

Pershore, Abbey Park Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116774
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	358027
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Peter Kerr

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Smith
Headteacher	Lynn Evans
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Ten teachers were seen teaching and 12 lessons were observed. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors looked at school policies, teachers' planning, samples of pupils' work and the 81 parental questionnaires that were returned.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- What impact has the recent focus on speaking and listening had on the pupils' learning?
- What are current standards in spelling and handwriting?
- Have the measures taken to improve behaviour have been successful?
- Has the change to subject-based lessons reduced cross-curricular links?

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average of its type. Numbers of pupils on roll have fallen in recent years. This has given rise to reduction of staff and to uncertainty about staffing levels in the immediate future. Most pupils are of White British heritage and none speaks English as an additional language. An average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils of Traveller heritage on roll is higher than in most schools of this size and most are from settled families. An average proportion of pupils has special educational needs and/or disabilities related to learning and behaviour and 14 pupils have statements of special educational needs. Most of these statements are associated with the eight-place Mainstream Able Autism Unit (referred to in the report as 'the Base'), which an integral part of the school and currently has nine pupils on roll.

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

This is a good school. Pupils enjoy learning and achieve well to reach expected standards by the end of Year 7. Pupils are very confident and articulate when working in groups and this helps their learning considerably. The content of the pupils' written work is often interesting and mature, but standards of spelling and handwriting are not consistent and work is sometimes poorly presented. The pupils have good problem-solving skills which help them to learn well in mathematics and science and prepare them well for the world of work.

The pupils feel extremely safe and well cared for because of the school's outstanding care, guidance and support and excellent safeguarding procedures. They behave well and are confident and friendly with adults. Discussions with pupils show that they have enjoyed a range of visits that have broadened their experience, but they have a very limited knowledge of diversity within their own country and beyond it. For example, pupils could say very little about characteristics of the different religions associated with the places of worship they had visited in Birmingham.

Lessons are well planned to provide challenge and support for pupils of all abilities and pupils based in the Base are fully integrated in lessons. When pupils are withdrawn from class for individual or small-group work, it is for specific reasons related to individual needs and the support given enables them to make good progress. Teachers' marking provides pointers to next steps in learning as well as praise and encouragement, but there is insufficient focus on improving spelling, grammar and presentation. The curriculum provides a wide range of learning experiences both within and beyond lessons so that all pupils have opportunities to discover interests and strengths and develop good life-skills.

The headteacher leads an effective management team that accurately evaluates the school's performance. This has led to significant improvements since the last inspection. Rigorous monitoring and support within the classroom, for example, and exemplary practice by subject leaders have improved the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good. The effectiveness of the governing body has also improved from satisfactory to good through greater involvement in school improvement planning and an increased willingness to challenge the school to raise standards, for example by insisting on the appointment of a subject specialist to raise standards in English. Plans to promote community cohesion meet requirements but lack clear statements of the intended impact of each initiative on the pupils' appreciation of diversity.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing by:

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- challenging and supporting pupils more consistently to improve their spelling and grammar
- providing pupils with more opportunities to refine and improve their handwriting and celebrating examples of well presented written work more prominently.
- Increase the pupils' knowledge and appreciation of cultural diversity locally, nationally and globally by:
 - setting more explicit aims relating to diversity for links and visits
 - evaluating the impact of what is done on the pupils' knowledge and appreciation of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils enter Year 5 with below average attainment, many having made less than expected progress in Years 3 and 4. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 are, therefore, lower than would be expected given the pupils' attainment at the age of 7. However, pupils from all social and ethnic backgrounds quickly make up any lost ground and make good progress in English and mathematics to bring standards up to average by the end of Year 7. Pupils were observed on many occasions confidently discussing tasks in pairs and groups in a range of subjects including mathematics, science, French and physical education. Samples of writing on display and in the pupils' books showed good development of self-expression, but also many examples of misspelt words that had gone uncorrected. Pupils' skills in editing and improving their own work, including their handwriting, are underdeveloped because they have too few opportunities to do so.

Pupils based in the Base make good progress because they are provided with very effective personalised learning plans. Other pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in learning and behaviour benefit greatly from the skilled support within the classroom and make good progress. Pupils from Traveller families also achieve well because of the outstanding work done to improve their attendance and increase their enthusiasm for school. More-able and gifted and talented pupils were seen to make good progress because of the developing range of extra opportunities the school provides, for example, additional science lessons at the high school.

Some pupils say that behaviour is not as good as it should be, but this is because of the very high expectations they have for their own and others' behaviour. They say very clearly, however, that staff deal swiftly and effectively with any unacceptable behaviour, including bullying. In lessons and around the school, the behaviour seen was consistently good and staff showed great skill and sensitivity in dealing with any challenging behaviour.

Year 7 pupils fulfil many roles of responsibility in the school but few such opportunities are available to the youngest. Pupils undertake charity work related to the local and wider communities and are involved in projects related to sustainable living. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. They have a good awareness of the unique value of each individual and a very clear sense of right and wrong. Pupils are very tolerant of any individuals with special educational needs and/or disabilities who may behave differently from them at times. They greatly enjoy a wide range of culturally enriching activities, particularly art, but have less of an insight into the diverse cultural influences that shape life in different areas of the United Kingdom.

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

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and plan lessons that interest and motivate the pupils. Good links continue to be made between subjects so that pupils learn to use a range of skills to solve problems and research and investigate ideas. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that the wide range of needs in each class is accommodated. Individual help is provided for those needing it to interpret instructions and complete tasks. In the best lessons, expectations are high for the more-able pupils, who are given more challenging tasks early on. Teachers use questioning effectively to assess pupils' understanding and either move them on to more demanding work or provide more explanation and practice.

The curriculum is varied and stimulating. Pupils say they enjoy lessons, particularly art. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities is provided, including plenty of sports and games and a computer club. Pupils develop a familiarity with modern technologies, including film. For example, four pupils recently went with staff to show a film they had made about their school to a school in France.

The school engages with a wide range of agencies to obtain optimum support for pupils facing a wide range of significant barriers to learning. It plays a leading role in facilitating support for Traveller families in the area, with notable impact on the attendance of these pupils and their increased participation in activities such as school trips. Looked after

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children and other vulnerable pupils are very well supported, with excellent coordination of the agencies supporting them and exemplary record keeping. Pupils attached to the Base receive a very high standard of care and guidance and the expertise that has been developed is used well to support other pupils with similar needs. Transition arrangements into the school from the feeder first schools and on to the high school are excellent.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	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?

A good team spirit contributes significantly to the school's success. The school is a welcoming place where a shared ambition to improve the pupils' well-being and achievement is very evident. Discussions with staff show that school improvement is very much a common goal. Teachers are self-critical, open to advice and willing to share their expertise. This has contributed to improved outcomes for the pupils since the last inspection.

The governing body works well. It ensures that the school fulfils all its statutory duties and reviews all policies annually. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils are exemplary, particularly the measures taken to ensure that any adults who have any contact with the pupils have been appropriately vetted. Parents and carers very strongly express the view that the school keeps the pupils safe and the pupils agree. The school's practices are used by the local education authority as a model for other schools in the area and the headteacher contributes to local safeguarding training. The school has also been a leader in ensuring internet safety through the use of the most up-to-date technologies.

The policy for promoting community cohesion takes into account the school's context and has led to pupils gaining an insight into some of the problems associated with an ageing population. It has also led to good links with other schools in England and in other European countries, but these are in the very early stages of development and planning for them does not make clear enough what the impact is expected to be on the pupils' appreciation of cultural diversity.

The school ensures all groups achieve well and that there is no discrimination. Subject leaders collaborate well to ensure that the pupils experience a good primary curriculum as well as good preparation for secondary school through specialist teaching.

The partnership between the school and parents and carers is good. The parent- teacher association raises considerable funds for the school and several parents and carers volunteer to help in the classroom. Much work is done to inform parents and carers about

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their children's progress and ascertain their views, including the holding of some meetings in the local pub. Despite all these efforts a small minority of parents and carers still feel that their voices are not heard. The headteacher and governing body recognise this and continue to seek new ways to further improve channels of communication.

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	2
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

There was a very good response to the questionnaire. The views of most of the respondents are positive. All who expressed a view agree that the school keeps their children safe. Nearly all say their children are happy at the school and are satisfied with the information they receive about their child's progress. A few parents and carers think that inappropriate behaviour is not effectively dealt with. The inspection found that any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with appropriately, including by exclusion when necessary in the past. There have been no exclusions so far this term. A few parents and carers want more help to support their children's learning. The inspection team conveyed this wish to the school. The headteacher and the governing body agreed to explore new ways of communicating with these parents and carers so that the school could find out exactly what help they need beyond the comprehensive information already provided. A few parents and carers also thought their children were not making enough progress. The inspection found that all groups were making good progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pershore, Abbey Park 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 81 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 178 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	47	38	47	3	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	41	51	39	48	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	39	48	39	48	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	44	35	43	9	11	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	36	42	52	3	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	37	38	47	11	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	35	45	56	5	6	0	0
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)	33	41	36	44	6	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	41	41	51	5	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	37	29	36	16	20	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	40	34	42	8	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	37	46	33	41	6	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	51	31	38	5	6	2	2

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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 pupils' 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.



9 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pershore, Abbey Park Middle School, WR10 1DF

Thank you for welcoming my colleagues and me to your school.

It is a good school. We were impressed with how well you are doing to achieve the standards expected of you by the end of Year 7 in English and mathematics. You often talk purposefully together during lessons and this helps your learning. Your writing is interesting and shows how you link different subjects together, as when you wrote stories in science. However, some of the writing we saw was untidy and the spelling and handwriting were not as good as they should be.

You say you feel very safe in school, and you behave well. You are confident that if there is any bullying it is swiftly dealt with. You also try your best to keep fit and stay healthy through diet and exercise. Some of you told us about trips to Birmingham and France. You clearly enjoy these activities and learn a lot from them, but you could get to know more about the way of life of people in different parts of the world, including their cultural traditions and religious beliefs. Teaching is good. Your school takes excellent care of you, keeping you very safe and making sure you all get the help you need to do as well as you can. Your headteacher leads a good team of teachers and teaching assistants and they know what to do to keep making your school even better. We have asked them to do the following things in particular:

- to help you to improve your spelling and handwriting and to present your work more neatly
- to help you to understand more about the people with different backgrounds from yours that live locally, in other parts of the United Kingdom and in other countries.

You can help too by doing your best to improve in these areas.

Yours sincerely

Peter Kerr

Lead inspector

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