

Allenbourn Middle School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113859
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	395535
Inspection dates	26–27 June 2012
Lead inspector	Alan Taylor-Bennett HMI

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	608
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Howarth
Headteacher	Derek Brooks
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2007
School address	East Borough Wimborne Minster Dorset BH21 1PL
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Age group	9–13
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Introduction

Inspection team

Alan Taylor-Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

Martin Brown

Additional Inspector

Martin Clifton

Additional Inspector

Joanna Peach

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 40 lessons, five jointly with senior staff, involving the work of 30 teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils and heard some read, and met with staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including the school's development plans, its self-review, analyses of the attainment and progress of pupils, records of lesson observations and policies. Inspectors analysed responses from the 376 questionnaires received from parents and carers, and those received from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Allenbourn is larger than the average-sized middle school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much smaller than average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is low. The school has a special unit for pupils with dyslexia funded by the local authority. The proportions of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs supported at school action, at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are lower than average. Some pupils leave the school at the end of Year 7 to attend other secondary schools, and others arrive at the beginning of Year 8. The school meets the government's current floor standard which sets the minimum standards for attainment and progress.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- Allenbourn Middle School provides an outstanding quality of education for its pupils.
- Attainment is above national averages and pupils make outstanding progress. Achievement in English and mathematics is outstanding by the end of Year 8. Those who join the school in Year 8 make rapid progress. Pupils acquire very good learning skills and use them confidently across all subjects. Progress in mathematics is particularly strong because of very high expectations and a concentration on developing a deep understanding of mathematical thinking and processes. Many pupils can speak about their learning in each subject eloquently and with confidence, and writing and reading skills are very well developed.
- Much of the teaching is outstanding and virtually all is at least securely good. It promotes inquisitiveness and generates very high levels of enthusiasm in pupils to tackle challenges and produce work of the highest quality. Behaviour around the site and in lessons is exemplary. Pupils show considerable thought and respect for each other, and for adults. Pupils feel safe in school and say that instances of poor behaviour are very rare.
- The school is exceptionally well led and managed. Staff and governors demonstrate very high levels of commitment to obtaining the best outcomes for everyone. The headteacher’s vision and high standards are communicated clearly, and the well-developed systems for development planning, self-evaluation and managing performance drive continual improvement. Leaders at all levels in the school show an excellent understanding of their roles and feel accountable for whole-school improvements. Work with other local schools stimulates high quality discussion about the nature of very good teaching and learning. The increase in the proportion of outstanding teaching this year is evidence of a strong capacity to sustain improvement.
- Pupils’ social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is supported impressively. There is a very wide range of activities and opportunities for pupils, beyond the normal school day, which complement the well-planned and expertly delivered curriculum, and enable pupils to acquire a wide range of

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important skills and experiences.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Offer continual stimulus to all staff's understanding and experience of outstanding learning and progress, and the highest quality teaching practice, by:
 - extending the range and type of work undertaken with other schools who seek to develop their own approaches to securing high quality outcomes for pupils
 - involving the school in aspects of developments nationally at 'best practice' level.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils make impressive progress in all year groups. Published measures of progress do not always reflect this as they relate the attainment of pupils two years before they arrive to their achievements half way through their time at the school. The school's own systems of gauging achievement are rigorous and reliable; the information generated, and the work seen in books and in lessons, all reflect the improvements that pupils make over their four years here. A very high proportion of pupils make at least one level of progress in English and in mathematics over Years 5 and 6, and again over Years 6 and 7, and many make two levels of progress over these intervals in these subjects. Standards of reading, writing and numeracy when pupils leave the school are above average. Pupils arriving in Year 8 settle in quickly and happily, and make very good progress because of the good support they receive.

Pupils share a tremendously positive attitude to learning and delight in the stimulus and challenge offered to them, regardless of their ability and aptitudes. In one outstanding lesson on the French Revolution pupils were encouraged to relate the ideas they were discussing about changes in social structures to other contexts, including recent world events. They responded well to the teacher's constant and skilful questioning by developing an impressively sophisticated grasp of events in France in the 1790s. In another lesson on adding fractions and mixed numbers, Year 5 pupils made considerable gains in their ability to solve a range of problems; this was because the highly effective support offered to pupils who struggled, and those with special educational needs, was exceptionally well targeted. This close support for pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs is a strong feature of the school's work both in lessons and in the special needs department. It enables pupils to make outstanding progress and develop confidence. Pupils working in the dyslexia base develop their reading skills rapidly and securely using phonics techniques (associating letters with the sounds they make) as a result of the very good teaching there. Pupils who are very able or talented make very good progress because they are offered well-judged levels of challenge and support, both in lessons

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and through a range of extra-curricular opportunities.

All of the many parents and carers who returned questionnaires indicated that they feel that their child is making good progress at the school. Inspection evidence demonstrates that their confidence in the school is well placed.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers' subject knowledge is good, and work is presented interestingly and is well matched to the needs of all groups of pupils. Teachers constantly gauge the quality of pupils' responses and respond accordingly, and high quality questioning skills are often used as a powerful means to extend thinking. In a cricket lesson observed, the teacher explained the essential skills involved with clarity and then monitored every pupil's developing technique, intervening briefly and effectively when necessary and showing instant video feedback captured on a tablet computer to illustrate the point being made. Pupils made excellent progress because they were able to understand the significance of each adjustment made to their posture and swing, and respond immediately.

Pupils play a keen part in whole-class discussions and teacher-led explanations because of the value placed on their contributions and the encouragement offered to question and probe their own and others' understanding. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to this process and are closely involved in monitoring the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs they support, and more generally in the classroom, and are able to help shape the lesson in response. Marking is regular and provides good feedback about what is done well and why, and how to improve specific aspects; it is valued by pupils.

The teaching offers pupils plenty of opportunities to develop their own responses to 'big issues' and to reflect on their significance. Lessons and assemblies often give opportunities for pupils to learn about cultural differences across people from different backgrounds and with different beliefs, and encourage a personal response. For example, in a Year 5 lesson on triangles there was a collective 'wow!' when a geometric proof of Pythagoras' theorem was demonstrated. There are many trips and visits to extend pupils' experiences and these are often connected cleverly and effectively to work undertaken before and subsequently in several subjects. Nearly all of the parents and carers who returned questionnaires believe that their child is taught well here; inspection evidence supports this view.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is always calm, cooperative and thoughtful. Pupils need few reminders about noise levels in the busy corridors and getting themselves ready to learn on arrival to lessons. This is because there are very good routines established and pupils take pleasure in cooperating and regulating their own and their friends' behaviour. Attendance is above average and pupils are punctual to school and to lessons. They are keen learners and respond

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positively to teachers' enthusiasm and love of their subject. In an outstanding art lesson, Year 5 pupils were engrossed in trying to replicate the way in which Rousseau blended many shades of green in foliage and reflections on the surface of water, and discussed the extent to which they had achieved this, offering each other useful feedback. Pupils say that bullying of any kind, including cyber- and prejudice-based bullying, is rare in the school and that friendship problems due to 'unkind words' are dealt with sensitively and effectively by staff. Fixed-term exclusions are rare and are used strategically.

The school has achieved UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award (level 2) in recognition of the way in which it not only teaches about children's rights but also models rights and respect in all its relationships. This standard is maintained across the school impressively and contributes to the very positive views parents and carers have about the standard of pupils' behaviour.

Leadership and management

The headteacher's vision for the school is based on establishing 'an excellent learning environment in which everyone fulfils their potential'. His passion for teaching and for valuing learning is communicated clearly throughout the school. In the words of one member of staff, 'There is a massive commitment to secure outstanding teaching and learning here.' Systems to manage performance and maintain and further develop outstanding teaching, and drive up good teaching to this standard, are varied and effective. They include all teachers being a member of small learning groups which set their own developmental priorities, very good links with other local schools, and a clear understanding across the school of what constitutes outstanding practice. Judgements of the quality of teaching are incisive, accurate and reliable.

Development planning supports this vision by establishing four main focus areas, and ensuring that all departments work to these priorities consistently. Self-review is rigorous: the school commissioned a number of local headteachers to join members of the school's leadership team in scrutinising all aspects of its work last October in the first of a series of such biennial whole-school evaluation exercises. The outcomes from this review, and the constant monitoring and evaluation of senior and middle leadership throughout the year, are used to focus energy on how strengths may be maintained and further improvements brought about. Senior staff responded effectively to the need highlighted in the previous inspection report to broaden pupils' understanding of Britain's diversity by establishing several links with schools in Bristol and London working in very different contexts. There are also links through the British Council with the Miao Miao Experimental School in China, and connections the school has made with schools in Normandy and Martinique. Through this, and other ways in the curriculum, pupils are acquiring a keen understanding of the importance of celebrating differences and valuing diversity.

Middle leaders relish the way that senior staff balance holding them to account and working with them supportively. They oversee their own areas keenly and also work collaboratively to develop broader strategies. One said, 'The senior team guide and

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support strongly and enable us to do a good job.’ For example, a school focus on literacy for the next academic year arose naturally out of their reflections on strengths and development needs in pupils’ learning in their separate areas, and in consideration of imminent staffing changes. Similarly, they are very conscious of the need to apply the outcomes of such development work to all pupils, not just those who have special educational needs, those who struggle and those who are gifted and talented. In this way, the school provides for the needs of all pupils individually and ensures equality of opportunity for all groups. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils superbly. It is broad and balanced and there are many examples of the learning needs of small groups of pupils being met by staff combining their talents and blending work and pleasure in, for example, the work of ‘Power Club’ and ‘Move It!’. Many children learn to play instruments. There are a large number of music groups and choirs and a range of opportunities for pupils to perform in concerts.

Governors know the school well and offer expert and appropriate challenge to the work of the headteacher and his senior team. They play an active role in development planning and evaluations, and closely monitor the quality of the school’s work, including ensuring that systems and procedures adopted to ensure the safeguarding of pupils are of the highest standard.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



28 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Allenbourn Middle School, Wimborne Minster BH21 1PL

Thank you for the welcome you showed the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed seeing you working in lessons, reading your responses to the questionnaire and speaking to some of you individually. You show great pride in your school and in your achievements, and we agree with the views expressed by many of you that your school provides an outstanding quality of education.

You make exceptionally good progress and reach standards that are above national averages. Those of you who join the school at the start of Year 8 settle in quickly and happily and also achieve very well, because you are made to feel welcome and everyone makes a special effort to get to know you as soon as possible. You all said that you feel very safe and extremely well supported by staff in the school. You are enthusiastic about your learning, show a good understanding of how well you are achieving and how to improve, and ask some really good questions and enjoy thinking things through for yourselves. We judged that the teaching in the school is outstanding in the way in which it supports you to achieve so well.

Your school is very well led. The headteacher, governors and the senior staff have a clear and accurate view of exactly how to carry on making your school even better than it is already. I have recommended that they should now give all staff a broader and a deeper understanding of outstanding teaching and learning by working with groups of people outside the school, and with other schools, on how such outstanding practice is shared across lots of schools, locally and nationally.

You already work with staff superbly to ensure that your school is as good as it is. I know that you will continue to show pride in yourselves and in your school. I wish you all every success and happiness in the future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector

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