

Witton Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116779
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	379298
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Carolyn Carnaghan

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	435
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Humber
Headteacher	David Coll
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed the school's work, including 23 lessons taught by 16 teachers and held meetings with staff, parents and carers, pupils and members of the governing body. They looked at the school's policies, documents and plans, including 156 responses to questionnaires from parents and carers and those returned by pupils and staff.

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

- Can teaching produce a rise in achievement for all groups of pupils, particularly in mathematics?
- Has the school raised achievement in writing sufficiently to overcome previous weaker performance?
- How effectively does the school use the monitoring of teaching and the curriculum to enable pupils to achieve well?
- To what extent does the governing body fully understand, challenge and hold the school to account across all its activities?

Information about the school

This is a middle school, deemed primary, of above average size. The proportions of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and from minority ethnic groups are smaller than average. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the majority of whom have moderate learning needs. Most pupils are White British in origin and there is a small, but growing, number who come from a Gypsy heritage.

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

Witton Middle is a satisfactory school where pupils' progress and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' personal development is good because the school provides a warm and caring environment where pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and others. They are keen volunteers, often helping out through the school council or as monitors. Their contribution to the school community is a positive feature that helps bind it together and make it a happy learning environment. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and appreciate what it does for their children.

Most teaching is satisfactory or better and this, along with a developing curriculum that ensures work is placed in interesting contexts, has helped build progress in core subjects from what was too low a level. The monitoring of the curriculum has strengthened since the previous inspection. Progress in mathematics has started to rise after several years where pupils did not achieve as well as they could. More focus on writing across all subjects has meant that achievement in this area has improved as well. Leaders have not fully ensured all teachers understand how pupils of all abilities should be challenged, particularly through probing questions to test understanding and through accurate and timely assessments. Some lessons lack pace and challenge for the more able or do not incorporate enough suitable tasks that stretch everyone. This can slow progress.

Members of the governing body are regular visitors and are highly supportive. However, they do not always sufficiently challenge the school or hold its leaders to account. The school's evaluation of its strengths and areas for improvement, particularly in teaching, is also satisfactory. While the school's leaders and managers carry out regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching, this has not always been focused sharply enough on how well pupils learn. Hence, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

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?

- Improve the rigour and consistency of the monitoring of teaching by leaders and managers at all levels to

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- focus sharply on how well pupils learn
 - help teachers plan lessons in which tasks closely match the needs of all pupils.
- Raise attainment and achievement by January 2013 by building on the existing good practice in teaching by:
- ensuring all lessons provide appropriate pace and challenge
 - using questioning more effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and more fully involve them in determining their next steps.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' arrive at Witton Middle School with attainment broadly in line with national expectations. Their progress is satisfactory and they leave Year 7 having reached national expectations in English and mathematics. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make satisfactory progress because the targeted support they receive is well focused in lessons. The opportunities for them to develop their core skills across subjects mean they keep up with their peers and enjoy their learning.

Pupils have made slow progress in mathematics and writing over a number of years but this situation is improving markedly. The school ensures that these core skills are used widely across the curriculum and this has helped raise progress. The most-able pupils are still achieving less well than expected because they are not always fully stretched in lessons. Slower progress in Year 5 has been an issue for leaders and managers over several years but this is improving because teachers are becoming better at assessing the needs of this group. There are instances of good progress in Key Stage 3 too, because it is now built on the firmer foundation established in Years 5 and 6. There are examples of good learning, such as in a science lesson where pupils were enthused by exploring how sound can be measured and recorded.

Pupils' personal development is generally good. Their attendance is above average and the school has made extensive efforts to reach out to families when children's attendance slips. Behaviour is consistently good in lessons and this helps pupils' learning. Pupils are sensible at break times and around the school, ensuring they play safely together. There is a good level of courtesy shown between pupils and to adults. Many volunteer to support their school community as members of the school council and as buddies. This ensures that the school is a calm and happy place where pupils enjoy their learning. Disruptions in lessons are rare. There is very little bullying reported and pupils affirm that they feel safe.

There is good understanding of the benefits of healthy eating and the importance of exercise. Pupils express their confidence in the adults who look after them and are clear what to do if they are worried about any aspect of their lives. They are sensible over journeys to school and road safety. Pupils are encouraged to use information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum and this helps to build

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satisfactory skills that will support them in their future lives.

Pupils enjoy the cultural experiences the school offers them, such as through musical performances. They appreciate the school’s commitment to achieve well through hard work in all their undertakings and express their views keenly. There is a clear moral ethos to much of the work at Witton Middle. The initiatives to introduce pupils to the lives and cultures of others have meant that their understanding of those who live in other places and around the world is satisfactory. Pupils’ involvement in their own community is good, however, and assemblies often lead to the celebration of a variety of different home cultures.

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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have constructive relationships with pupils and pupils’ attitudes to their work are good. Most lessons make it clear what pupils need to learn and tasks are clearly explained; as a result, pupils are generally confident about tackling their work. Some lessons are taught at a brisk pace and teachers know just when to prompt their pupils with well-focused support, and when to hold back and let pupils work things out for themselves. These good lessons are also characterised by teachers’ good subject knowledge and accurate use of assessments. They understand pupils’ learning needs. However, good teaching is not sufficiently widespread. Sometimes teachers do not closely match tasks with the needs of all pupils, particularly the most capable. The pace of learning can be too modest and questioning is not used effectively to check understanding or to extend learning. Marking of pupils’ books is

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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variable although the school has devised a thorough marking policy. While some pupils benefit from well-focused feedback, others do not receive enough guidance about how to improve.

Increased opportunities for pupils to deploy their skills in English and mathematics across subjects are helping to develop pupils’ literacy and numeracy skills. Insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop problem-solving and ICT skills have been addressed so that they can use ICT to support progress in other subjects. The provision for pupils’ personal development is a strength of the school, leading to positive attitudes, behaviour and relationships. Visits and after-school clubs help enrich pupils’ experiences both academically and through sports.

Parents and carers speak highly of the school’s caring ethos. One said they were ‘completely confident in the care bestowed upon my child during his educational journey’. The school can point to examples where well-targeted support for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable has led to successful outcomes. For example, where pupils have high absence because of family circumstances, the school has worked hard to improve their attendance.

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?

Leaders and managers regularly monitor the work of the teaching staff and give supportive feedback about their lessons, although this has not always focused sharply enough on learning. Leaders and managers communicate ambition satisfactorily and undertake thorough evaluation but they have not yet been rigorous enough in following up all of the weaknesses in teaching to raise it above a satisfactory level. Where they have been successful, for example in tackling the progress of pupils in Year 5 and in mathematics, there has been a positive impact on results.

The school ensures there is no discrimination between any of its pupils and provides for satisfactory equality of opportunity for all. Currently there are some inconsistencies in the progress of pupils, however, and in the provision for the full range of abilities across the school.

Members of the governing body understand and support the school very well, being regular and welcome visitors. Their evaluation of pupils’ progress and personal

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development is thorough. They have involved themselves in enriching the curriculum, where they have accompanied groups of gifted and talented pupils to extra workshops in mathematics. The governing body has developed a good understanding of what the school needs to do to improve the achievement of all pupils but its focus has not been quite sharp enough yet to promote rapid change. It ensures the school is safe and that all staff receive thorough training and are carefully vetted. The procedures for safeguarding pupils are good; all relevant policies are checked and thoroughly reviewed so that activities undertaken by either pupils or staff are safe.

The school has positive links with parents and carers and regularly evaluates their views, acting on them, so their influence is felt in decision making. Parents and carers are well informed through strategies involving two-way channels of communication. The school’s partnerships help augment the good personal support and development of many pupils, providing initiatives that the school alone could not manage. The school has made an in-depth analysis of its impact on the local community and beyond, and this shows how well pupils are regarded. Local charities have been the beneficiaries of pupils’ good efforts. However, the school has not fully implemented plans to further broaden pupils’ understanding and appreciation of the world beyond its local area.

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	2
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

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are happy with the way the school is led and managed. They also think their children are happy at school and that they are safe there. A few stated that they do not feel the school helps them to support their child’s learning. The inspection found that relationships with parents and carers are good and that the school provides good

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channels for communication between home and school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Witton 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 156 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 435 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	67	43	83	53	5	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	66	42	88	56	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	40	26	110	71	6	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	29	98	63	6	4	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	40	26	109	70	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	39	25	103	66	12	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	26	106	68	5	3	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)	48	31	89	57	8	5	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	39	25	105	67	6	4	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	27	94	60	9	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	22	107	69	6	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	53	34	98	63	3	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	57	37	91	58	4	3	1	1

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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 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.



5 December 2011

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Witton Middle School, Droitwich Spa, WR9 8BD

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we recently inspected your school. We really enjoyed meeting you.

Witton Middle School provides a satisfactory education for you. We found that you are making satisfactory academic progress and are developing well as individuals. The school is preparing you adequately for your future lives.

We enjoyed hearing you express your opinions about your school, which you do very well. You also told us some of the things you have done for your school, such as helping design a new school jacket.

We have asked the school to do a few things to help you achieve better. These are:

- to improve the way leaders and managers evaluate teaching and learning
- to ensure every lesson provides enough pace and challenge for all pupils
- to use questioning better in lessons in order to challenge your thinking and more fully involve you in setting your next steps in learning.

You can help by always trying your best and by asking questions that help you determine the next steps in your learning.

Yours sincerely

Carolyn Carnaghan
Lead inspector

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