

# Witton Middle School

Old Coach Road, , Droitwich Spa, WR9 8BD

**Inspection dates** 17–18 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement.

- Too few pupils throughout the school reach above average standards, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils do not always make good enough progress because the quality of teaching is too inconsistent and not enough is good.
- In some lessons, pupils do not make enough progress. This is because the teacher talks for too long so pupils can't get on with tasks or the most-able pupils waste time doing work that is too easy.
- There is too much inconsistency in how well teachers mark pupils' work. Not all pupils know what they need to do to improve.
- There are not always enough planned opportunities for pupils to write at length or practise and improve their writing and numeracy skills in different subjects.
- In mathematics, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise solving problems or develop the ability to think for themselves.
- Many subject leaders are new to their areas of responsibility. They do not all have a clear enough view of whether standards are high enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' progress is improving because teachers keep a more careful check on whether pupils are doing well enough.
- In 2013, attainment in Year 7 was above average in reading and mathematics because pupils made good progress.
- The way in which pupils assess the quality of each other's work is particularly good.
- Strong relationships between adults and pupils contribute well to pupils' good personal development.
- Pupils behave well and are very proud of their school. Their attendance is well above-average because they enjoy school.
- The new headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong leadership and are the major driving force behind moving the school forward. Staff are now far more accountable for the standards pupils achieve.
- Senior leaders and governors have a clear understanding of what is working well and what needs to be done to bring about improvement.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons, five of which were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils, representatives of the governing body, the local authority and staff, including senior and subject leaders.
- The inspection team took account of 36 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also analysed the school's own parent questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including policies, data about pupils' progress and attainment, and how the school sets targets for teachers to improve their work. They also looked at safeguarding and child protection procedures.

## Inspection team

Kath Campbell, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jenny Taylor	Additional Inspector
Kerin Jones	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Witton is larger than the average-sized middle deemed primary school.
- Nearly all pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are supported by pupil premium funding, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and others.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are supported at school action, and an above-average proportion are supported at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs.
- The school provides breakfast club care for pupils during term time.
- There have been several changes at senior leadership level since the previous inspection.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching and raise the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by making sure that teachers:
  - do not spend too long talking at the beginning of lessons, so that they leave enough time for pupils to practise skills
  - move more-able pupils on to harder work earlier in lessons
  - mark pupils' work consistently and provide comments for pupils to help them to improve their work.
- Raise the proportion reaching higher levels in writing and mathematics across the school by making sure pupils have more opportunities to:
  - write at greater length as they move through the school
  - practise their writing and mathematical skills in different subjects
  - apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to solving problems and learn to think for themselves.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - developing the role of subject leaders so that they know whether standards are high enough and whether pupils make enough progress in their subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils in both key stages, particularly the more-able, have not always made expected progress and reached the standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics requires improvement throughout the school because, until recently, too much teaching was not good enough to ensure good progress and not all teachers challenged the most-able pupils sufficiently.
- Pupils' progress over the past three years has not been consistent enough to be good. However, although some pupils are still catching up lost ground, much current progress is good because teachers are far more focused on making sure pupils are doing well enough.
- In mathematics, some pupils, especially in Key Stage 2, lack the confidence to attempt difficult work without help. They sometimes give up too easily. This is particularly the case when they are applying their skills to solving problems. As a result, some more able pupils do not acquire the independent reasoning skills they need to reach higher levels.
- Pupils' attainment on entry to Year 5 is broadly average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing. By the end of Year 6, although an average proportion of pupils reach expected levels, not enough pupils reach higher levels, particularly in writing and mathematics. Attainment in Year 7 is rising because the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels is increasing. In 2013, pupils in Year 7 made good progress and reached above average standards in reading and mathematics and average standards in writing.
- Raising attainment in writing has been an on-going area for development. Strategies introduced to create an enthusiasm for writing, particularly among boys, are having a positive effect on pupils' attitudes to learning. Activities, such as writing persuasive letters to a local councillor, motivate pupils of all ages to write with greater confidence. However, some pupils find it difficult to write at length in a range of subjects.
- Pupils enjoy reading a wide variety of books. Time is set aside each day for reading and for some individual pupils to receive individual help to improve. Reading is a very important part of school life and, as a result, boys and girls develop mature attitudes towards reading.
- The school uses its 'catch-up' funding well, for example, to provide additional support for Year 7 pupils in literacy and numeracy. As a result, these pupils have far greater confidence to work independently because basic skills are more secure.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is similar to that of other pupils. The school reflects carefully on the strategies it has put in place to make sure these pupils succeed. The range of initiatives has increased and, as a result, the support for these pupils is effective because it is better tailored to their individual needs.
- In 2012, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals were working the equivalent of four terms behind their classmates in English and mathematics. The gap was not as wide as that seen nationally. The school has used its pupil premium effectively to provide, for example, extra staff for more one-to-one support. The gap between the attainment of these pupils and others closed slightly in 2013.

**The quality of teaching requires improvement**

- Teaching is too variable and not enough lessons are good. There has been improvement since the previous inspection and inadequate teaching is almost eradicated. Much of the teaching observed during the inspection was good, with some that was outstanding. However, there is still too much that requires improvement.
- Inconsistencies in teaching are clear in pupils' current and past work. Expectations, particularly of the most-able pupils, are not always high enough. In writing, some teachers do not push pupils to produce enough. In mathematics, there is too little attention given to developing pupils' problem solving skills.
- The quality of marking, though improving, is not consistently good. Most teachers mark work carefully and pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve. However, some teachers do not guide pupils sufficiently well to help them with their learning.
- In lessons where teaching required improvement, teachers frequently spent too long explaining work to the whole class so that the most-able were unable to move to tasks quickly enough. Also when work was not hard enough, pupils were sometimes slow to complete tasks and lacked a sense of urgency.
- In the most successful lessons, teachers and the adults who help them worked together very effectively as a team. Not a minute was wasted and pupils moved on to harder work as soon as they were ready. In a mathematics lesson in Year 7, high quality questioning during group activities moved learning on at a rapid pace. More-able pupils rose to the challenge of forming algebraic equations. Pupils' determination to get demanding work right led to the success of the lesson.
- Pupils routinely read through each other's work and write comments as they judge its quality. Pupils respond to these comments very positively because they value each other's opinions. The whole process aids learning because pupils have a good level of involvement in assessing how well they are doing. Their involvement has improved greatly since the previous inspection.
- Teachers manage behaviour consistently well and lessons run smoothly because relationships are strong and pupils want to do well.
- Adults who support teachers in the classroom make sure disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as those eligible for the pupil premium, receive the good quality support they need to help them succeed.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. In lessons when teaching is good or better, their enjoyment helps them to make good progress.
- Most pupils behave well and are respectful, courteous and well mannered. They are keen to do well because they get along well with the adults who teach and support them.
- The school is a friendly, caring place where pupils feel safe and are confident they will be listened to if they have concerns. They know a great deal about how to stay safe, including when using the internet or computers. They say bullying is very rare and that any incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with swiftly and effectively to make sure there is no

recurrence.

- In lessons, pupils work well together. They particularly enjoy talking with a partner about their work. However, some pupils lose concentration during lengthy introductions to lessons. They become distracted and do not always produce their best, particularly when not enough is asked of them.
- Pupil premium funding has been used well to provide additional nurture for a few pupils who do not always behave well or who find it hard to focus on learning. As a result, there has been a decline in exclusions and none during this academic year.
- Attendance has improved year-on-year and is currently well above average. Tenacious monitoring and effective support procedures for individual families help to make sure pupils attend well.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Although the new senior leadership is driving through improvements, the school has not always moved forward at a fast enough pace.
- Several subject leaders, newly in post, do not have the skills they need to judge attainment and progress in their subjects. Training has been put in place to improve their monitoring skills but it is too early to measure its impact on raising attainment.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide an effective working partnership and complement each other's skills well. They have an honest, realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The new headteacher is tenacious in her efforts to raise attainment.
- The checks carried out by senior leaders on the quality of teaching are rigorous and detailed. They are a very important part of the school's work. They are clearly focused on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and they provide staff with valuable information about how to improve. Effective staff training in, for example, improving teachers' use of questioning in the classroom has resulted in improvement.
- Systems for checking pupils' progress are of good quality. They are far more precise than in the past and pupils who are in danger of falling behind are identified early so that they get quickly back on track.
- Pupils have many rich and rewarding learning experiences that contribute greatly to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Visits to places such as Cheddar Gorge or Worcester University, also support good personal and social development. Creative arts and sport feature strongly and further enhance pupils' learning. However, although increasing, there are not always enough planned opportunities for pupils to further extend their writing and mathematical skills in different subjects.
- The school has allocated its primary sports funding effectively by, for example, appointing a school sports co-ordinator to work alongside staff to develop their subject expertise.
- Good links with local first schools and the high school help pupils to move smoothly to the next stage of their education. Parents have positive views of the school and links are being strengthened further through, for example, providing better information for parents about their

children's progress.

- Safeguarding procedures meet all current government requirements.
- The local authority's school improvement adviser knows the school well, reviews its work at regular intervals and provides training when requested.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is well organised, well informed and supportive. Governors know what needs to be done. They keep up to date with training requirements on important matters such as child protection and safeguarding procedures. The governing body has a separate committee that makes sure pupil premium funding is used effectively. It monitors, for example, the cost effectiveness of employing additional staff to work with individual pupils. Governors have a robust structure in place to check teachers' performance and have tight procedures to make sure that underperformance is tackled effectively. Several members of the governing body are new and they are at an early stage of developing the skills needed to judge whether the school is doing well enough.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	116779
<b>Local authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	426900

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–12
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	436
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Barbara Humber
<b>Headteacher</b>	Cath Crossley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 December 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01905 773362
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