

West Moors Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113861
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	357441
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Stephen Long HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pauline Whale
Headteacher	Alison Bunting
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 October 2007
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed the school's work including approximately 12 hours of teaching, tutorial sessions, an assembly and observations of pupils at break and lunchtimes. They held discussions with four focus groups of pupils and three whole tutor groups, as well as with staff, governors and a representative from the local authority. They scrutinised work samples and documents including safeguarding procedures, pupil assessment information, school development plans and questionnaires from 137 parents and carers and 105 pupils.

Information about the school

West Moors Middle School is smaller than most similar schools. Very few pupils are of minority ethnic heritage or speak first languages other than English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils in each year group varies considerably and some pupils leave at the end of Year 6 to attend selective schools or other secondary schools. The number on roll has fallen this year. The headteacher was appointed permanently in April last year after a period as acting headteacher. The deputy headteacher joined the school at the start of this academic year. Staff recruitment is difficult, although the school is fully staffed at present. Government floor targets in national assessment tests in English and mathematics for pupils in Year 6 have been met in recent years with the exception of in writing in 2010. The school has an Eco-Schools award, a Healthy School award and an International Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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

Inspection judgements

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

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school which has been through a period of decline in the quality of teaching and achievement but is now improving. The fluctuating roll and some over-staffing have put pressure on its finances in recent years. This is being effectively managed but has challenged senior leaders when a need for staff reductions has been set alongside the need to improve teaching.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress from overall starting points which are below the national average. Their attainment by the time they leave is below average. However, a more accurate awareness of what pupils should achieve this year has helped raise attainment, notably in writing, so the gap between attainment at the school and that seen nationally is closing.
- Teaching ranges considerably in its effectiveness but includes examples of high quality practice. Where it is stronger, teachers make good use of assessment information to plan tasks which challenge pupils of all abilities, pupils' progress in lessons is checked carefully and pupils know what they are trying to achieve. In some lessons, these features are less evident so that progress is hampered. Teachers usually mark pupils' work regularly, but marking is not always useful in helping pupils understand how to move forward or checked to see that they make the requested improvements.
- Most pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe. Attendance is above average. Behaviour around the site is satisfactory, with positive relationships between most pupils. There is some boisterous and inconsiderate behaviour which, while not making pupils feel unsafe, is of concern to them. Incidences of unkind behaviour are dealt with appropriately by staff but some opportunities are missed to reinforce their expectations for good behaviour, for example by more widely publicising and promoting the behaviour policy. Pupils experiencing such incidents are not always kept informed about how they have been resolved.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders understand the key priorities for the

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school and are moving it in the right direction, focusing on areas such as writing. The development of a secure assessment system in core subjects this year has been crucial to tackling underachievement. Development planning includes challenging overall goals. However, the intended impact of the steps to reach those goals is not always clear enough to check easily what is working and what is not. Subject leadership is of variable quality. Subject leaders' use of assessment data and lesson observations to improve provision is inconsistent and is not contributing fully to school improvement. The majority of parents and carers are positive about the school's work. Nevertheless, a significant minority want to know more about how to support their children's learning and about how concerns they may have, such as about behaviour, are dealt with.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of teaching on learning by consistently:
 - making better use of assessment information to plan activities which meet the full range of pupils' needs in all lessons
 - ensuring that pupils know what they are aiming to achieve and how to improve their work in lessons and through marking
 - checking the progress being made in lessons so that tasks can readily be adapted, if necessary.
- Increase the impact of leadership on learning by:
 - clarifying the success criteria for actions intended to improve pupils' progress so as to check the impact systematically and identify the next steps
 - involving subject leaders fully in monitoring and improving provision and outcomes in their subjects.
- Ensure pupils understand fully and adhere to the school's expectations for good behaviour and where pupils have concerns about unkind behaviour that they know how these have been resolved.
- Improve communication with parents and carers so they are able to support their children's learning more effectively and receive better information about how their concerns have been dealt with.

Main report

The attainment of pupils by the time they leave is below average, with variations between different subjects. However, the overall gap is closing and progress is becoming more consistent between subjects. Pupils make satisfactory progress in reading. Progress in lessons is variable because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. In lessons, pupils usually know what to do and make good progress when there are a variety of tasks which include discussion with teachers, especially at the start, to clarify the purpose of their learning. Practical activities, such as experiments

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in science, boost progress and are enjoyed by pupils because they can investigate concepts fully and retain their learning. Speaking and listening skills develop well in these discussions and support writing through rehearsing ideas. Pupils usually work well in pairs and small groups if tasks have a specific purpose and are time limited. Where activities involve too much listening to teachers or recording, the pace of learning is slow. The introduction of a sound progress tracking system this year enables the school to identify lower performing groups of pupils and weaker areas of learning, such as writing. Teachers now know about the learning needs of their pupils and their targets. Action to support slower progress in writing, and in some pupils' reading, such as extra sessions and changes to class organisation, is helping reverse past weakness. While not achieving significantly less well than others, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those with more significant levels of special educational needs make comparatively slower progress. In line with other pupils, the school is successfully improving outcomes for these pupils through a better focus on meeting their needs in lessons.

Teachers generally have appropriate expectations of pupils and plan activities which build learning over time. Most lessons involve logical sequences of tasks. Teachers manage resources well, including electronic whiteboards. Their subject knowledge is satisfactory, although some find it challenging teaching the range of subjects they are responsible for up to Year 8. Lesson planning makes satisfactory reference to assessment information in meeting pupils' differing needs. However, this is not always the case, with the most and the least able pupils sometimes expected to do different amounts of the same work as others rather than tasks specifically tailored to their ability. Lessons often include opportunities for discussion at the start and as the lesson proceeds. Where these are well planned, they include questions targeted at pupils of differing ability, the objectives for learning are clarified so pupils know what they are trying to achieve, and teachers are able to adapt tasks if progress is slow. Nevertheless, these features are not routine in all lessons so as to ensure consistently good progress. Lessons in areas other than mathematics and English offer satisfactory reinforcement of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, although here, too, simple opportunities like noting key words are sometimes missed. Most books are marked regularly. However, the impact is lessened because references to pupils' targets are not always clear enough to help pupils to see how to reach them and they do not always respond to what is written. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is being sensibly restructured to make efficient use of fewer resources. Additional adults are keen to support pupils in lessons but, at times, give too much guidance which inhibits pupils from taking enough responsibility for their own learning.

Pupils' behaviour contributes positively to their learning with the majority attending well, getting to school and lessons punctually and wanting to learn. The school is effective in improving the attendance of pupils where there are concerns. Exclusion levels are low among all groups of pupils and are monitored carefully. The school works well with external agencies, such as social services, to support vulnerable and at-risk pupils. Good work to support pupils in leading healthy lives by taking exercise and eating well is attested to by the Healthy School award. Pupils' moral and social

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development is satisfactory and most are considerate toward each other, for example when sharing equipment in lessons. A small number of lessons are disrupted by off-task talking when teaching is not fully engaging. Pupils usually respond appropriately to teachers' direction, although lunchtime supervisors are less effective in securing good behaviour. There is some bullying with the overwhelming majority being low-level name calling and, in the words of pupils, 'some nastiness'. The school responds satisfactorily to this but does not exploit every avenue to reinforce its expectations of good behaviour. When dealing with poor behaviour, a significant minority of pupils and parents or carers get insufficient information about what has been done so as to feel confident it has been resolved. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the life of the school and the community, for example by serving on the school council, by helping with recycling and by participating in local carol services and remembrance ceremonies. They make good use of opportunities for spiritual reflection in assemblies and in 'Beliefs and Values' lessons. They enjoy learning about other cultures, with international links providing useful experiences. However, pupils have relatively few opportunities to learn about the range of cultures in contemporary British society.

The headteacher and senior team show the necessary drive to improve the school and at a time when staffing is experiencing some turbulence. Restructuring of staffing is being well managed to balance the budget, make better use of teachers' subject skills and rationalise support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Less effective teaching is tackled adequately and secure support provided for improvement. The school has worked well with local authority personnel and staff in another school to enhance teaching and secure its capacity to improve. Monitoring involves a satisfactory range of lesson observation and data analysis. It gives senior leaders a broadly accurate picture of the school's effectiveness, enabling them to promote equality by checking how well the needs of different groups of pupils are met. The governing body monitors the school's work satisfactorily, communicating regularly with staff. The improved assessment system enables governors to ask more probing questions about pupils' achievement, which has not always been evident in past years. School action plans are ambitious for further gains, but are not always explicit enough about the impact expected from different initiatives so their effectiveness can be checked. Subject leadership is undergoing changes with some staff temporarily in role, others relinquishing posts at the end of the year and new arrangements in place for the next academic year. As a result, subject leaders are not engaged systematically in monitoring and improving the quality of teaching to ensure equally good progress within and between subjects.

The school takes satisfactory steps to communicate with parents and carers, including through newsletters and parents' evenings. Reporting to parents and carers has improved this year with good reference to pupils' current attainment and targets in core subjects. However, some parents and carers are unhappy about communication with them about how to support their children's learning. Safeguarding procedures are secure and are a high priority for the school. Procedures for child protection, staff training and site security are regularly reviewed and updated.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at West Moors 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 137 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 268 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	26	19	92	67	16	12	3	2
Q2 My child feels safe at school	29	21	90	66	16	12	1	1
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	21	15	74	54	37	27	2	1
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	20	15	74	54	35	26	2	1
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	23	17	97	71	11	8	3	2
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	12	9	88	64	28	20	6	4
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	8	6	73	53	35	26	15	11
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	8	6	59	43	46	34	13	9
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	15	11	54	39	39	28	12	9
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	8	6	78	57	32	23	11	8
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	17	12	57	42	42	31	13	9
Q12 The school is well led and managed	13	9	54	39	41	30	22	16

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

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

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

10 June 2010

Dear Pupils



Inspection of West Moors Middle School, West Moors BH22 0DA

This letter is to thank you for your help in the inspection and to give our findings.

- The school is judged to be satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching had fallen in recent years but has improved this year. Pupils join with standards a little below average and remain below average when they leave. However, they are rising because of better teaching, including in important areas like writing.
- Most lessons help you learn but sometimes the work is not varied enough, being too hard for some and too easy for others. Where you understand clearly what you are doing, you are able to think for yourselves about how to improve. However, in some lessons teachers tell you what to do but not why and while there is a lot of marking in books not all of it helps you to improve.
- Most of you enjoy school, feel safe and attend well. Behaviour is satisfactory but is sometimes inconsiderate. We looked carefully at this and talked to many pupils. You told us the concern is about things like name calling and knowing how staff have dealt with it when it happens. We investigated with staff and judge that they, too, expect good behaviour and tackle misbehaving pupils. What they do not always do is make sure everyone knows the rules or tell you what has been done if you are unhappy about other pupils' behaviour.
- The headteacher and staff have high expectations for the school, but their planning for improvement needs to be clearer and involve a wider range of staff. Some of your parents and carers want more information about how to help you learn and, like you, to know how any poor behaviour has been dealt with.

I have asked the headteacher and the governors to include the following in their plans for improvement.

- Ensure all lessons meet your differing needs so that you understand what you are trying to achieve and that marking always helps you improve.
- Think carefully about how the actions they are taking to improve the school will affect you and involve all staff in leading the improvements.
- Help parents and carers support their children's learning and make sure they are happy about how their concerns have been dealt with.
- Check that pupils abide by the policy for good behaviour and, where unkind behaviour occurs, make sure that it is dealt with and pupils know what has been done.

Thank you again.

Yours sincerely
Stephen Long

Her Majesty's Inspector

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