

Westacre Middle School

Ombersley Way, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire, WR9 0AA

Inspection dates 27–28 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress at the school from lower than average starting points. At the end of Key Stage 2, attainment has improved over the last three years and is now broadly average. When pupils leave the school at the end of Year 7, their attainment is slightly above national averages.
- Teaching throughout the school is good and improving rapidly. Teachers create a caring and calm environment in which all pupils are able to thrive.
- Very robust procedures for managing the performance of all teaching staff, combined with a carefully planned programme of support, is increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching and eradicating any areas of underperformance.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They attend regularly and have positive attitudes to learning. They are polite and respectful to their peers and adults. They enjoy school and are proud of their achievements.
- School leaders, including the governors, work together to ensure that pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching continues to improve. The actions they have taken have been highly successful because of rigorous monitoring to check that any intervention is having a positive impact.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although significant improvements have been made, more pupils are capable of making faster than expected progress to reach higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils do not make a rapid start when they arrive in Year 5.
- Teachers use marking very effectively to identify next steps for the pupils' learning. However, they do not consistently assess learning throughout lessons and reshape activities to ensure that all pupils are challenged, particularly the more-able.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 17 lessons, of which nine were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, the inspectors carried out three 'learning walks' to look at guided reading, the quality of intervention sessions and the wider curriculum and attended two assemblies. They also listened to pupils read and looked at their work around the school and in books.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle leaders and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 44 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), two letters received from parents and responses to the school's parent questionnaire carried out in July 2012. They also took account of the responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current progress, monitoring documentation, records relating to performance management and safeguarding, the school's self evaluation and improvement planning.

Inspection team

Susan Barkway, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joseph Skivington

Additional Inspector

Nicola Southall

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Westacre Middle School is a middle deemed primary school. It admits pupils at the beginning of Year 5 and they leave at the end of Year 7. It is larger than most primary schools.
- The school takes pupils from 12 feeder first schools, including very small rural schools and larger urban schools.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much lower than other schools, as is the percentage of pupils learning English as an additional language.
- Around 30% of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those with parents in the armed forces. This is slightly above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is broadly average. However, the proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high compared to national figures.
- One pupil is educated offsite for half of the school week and the school provides an outreach programme on one afternoon a week for a pupil who is at a local special school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' learning and progress.
- Since the last inspection, the school has seen a significant turnover in staffing. New English and mathematics leaders are in place and a Year 7 leader was appointed in September 2011. A newly appointed special educational needs co-ordinator took up post in September 2012. Three newly qualified teachers joined the staff team in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve pupils' achievement by:
 - setting specific and challenging targets to increase the proportion of pupils who make better than expected progress
 - accelerating progress in Year 5 by further development of transition arrangements with the feeder first schools.
- Improve teaching so that a greater proportion is outstanding and it is never less than good by:
 - making sure that there are high expectations and challenge in all lessons, particularly for the more-able pupils
 - ensuring on-going assessment in lessons is used consistently by teaching staff to reshape lessons when appropriate so that tasks are well matched to pupils' understanding or skill levels.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils enter the school with attainment that is below that expected for their age. At the end of Year 6, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in 2012 was broadly average. Standards have improved over the last three years as a result of good teaching, careful tracking of pupils' progress and well-planned interventions to support pupils who are in danger of falling behind or need additional help. Although pupils leave the school at the end of Year 7 with attainment that is slightly above national averages, the proportion of pupils who reach higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2 is still slightly below that found nationally.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points. In Year 5, pupils' progress in the first term is slower than for other pupils in the school. Although the school does have a transition programme with the feeder first schools, pupils take time to settle and to make the progress that they should. However, in the second part of Year 5, pupils make better progress and, in Years 6 and 7, their progress accelerates.
- Overall, the proportion of pupils making expected progress is similar to that made by pupils in similar schools. Although the proportion of pupils exceeding the expected progress is below that of schools nationally, it has been improving steadily.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs make more than expected progress in their time in the school and achieve well from their starting points. This is a result of well-planned additional support which ensures that their needs are met.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to provide additional staffing so that pupils can be taught in small groups for English and mathematics, as well as social development programmes for pupils who have difficulty settling in school. As a result, pupils who are eligible for pupil premium are making accelerated progress and the gap is narrowing between their attainment in English and mathematics and that of other pupils in the school. For example, in English in 2012, the proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding achieving expected levels of progress improved by 26%. In mathematics, the proportion improved by 33%.
- Pupils have a wide selection of books to read. They read regularly and almost all are confident and fluent readers by the time they leave the school. Regular reading sessions are planned into the school day, when pupils are engaged in a variety of well-structured activities to extend their reading skills. These outstanding sessions make a strong contribution to improving standards of reading as well as to pupils' love of reading.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. There is now no inadequate teaching and most of the teaching is consistently good, with an increasing proportion that is outstanding. This is a result of a structured programme of monitoring activities to identify strengths and areas for development, followed by high quality support and professional development for the teaching staff.
- In all lessons, teachers have good relationships with their pupils and create a positive climate for learning. Pupils enjoy the lessons and are interested and engaged because of the range and balance of activities that are planned.

- In the most effective lessons, teachers skilfully assess learning throughout the lesson and adjust or amend their teaching to ensure that all pupils are challenged and their learning does not slow. For example, in a literacy lesson, effective questioning showed the teacher that a more-able group of pupils was ready to try more challenging work than expected, and the level of demand was adjusted accordingly. However, in some lessons, teachers stick too rigidly to their planning and, as a result, miss opportunities to support or extend learning.
- Teaching support staff make a strong contribution to the overall quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They work well with pupils in classrooms, providing additional support through effective questioning and explanations. They work with small groups of pupils on specific intervention programmes, which are accelerating the progress of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- In pupils' books, work is well presented and pupils demonstrate their ability to work independently on extended pieces of work. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed across the curriculum: for example, in science work on measuring shadows and researching for information about mountain ranges in topic lessons.
- Pupils are encouraged to self- and peer-assess their work. This strategy is effective in helping pupils to see for themselves whether their targets have been achieved and what else they can do to make their work better.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is outstanding. All teachers provide feedback on pupils' work, telling them what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. They pose questions to challenge pupils' thinking and to encourage them to find additional information. Pupils are given the time to respond to the marking and to correct and improve their work. As a result, their learning is consolidated and they make more rapid progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite, courteous and welcoming. They get on well with each other and work together cooperatively. All parents and carers who responded to the Parent View questionnaire stated that behaviour is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. In lessons, they listen carefully and respectfully to the teacher and to each other. They get on with their work and there is very little off-task behaviour. However, in a few lessons, a small number of pupils do not get fully involved in the group work or work as well as they could.
- Teachers manage behaviour effectively. They are consistent in their expectations of what is acceptable behaviour and implement the behaviour policy when appropriate. Mentoring, small group work and personal and social education sessions are used well to support those pupils who find school difficult to cope with.
- Pupils feel safe in school, although some pupils explained how they found it very large and confusing when they moved from a small first school! They understand how to keep safe, for example they have a good awareness of e-safety, and say that the adults in the school listen to them and help if there is a problem.
- Pupils state that bullying is rare. They have a good awareness of different types of bullying, including cyber-, racial and homophobic bullying. They say that adults take swift action if they hear any discriminatory language being used or if pupils misbehave.

- Attendance and punctuality have improved and are now good. Close working between the pastoral manager and external agencies, such as the Education Welfare Officer, has significantly improved the attendance of the small number of pupils who do not attend regularly. In particular, the attendance of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding has improved in this academic year.
- Good arrangements are in place for ensuring the well-being of pupils in alternative provisions. There is regular communication with the other schools and support staff are shared so that there is continuity for these pupils.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- All leaders and managers, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the school's performance. Their uncompromising approach, combined with a high level of support, has been highly successful in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Middle leaders have a very good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They take a lead in curriculum development and in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching. Senior leaders hold them to account for the progress of pupils in their area of responsibility. As a result, all leaders are involved in regularly tracking progress, identifying pupils who are not making the progress they should and working with the teaching staff to secure improvements.
- School development planning identifies appropriate areas for improvement based upon evidence from rigorous monitoring. Improvements against targets are reviewed on a regular basis and the impact measured in terms of pupils' progress.
- The curriculum and extra-curricular activities help pupils to develop their knowledge and skills and prepare them to live in a diverse society. They have access to a good range of clubs and have regular opportunities to visit different places in order to support their learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well.
- The local authority gives good support to the school. For example, they have provided additional support and training for newly appointed middle leaders.
- Relationships with parents and carers are highly effective. Almost all parents or carers who responded on Parent View and to the school's own questionnaire believed that there was good communication with the school and that they received the information they needed to know how well their child was doing. Workshops, parents' meetings and informal opportunities to meet with teachers and members of the leadership team involve parents and carers in the work of the school and provide valuable opportunities for discussion.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides outstanding support to the school. Governors are very clear about their roles and responsibilities and are proactive in finding out about the work of the school. Governors robustly hold senior leaders to account for all aspects of school performance. They are well informed about pupil data and the quality of teaching and have been very involved in working with the headteacher and senior leaders to secure improvements. Governors have ensured that there are robust procedures in place for managing performance and are linking increases in salary to performance and contribution to whole-school improvement. Governors have checked that pupil premium funding is used to enable those pupils it supports to make good or better progress. They ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	116778
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	405665

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	378
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judith Aldridge
Headteacher	Donna Evans
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2011
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