - monitoring planning and delivery of lessons to ensure that teachers use information on pupils' prior attainment and progress to prepare suitably challenging tasks matched to pupils' different needs and abilities
 - developing the use of questioning to check pupils' understand and are fully engaged in learning
 - sharing existing best practice and modelling highly effective teaching.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - increasing the size of the senior management team to include the most effective middle leaders
 - embedding leaders' and managers' understanding of how assessment data can be used more effectively to raise achievement
 - enabling highly effective middle leaders to mentor inexperienced middle leaders.

Main report

Analysis of school data and observations of Year 5 lessons confirmed that the attainment of most pupils on entry into Year 5 is at least average with a high proportion of them joining the school having exceeded national expectations. Based on these starting points, the vast majority make satisfactory progress and attain standards that are in line or above expectations by the end of Year 8. Standards attained in national tests in Year 6 are above average in English but well below in mathematics, reflecting the difference in quality of teaching in these two subjects. In Key Stage 3, underachieving pupils benefit from one-to-one support, additional

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maths lessons and curriculum days that focus on developing mathematical skills in other areas of learning which help them to catch-up. Optional tests at the end of year 8 show that the majority of pupils achieve or exceed expectations in all core subjects. English results are validated by comparing papers with other local schools but mathematics results are not.

No significant differences were noted between the achievement of pupils from different backgrounds. Similar to national trends, girls tend to out-perform boys particularly in Key stage 2. The English department is leading the way in narrowing this gap in performance by teaching single-gender classes in Key Stage 2 and promoting boys' interest in reading by encouraging them to read independently, regularly, talk together in groups, and read aloud. Pupils that have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve equally as well as others due to the good personal care and support they receive. However, inspectors saw few examples of teachers using information from pupils' individual education plans to ensure their learning needs were always fully met in lessons. The school liaises well with external agencies and parents and carers to ensure that pupils deemed to be vulnerable are fully integrated into school life. Staff know these pupils and their families well and work successfully to ensure they enjoy and achieve satisfactorily in school.

In some lessons, the progress of lower ability pupils slows when tasks are too hard for them. When teachers do not engage them in discussions they become passive and let others do the work. This was particularly notable in mathematics lessons that had no additional support from classroom assistants. Some teachers plan demanding tasks that challenge the most able, such as in an outstanding Year 5 English lesson where a group of gifted and talented pupils were set a writing task pitched at an advanced level. However, in other lessons some older pupils found the work too easy and felt they could be challenged further. The quality of the questioning used by teachers to check pupils' progress and to correct misunderstandings was variable.

Senior leaders have recognised the variable achievements of pupils in English and mathematics and responded by appointing a new subject leader in mathematics to match the improvements made in English. She is already making an impact by helping non-specialist teachers gain a better understanding of teaching the subject, but more time is needed before the impact can be fully known so that pupils' achievements match those in English throughout both key stages. Teaching assistants are beginning to be deployed better in mathematics lessons.

The majority of teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and ensure that classrooms remain calm and productive. Pupils know the sanctions for poor behaviour. They are confident that should incidents of bullying occur they are dealt with promptly and effectively. Established procedures to retain the most challenging pupils in learning means that very few of them are excluded from school. A small minority of parental questionnaires did not agree that behaviour is good. The inspection team investigated this thoroughly. The noted consistently good behaviour in lessons and around the school and received only positive views about it from the school council and a representative group of Year 7 pupils.

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Pupils feel safe, healthy and say school is a friendly place to be. They enthuse about physical education and sport, art, music and 'curriculum Fridays' which enables them to learn in depth. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their attendance which is above the national average. Pupils' personal development and well-being, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Weekly whole-school assemblies provide an excellent means of promoting pupils' understanding and appreciation of the different cultures and faiths in their area and beyond.

Some outstanding teaching was observed in English and in music, where teachers display the highest expectations of pupils and use a range of resources to enthuse and motivate them. Many teachers regularly use interactive whiteboards to present information and illustrate learning. Inspectors and senior leaders were in agreement during joint observations of lessons, but the school's evaluation that over 80% of teaching is good or better is too generous. Some inherent weaknesses remain that prevent all pupils from progressing well. Other than the range of interventions to support underachieving pupils, inspectors were unable to substantiate the school's view that teaching accelerates pupils' progress significantly during Years 7 and 8. The evidence gained from lesson observations in Key Stage 3 indicates that their progress is mostly satisfactory and at times, inadequate.

In a small minority of lessons teachers are under-prepared. Pupils' progress in these lessons is inadequate. Most lesson plans do not refer explicitly to assessment data, so planning is not always tailored to the needs of all learners and at times, all pupils end up doing the same activity which restricts the progress of average-ability and more able pupils. Too much teacher-talk limits opportunities for pupils to learn independently. Pupils know their targets, particularly in English and mathematics but teachers' marking does not always inform them of how well they are doing or what they need to do to exceed their targets. Pupils' books are marked regularly but this does not address the poor presentation and unfinished work evident in most subjects.

The headteacher's ambitions for improving the school are shared by staff and governors. She has prioritised securing better behaviour and providing pupils with a safe and welcoming environment in which to learn. Regular monitoring by senior and middle leaders and staff training has led to some improvements to the quality of teaching and decisive action has been taken to address ineffective teaching. Notable strengths were regularly observed in English but more time is needed to bring the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in mathematics up to a similar level. She is ably supported by a small leadership team who demonstrate satisfactory capacity to make improvements, but other proven middle leaders who could aid further improvement are under-used.

Senior leaders evaluate the school's effectiveness as good; this is too generous. The quality of teaching is not consistent enough to ensure that the learning and progress of pupils is good. Performance data is collated by a recently appointed member of staff who is not a senior teacher, therefore, senior leaders' understanding of the full

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range of data collected and its use in school improvement are under-developed. This information does not present a clear picture of pupils' achievement because it contains some inaccuracies which senior leaders are unclear about. Governors provide the headteacher with effective support and challenge and ensure that arrangements for safeguarding pupils are secure. They promote equality of opportunity for all and ensure that pupils are not discriminated against. They know most of the school's strengths and weaknesses but are only partly involved in self-evaluation procedures.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Horringer Court 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 99 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 297 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	38	38	60	61	1	1	0	0
Q2 My child feels safe at school	47	47	49	49	2	2	1	1
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	34	34	59	60	6	6	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child's particular needs	32	32	63	64	3	3	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	42	42	53	54	3	3	1	1
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	38	38	56	57	3	3	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	13	13	67	68	15	15	1	1
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	10	10	52	53	27	27	2	2
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	31	31	54	55	4	4	1	1
Q10 The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	24	62	63	9	9	0	0
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	27	27	55	56	13	13	1	1
Q12 The school is well led and managed	37	37	55	56	3	3	1	1

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 all 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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management and taking into consideration ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.



30 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Horringer Court Middle School, Bury St Edmunds IP33 2EX

Earlier this week we visited your school to see you in lessons and meet with some of you. Thank you for welcoming us. In particular can we say thank-you to the pupils in Year 7 and members of the school council, you were good ambassadors for your school and should feel proud of yourselves.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. We found that you enjoy school, attend regularly and behave well. You talked enthusiastically about PE and sport, art, music and the range of after-school clubs on offer. You achieve well in English but not all of you make enough progress in mathematics. So, we have also asked your teachers to make some improvements including:

- raising your achievement in mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2 by improving teaching in all lessons and keeping a close eye on how you are progressing
- asking your teachers to use the information they have from assessing your work to plan tasks that meet your different needs and interests, and that they include all of you in question and answer sessions to check that you fully understand what to do.

You can help your headteacher by letting her know through your school council what other improvements you would like to see. In the meantime, keep working hard and enjoy school.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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