

Walkwood CofE Middle School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	116987
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	379338
Inspection dates	29 February–1 March 2012
Lead inspector	Anthony O'Malley 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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	673
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Lowe
Headteacher	David Doubtfire
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2009
School address	Feckenham Road Headless Cross B97 5AQ
Telephone number	01527 543361
Fax number	01527 551807
Email address	office@walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk

Age group	9–13
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Introduction

Inspection team

Anthony O'Malley

Her Majesty's Inspector

Justine McNeillie

Additional inspector

Philip Winch

Additional inspector

Michael Phipps

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Twenty-nine lessons were observed, taught by 28 teachers. A number of shorter visits were also made to classrooms to gather evidence on specific aspects of the pupils' learning. Meetings were held with staff, representatives of the governing body, an officer from the local authority and six groups of pupils. 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 variety of documentation, particularly that related to pupils' progress and behaviour. Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised and a number of pupils were heard reading. Inspectors analysed 178 questionnaires that were returned by parents and carers, as well as questionnaires from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Walkwood is larger than most middle schools. Its provision includes a mainstream autism base for 10 pupils aged nine to 13. These pupils regularly work with peers in the main school. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The great majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is close to the national average. However, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress. The school has won several awards including Artsmark Gold, an Eco School green flag and Sportsmark. The before- and after- school club on the school site is not managed by the school and will receive a separate inspection.

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 of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Despite a number of strengths relating to provision in the mainstream autism base and some outstanding examples of teaching practice, it is not good because the monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently rigorous to iron out inconsistencies and ensure that pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In the last two years, attainment at the end of Year 6 has declined. Last year it was below average. This is a consequence of weaknesses in the transition arrangements between the feeder schools and the middle school. These lead to pupils being set insufficiently ambitious targets when they join the school. Attainment is average at the end of Year 8.
- The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory but too inconsistent. It is often good and sometimes outstanding, but in a minority of lessons the activities set are either too easy or too hard for pupils. The quality of marking and the use of targets, to ensure that pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve, are also inconsistent across the school.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are satisfactory. In the great majority of lessons observed, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning were good. However, this year too many pupils have been excluded or have received detentions for behaviour-related incidents.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Appropriate support and challenge and decisive action have helped to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress to satisfactory levels in Years 5 and 6. However, the monitoring of teaching and the application of school-wide policies are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that aspects of performance, such as teaching, achievement and behaviour, are consistently good.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that by December 2012 it is good, by:
 - ensuring all teachers plan and deliver lessons that offer the right amount of challenge to all pupils
 - sharing the practice of the most effective staff so that all pupils benefit from marking that helps them improve their work and respond thoughtfully to comments they receive
 - increasing the rigour of the monitoring of teaching so that the specific developmental needs of individual teachers and departments are identified and addressed.

- Further improve the progress made by pupils in Years 5 and 6, through:
 - effective partnerships with the feeder schools to ensure that right from the start of Year 5 pupils receive work that builds on their previous learning
 - setting pupils challenging targets that take into account their attainment at the end of Year 2.

- Improve behaviour and reduce the number of exclusions and detentions, by:
 - implementing the school's behaviour policy consistently
 - analysing closely the factors leading to pupils receiving exclusions and detentions and providing necessary support for staff and pupils
 - working with pupils to eliminate the swearing and prejudicial name calling of a small minority of pupils.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The large majority of parents and carers judge that their children are making good progress at school. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in the mainstream autism base make outstanding progress in their personal development, so that when they are learning in the main school they engage successfully with their peers and adults. However, the academic achievement of all groups in the school, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, is no better than satisfactory. This is because teaching does not consistently take into account their earlier learning.

In recent years, pupils at the end of Year 6 have made below-average progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. The progress of pupils in Year 5 is slower than in other year groups. Moderation between schools is not robust enough to ensure good transition of data which means that it is difficult to pitch the work at the start of Year 5 at the levels appropriate for the pupils. Strategies are developing to help improve this aspect of transition. The

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middle school leaders also recognise that weak teaching in the past limited progress in Years 5 and 6. Inspection evidence indicates that progress is improving in these year groups, but it is still slower than in Years 7 and 8. In these year groups, good progress is made in mathematics. Attainment in reading is average by the end of Year 6 and Year 8.

Lesson observations highlighted differences in the progress made by pupils even within the same department. For example, the achievement of pupils in one English lesson was outstanding because the tasks set built well upon the range of previous learning so all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils, were motivated and challenged by their work. The marking in these pupils' books included helpful comments that highlighted features of their writing to improve and there were plenty of examples where pupils had acted upon feedback to raise their performance. However, in other English books, work was not matched so sharply to need and progress over the year was less evident. In these books, marking was less helpful and so pupils had made only limited progress in such skills as spelling and writing extended pieces with well-structured openings, middle sections and endings.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers feel that children are taught well. Inspection evidence is that teaching is satisfactory. The school's own monitoring suggests that the quality of teaching is good in most lessons. Inspectors judged it to be good or better in just over half of the lessons seen, but too variable.

When teachers have a precise understanding of their pupils' learning needs and have high expectations, pupils achieve well. For example, in a mathematics lesson with high-attaining pupils, the pupils applied their excellent knowledge of ratio and percentages to investigate how much various members of a family would inherit according to the intricate terms of a will. There was equally good learning in a French lesson with a lower-attaining set. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, were able to introduce themselves in French and follow the lesson, much of which was delivered in French, because the opening activity revised earlier learning, the teacher modelled spoken French very clearly and the subject knowledge of the teacher and teaching assistant was strong. The care shown in such cases to deliver lessons that build well on earlier learning is not consistent. In one mathematics lesson, pupils made inadequate progress because they were given the task of converting fractions to decimals even though their responses to the lesson introduction indicated clearly that their understanding of the simplest fractions was extremely limited. Because subject leaders do not monitor planning or check work in pupils' books frequently, such weak practice is not always picked up and remedied quickly enough.

Teaching and the curriculum satisfactorily promote the pupils' personal development. In most lessons, the opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively promote their

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social development effectively. Occasionally, such as in an art lesson where pupils were inspired by the natural world, pupils have good opportunities to show imagination and creativity. Pupils do have opportunities to reflect on their learning and share their views on social and ethical issues. For example, in a geography lesson, pupils considered the impact of tourism and economic development on the Lake District. In this lesson, pupils applied and developed their literacy skills successfully. However, in some subjects, in science for example, opportunities are missed to promote literacy skills and pupils often copy text or complete worksheets that limit the quality of written responses.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour around the school and their attitudes to learning in lessons were good. Pupils say they feel safe in the school and speak positively about the information they get about a range of matters important to their age group, including the misuse of drugs and cyber bullying. They value the care the staff give them and speak positively about their tutor groups where they mix with pupils from other year groups. Attendance is above average; strategies have been very successful in reducing the number of pupils who go on family holidays during term time. Many pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs and play an active role in the school and local community promoted by groups such as the school orchestra and the drama, photography and Eco clubs. However, this generally positive picture is not fully borne out by other evidence. Most parents and carers judge that behaviour in the school is good, but in their questionnaires a small minority raised concerns about bullying, including the use of the term 'gay' to upset others, and swearing. Discussions with pupils and analyses of school documents indicate that the rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively, but that swearing and other inappropriate language do sometimes offend other pupils. Pupils also commented that members of staff do not implement the school's behaviour policy consistently.

The school is proud of its inclusive ethos, which allows disabled pupils and pupils from the autism base to feel confident and happy. The school can also demonstrate positive outcomes for the majority of pupils who join Walkwood following disciplinary problems at their previous schools. However, each term a number of pupils are excluded and there are daily detentions. Staff do not systematically analyse the record of detentions and so school leaders are uncertain of the numbers of pupils receiving detentions or the reasons for them. This means they are unable to provide the support for staff and pupils and reduce the number of detentions.

Leadership and management

The school's leaders have responded appropriately to the weaknesses in provision that contributed to inadequate progress in Years 5 and 6. They are improving the quality of teaching through rigorous performance management, coaching and well-targeted professional development. Strong recruitment practice is strengthening the

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team of teachers and there is now sufficient good and outstanding teaching across departments for the school to secure consistently effective teaching and learning without reliance on external support. This demonstrates the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further.

The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. In many lessons there are opportunities for creativity, reflection and teamwork, all of which are very popular with the pupils. The curriculum provides a broad range of experiences, reflected in a number of national awards. Pupils talk enthusiastically about enrichment activities that include performing arts and enterprise events. However, discussions with pupils reveal they have a relatively limited understanding of the wide range of cultures living within the United Kingdom.

The school's safeguarding policies and procedures meet requirements. The high quality of its provision for pupils in the autism base and the care that is provided for pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable demonstrate a strong commitment to equality of opportunity. A number of questionnaires praised the 'family ethos' of the school and highlighted how this helped their disabled children to thrive. A representative of a local bereavement support group also confirmed this strength when praising the school's commitment to the well-being of pupils experiencing challenging personal circumstances.

The governing body has a broad understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It monitors the progress of improvement planning through regular meetings of its strategy group. However, the impact of some of its policies are not scrutinised as closely. For example, it does not receive data regarding detentions or participation rates in after-school clubs that would enable it to evaluate the impact of its equalities and behaviour policies.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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.
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.



2 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Walkwood CofE Middle School, Headless Cross, B97 5AQ

Thank you for the welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited recently. We enjoyed being in your school, seeing you working in lessons, looking closely at the questionnaires some of you completed and meeting groups of you. You made a very important contribution to the inspection. For example, you told us that you feel safe in school and enjoy the many clubs available at lunch break and after school. However, you also told us that occasionally pupils use inappropriate language on the playground.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory quality of education. By the time you leave the school you achieve the skills expected. Your headteacher and his senior staff are steering improvements successfully. They have clear ideas about how to build on the school's current strengths and make it an even better place to learn. There are three main areas for your school to improve. They are to:

- secure consistently good or better teaching throughout the school so that more lessons include challenging tasks to suit your different abilities
- improve the progress you make when you are in Years 5 and 6
- improve the behaviour of pupils who disrupt learning or use inappropriate language, and reduce the number of pupils excluded and the number who are given detentions.

You can all help your school improve by sharing your ideas on how behaviour can improve and by informing teachers if you find the work they set either too easy or too hard. I hope you continue to enjoy school, attend regularly and work hard to achieve your very best.

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector

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