

Westacre Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116778
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	358028
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Usha Devi HMI

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	354
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judith Aldridge
Headteacher	Donna Evans
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 17 lessons and 14 different teachers. In addition to the observations, inspectors made short visits, together with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, to two classes in each year group to look at learning and progress in writing and mathematics. The inspectors met with some parents, groups of pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, staff and representatives from the local authority. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including minutes from governing body meetings, the school improvement plan and pupils' assessment information. They also looked at 159 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics when pupils start at the school were compared with those they attain on leaving.
- Pupils' current rates of progress, especially in writing, were assessed.
- The team investigated how well leaders and managers at all levels are using information from monitoring and evaluation to ensure all pupils make the progress of which they are capable.

Information about the school

Westacre is a larger than average school. Three quarters of the pupils are of White British heritage, with the remainder from a range of other heritage groups. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low. Within the school premises there is a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body of the school. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status and the Active Sports Mark.

Since the last inspection the school has experienced high levels of staff absence. Some classes have had a number of temporary teachers. There have been some new appointments at a senior level. A deputy headteacher and a Year 5 leader joined the school in September 2008, and a Year 6 leader started at the school in September 2010.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Westacre provides a satisfactory quality of education. The school has several good aspects. These include:

- pupils' good behaviour and their enthusiasm for learning
- a team of staff who pay close attention to the well-being of individual pupils and provide a good level of care, guidance and support
- the school's procedures to safeguard pupils and pupils' understanding of how to stay safe.

The school has halted the decline in standards caused by previous weaknesses in provision and instability in staffing, with effective support from the local authority. Consequently, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, now make satisfactory progress. Occasionally, they make good progress. Inspection evidence shows that in reading and mathematics, pupils reach standards which are similar to national expectations by the end of Year 7, but standards in writing are below average. In order to improve achievement in writing, staff in Years 5 and 6 have recently implemented a new approach which systematically develops pupils' use of vocabulary, grammar and punctuation. This is having a positive impact, with more pupils now making good progress than previously. This is not the case in Year 7 where the approach to teaching writing varies too much between classes.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Sometimes, it is good or outstanding. When asked to describe their best lessons, pupils commented that they were 'practical' and 'learning is challenging and exciting.' There are a number of reasons why teaching has a satisfactory impact on pupils learning overtime. For example, teachers have a wide range of assessment information but do not always make best use of this to match work to the needs of pupils of different abilities. Occasionally, teachers' expectations of pupils' capabilities are not high enough and the work set is too easy. This is mainly related to work set for pupils of lower ability and for the more able. Teachers' marking is variable. Although some teachers provide pupils with the guidance they need to improve, and pupils respond well to the advice they are given, this effective practice is not yet consistently applied.

Parents appreciate the strong emphasis senior leaders, teachers and support staff place on pupils' welfare. One parent wrote: 'the school is providing a holistic approach for the care and general well-being of our son as an individual,' which reflects the views of several other parents and carers. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate and senior leaders have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Senior and middle leaders use a suitable range of strategies to monitor the performance of pupils, identify those at risk of underachieving and decide on the support required for individuals

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and groups. Despite this, the impact of these strategies on pupils' performance is not as effective as it could be. This is because there are not enough checks on pupils' progress to ensure appropriate actions are implemented early enough or that the intervention programmes are having the required effect. Similarly, leaders and managers do not always check that all staff consistently implement the actions identified following the monitoring of teaching. This results in inconsistencies in teaching and uneven rates of progress. Nevertheless, the school is beginning to address these weaknesses and recent improvements in the provision and pupils' achievement demonstrate a satisfactory capacity to sustain further improvement.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged 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 across the school, especially in writing, by
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of pupils' capabilities are high enough and that they use assessment data to match work to the differing needs of pupils
 - providing pupils with more exciting and creative opportunities to apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum
 - implementing a coherent approach to the teaching of writing across the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring
 - pupils have sufficient opportunities to be more fully involved in their learning
 - a consistent approach to marking which gives pupils the precise guidance they need to improve their work and the opportunity to respond to teachers' comments
 - sharing existing good practice.
- In order to bring about more rapid improvement in pupils' progress, ensure leaders and managers at all levels
 - monitor pupils' performance more frequently, and use this information to take swift and appropriate action to introduce interventions and to check their impact on pupils' progress
 - focus on how effectively teachers enable all pupils to make the progress of which they are capable when providing feedback following performance monitoring
 - establish robust arrangements for checking that all staff consistently implement the actions identified for improvement following the monitoring of teaching.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The majority of pupils enter Year 5 with broadly average attainment, although this varies between cohorts and is sometimes below average. Observations of pupils and a scrutiny of their work show that pupils' achievement is satisfactory and they make satisfactory progress from their starting points. While some make good progress, it is not consistently good in all classes or all subjects. This applies equally to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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The school's assessment information shows that throughout the school, girls generally reach higher standards than boys in writing. The school has started to tackle this difference by planning activities which capture the interest of all pupils. As a consequence, boys are beginning to make better progress in writing. In one successful example, pupils explored how to use persuasive language to produce an advert while discussing the ingredients used by Victorian pharmacists. This activity engaged boys and girls equally. 'This is educational and fun,' commented one pupil.

In lessons and around school, pupils behave well. They are keen to learn, listen carefully and share their views with confidence. Pupils are adequately prepared for their future lives. Attendance is average and they enjoy school. However, teachers provide too few opportunities for them to develop workplace skills such as working in teams and taking leadership roles during lessons. While pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong, their spiritual and cultural development is adequate. Pupils say they feel safe and staff deal with concerns swiftly and effectively. They are aware of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and the choices that contribute to these. However, they do not always choose to make them. Pupils have numerous opportunities to take responsibilities within school. For example, 'Eco Warriors' oversee recycling in the school and playground leaders organise lunchtime activities. In contrast, their contribution in the wider community is not as well developed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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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How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory. Sometimes it is good or outstanding Strengths in all lessons include:

- positive relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils
- good use of electronic white boards to present information and promote discussion
- useful and effective guidance and support given by teaching assistants to individuals and groups of pupils.

In the most effective lessons, teachers use questions skilfully to extend pupils' thinking. They ensure instructions are clear and brisk so that pupils are quickly engaged in their work. A good example of this was seen in a mathematics lesson in which pupils were provided with a 100 square and had to read a series of statements to find the 'magic number.' Where teaching is less effective pupils sit passively because there is an imbalance between the time pupils are actively involved in learning and the time they spend sitting and listening to adult direction. During a meeting with inspectors, pupils summed this up well when they said, 'we would like more out-of-seat learning.'

In order to help make learning more exciting and creative, the school is in the process of introducing a curriculum which makes more effective links between different subjects. Currently, opportunities for pupils to practice their reading, writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum are in their early stages. There is a satisfactory range of enrichment activities. The school acknowledges that more visits and visitors to the school would extend and enhance pupils' experiences.

Arrangements for transition into the school and on to the high school are good. One parent commented, 'we are extremely pleased and impressed with how well Westacre has managed the transition from First School to Middle School for our child.' The school's mentor works successfully with staff and external agencies to ensure that pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable receive timely and appropriate support. There are good arrangements to ensure that pupils who attend the breakfast club have a healthy breakfast and are effectively supervised.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and other senior leaders have successfully maintained an environment where pupils feel well cared for despite staffing instability. Work done by senior leaders in

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collaboration with local authority advisers has strengthened the quality of teaching which is starting to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. The school's tackles discrimination firmly and its promotion of equality is satisfactory. Leaders and managers are aware that there is still more to do to improve achievement, particularly in boys' writing. Middle leaders work satisfactorily to lead the areas for which they are responsible, and are developing their skills further. When monitoring lessons, leaders at all levels tend to give more attention to what the teacher is doing than the impact of teaching upon the quality of pupils' learning. This means staff do not always receive the precise guidance they need to accelerate progress for all groups of pupils in their class.

As a result of local authority training, members of the governing body have developed a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are steadily increasing the level of challenge to the school. The governing body ensures that arrangements for safeguarding are thorough and regularly reviewed. Health and safety requirements are fully met and child protection arrangements meet statutory requirements.

The school is a cohesive community where pupils and staff get on well. Staff are in the early stages of establishing links with a range of communities in the immediate locality and beyond. The school has formed strong links with a range of partners to promote pupils well-being, but links to support pupils' learning are underdeveloped. Parents and carers appreciate the text messaging service which informs them of future events. Through workshops, the school is increasing opportunities for parents and carers to support their children's learning.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

A below-average number of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. The very large majority of those who returned the questionnaire are happy with all

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aspects of the school. For instance, they are pleased that their child is kept safe and enjoys school. Most parents and carers agree that their child is making enough progress. Inspectors found that pupils make satisfactory progress and some make good progress. A few parents and carers' written comments expressed concerns, mainly regarding behaviour. Inspectors investigated these concerns and found that behaviour was good in lessons and around school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westacre 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 159 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 354 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	75	47	75	47	7	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	77	48	78	49	3	2	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	64	40	84	53	9	6	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	38	90	57	6	4	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	67	42	83	52	6	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	64	40	90	57	2	1	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	36	89	56	10	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)	52	33	96	60	4	3	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	35	95	60	8	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	60	38	87	55	6	4	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	31	97	61	7	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	78	49	70	44	5	3	4	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	84	53	67	42	4	3	3	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 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 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.

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 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.



18 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westacre Middle School, Droitwich, WR9 0AA

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school.

We enjoyed spending time in lessons, talking to you about your learning and looking at your work. We would like to thank pupils who came to talk to us and those who filled in the pupils' questionnaires.

Westacre provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. You make satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Some of you make good progress. We have asked your teachers to help even more of you make good progress, especially in writing. To do this we have asked them to give you work that challenges you to do your best and to give you more opportunities to use your reading, writing and mathematical skills in other subjects.

Some aspects of your school are good. For example, the care, guidance and support you receive, and your understanding of how to stay safe. We were impressed by your good behaviour and how carefully you listen to each other's ideas. You told us that you would like 'more out-of-seat learning.' We agree with you. We have asked your teachers to make sure that they give you more opportunities to be actively involved in your lessons. We have also asked them to continue to make your lessons more exciting.

Finally we have asked school leaders to check how well you are doing on a more regular basis so that they can make sure you make as much progress as possible. You can help by continuing to behave well and work hard.

Thank you for being so helpful, kind and polite when we visited your school. We would like to wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi

Her Majesty's Inspector

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