

# Birchensale Middle School

Bridley Moor Road, Redditch, B97 6HT

**Inspection dates** 12–13 December 2013

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils join the school with levels which are well below average compared with those expected on entry to Year 5. They achieve well and leave the school in Year 8 with levels which are expected or slightly above.
- Teaching is good throughout the school. Work is set at the right level of difficulty for the different groups of students, including the most able.
- Behaviour is good, both in and out of the classroom. Pupils feel safe at school, and they are particularly well informed about e-safety.
- The support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, those who join the school later than the start of Year 5, and those who speak English as an additional language is good and means that they make good progress.
- Senior leaders and the governing body have a clear view of what the school needs to do to improve and demonstrate a clear commitment to raising standards.
- Improving teaching is leaders' main priority and through good training and support for teachers have enhanced its quality.
- Pupils are keen to learn. Many make a very positive contribution to the life of the school and to supporting other pupils. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The marking of pupils' work does not always clearly inform pupils what they need to do to improve it.
- The presentation of pupils' work and their handwriting in English in Key Stage 2 is not always neat enough.
- The school is just beginning to analyse the progress of pupils from their different starting points. This information is not always used consistently throughout the school.
- Leaders' planning to improve teaching and achievement do not always indicate the desired outcomes.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 28 lessons, 10 of which were seen jointly with senior leaders. They made additional visits to registration periods, an activities assembly and also carried out a learning walk with the headteacher across a range of lessons.
- The inspection took place during an activity week with a range of themed activities and sessions.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, and representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes. They spoke to three groups of pupils representing all year groups in the school.
- Inspectors heard a group of Year 7 pupils read and listened to pupils read in lessons.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation, including the school’s own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan and statistical information about pupils’ progress, achievement, behaviour, attendance and exclusions. They looked at the school’s safeguarding information and attendance logs.
- Inspectors carried out a detailed work scrutiny with subject leaders.
- Inspectors took into account the 30 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, and the 49 Responses to the staff questionnaire as well as letters and a telephone call from a parent.
- An additional inspector made a further visit to the school on 6 March in order to collect additional evidence to complete the inspection.

## Inspection team

Christine Young, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lesley Voaden	Additional Inspector
Andrew Sierant	Additional Inspector
Jenny Edginton	Additional Inspector
George Derby	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized middle deemed secondary school.
- The majority of the pupils are from a White British background but the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. These pupils speak 15 different languages between them.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average. This is additional money allocated by the government for specific groups of pupils, including those looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school does not use any off-site, alternative provision for any of its pupils.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school has received many awards, including the: Sainsbury's School Games Kite mark Silver; Eco-Schools Green Flag, Arts Mark Gold; Effective Practice Award; Healthy Schools Award; Leading Parent Partnership Award and Leading Aspect Award for recognising and sharing good practice in education.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school throughout Key Stage 2 and 3, other than at the usual times, is high.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement even further by:
  - ensuring that pupils' work is neatly and attractively presented in English in Key Stage 2 and especially that handwriting is well formed and letters are joined in words
  - ensuring that teachers' marking always provides pupils with clear and specific guidance on what they have to do to improve their work, and that pupils do not repeat mistakes
  - sharing examples of outstanding teaching and pupils' work across the school.
- Develop further the impact of leadership and management by ensuring:
  - staff have a clear picture of the progress that pupils make from their different starting points and that this information is used consistently throughout the school
  - leaders are clear about the intended impact of their planned actions, especially to improve teaching and pupils' progress even further.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils enter the school in Year 5 having attained standards that are well below average (about three terms behind) compared with what is expected nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, their attainment is below average. Results in national tests in 2013 showed that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in Key Stage 2 was around two terms behind in English (grammar, spelling and punctuation), reading and mathematics. Although they still have much ground to make up, during the two years they are in Key Stage 2 they make good progress.
- Pupils' progress continues to be good in Key Stage 3. By the end of Year 8 nearly all pupils have exceeded the progress expected of them in English, mathematics and science. Assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of that year, which are externally checked for accuracy by secondary school staff where pupils transfer to, indicate that, pupils' levels are close to, and sometimes exceed, those expected for their age.
- This good progress includes pupils who enter the school after Year 5, as well as those who speak English as an additional language. This is because these individuals are targeted for additional support, such as through the use of bilingual teaching assistants.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good because work in lessons is specifically tailored to help these pupils develop the skills that they need to. In addition, because of extra support, one-to-one coaching and teachers' higher expectations, these pupils continue to make good progress.
- The gap in achievement between pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium funding and their classmates is narrowing. The attainment of these pupils is approximately six months behind that of their classmates, although progress of both groups is good. The pupil premium funding is largely spent on extra staffing to improve pupils' attainment and to help overcome barriers to learning. Successful intervention sessions for groups in literacy and numeracy have resulted in pupils supported by the pupil premium making accelerated progress.
- Pupils' skills in joining letters, and the presentation and the organisation of their work in English in Key Stage 2 lags behind pupils of a similar age in other schools. By contrast, work is set out well in mathematics and is systemically organised; this helps pupils to carry out mathematical processes and calculations accurately.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used to help individual pupils improve. Year 7 weaker readers said the school has really helped them to make progress and they find the time given to all pupils to read every day is helping them to improve their reading. The school's literacy programme is successfully being embedded in the curriculum and supports reading for all pupils twice a day. Other opportunities to promote reading include 'drop and read' sessions. Leaders closely monitor the progress of this and other groups of pupils.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers expect a lot from pupils and get a great deal from them in return. Work challenges most pupils well. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils inferred what was happening in a sequence of pictures taken from a book without any writing. They constructed sentences about each picture which extended their use of grammar and enabled them to build an extremely coherent story. This

demonstrated pupils' rapid progress, their attention to detail and their determination to do their best.

- Teachers' passion and strong subject knowledge result in pupils' enjoyment and enthusiasm for the subject. Pupils are fully involved in learning, show interest and are given opportunities to develop tenacity and concentration to complete tasks. Teachers use effective and skilled questioning to encourage pupils to think for themselves and deepen their understanding, giving pupils time to think, explain and share their ideas in class. Learning takes place at a good pace and pupils make sustained and rapid progress.
- Teachers circulate well around the classroom to support pupils and to assess their work swiftly. They work closely with teaching assistants who are well deployed and offer just the right help for pupils. They provide individual support for pupils or adapt their teaching, if necessary to ensure that all pupils understand their work fully. This was evident in a Year 5 lesson where pupils were exploring crime and punishment in Tudor times, which resulted in a very successful discussion and practical exploration of their historical knowledge and developed an impressive range of new vocabulary.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils enable pupils to contribute effectively to learning. For example, in a Year 7 lesson looking at life in the 1950s, pupils developed an awareness of other people's points of view and were able to enter into a mature discussion developing their thinking and learning skills.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well through lessons, the life of the school and through the vast range of extra-curricular activities that are made available for all pupils. It is a real strength of the school. Pupils seize opportunities to work together and share their learning. The school's activity week enabled pupils to engage in outdoor activities with visiting practitioners and enjoy a range of creative subject-related opportunities.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs are supported effectively to ensure that they achieve well. Good teamwork between teaching assistants and teachers provides tasks that are accessible to these pupils so they do not become reliant on adult support to succeed. For example in a Year 6 lower set mathematics lesson, the work provided, and support from adults made the different groups in the class think hard about regular and irregular shapes and draw conclusions about their similarities and differences.
- Although most teachers mark pupils' work regularly, the quality of marking and feedback is not consistently helpful across the school. Not all teachers provide pupils with specific advice on what they have to do to improve their work, or insist that pupils respond to their advice.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are calm, polite and courteous both in the classroom and around the school. They are well meaning, inquisitive and fun to talk to. They demonstrate a respect for each other and for their school generally. They are immensely proud of their school and say it is a great place to be. The atmosphere in the school is one of tolerance, sharing and learning together.
- Teachers forge strong, positive relationships with pupils so that they thrive in an atmosphere where there are high levels of mutual respect.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Caring, vigilant staff ensure that pupils

feel safe in school. The responses to Parent View indicate that the very large majority of parents agree that their children are safe at school and well cared for, and would recommend the school to other parents.

- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying and how to respond. They are especially knowledgeable about the dangers of the internet and cyber bullying. Pupils say that, should any instances of bullying occur, they are quickly resolved.
- The school council is very active and encourages pupils to have a voice within the school. The school supports many charities, and fundraising events by the pupils have helped provide an activity trail, a climbing wall and bicycle shelter for the school.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to take on extra responsibility, which are both challenging and rewarding. These include the roles of head boy and head girl, house captains and vice house captains and prefects. All of the prefects are given special training in the role of peer mentors. The school also runs an eco-council as part of its green flag level eco-schools award.
- The house system works well in providing an element of competition, which helps pupils to encourage each other to attend regularly and to work hard in lessons.
- Attendance is above average, reflecting pupils' high enjoyment of school; the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced. The school operates a very successful rewards system that has had an impact on improving attendance.
- Pupils' behaviour is not yet outstanding. This is because a few pupils are not always focused on what they should be doing and become distracted.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The enthusiastic headteacher is leading the drive to improve the school with determination, focus and energy. Systems and structures within the school have been improved to make them more rigorous. Leaders ensure that pupils get off to a flying start and make good progress throughout the school.
- Senior staff have been tenacious in their assessment of pupils' skills and the tracking of their progress. This is particularly important given the high mobility of pupils and their families. This has meant that staff have a clear and accurate picture of pupils' starting points so they can measure progress systematically. The progress of different groups of pupils, including those for whom the school receives the pupil premium, is tracked carefully. Termly assessment and analysis on pupils' achievement identifies those not on track to reach challenging targets. As a result, pupils needing extra help are given support quickly. Only recently, though, has a system been introduced which provides information about progress from pupils' different starting points. This is not yet consistently used throughout the school.
- Teachers' performance management is well organised through straightforward, measurable targets linked to school priorities and salary progression. Good quality training has helped to improve the proportion of good or better teaching. Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and about the school's work as a whole.
- The curriculum is regularly reviewed by staff to ensure that it meets effectively the needs and aspirations of all pupils, captures their imaginations and interests and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Pupils enjoy the many and varied educational visits and trips and

additional opportunities organised for them. The school makes good use of its local and international links to promote pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The pupils work with visiting artists, theatre companies and outside speakers.

- Pupils who are supported by additional government funding make good progress because the money is used effectively. The school responds quickly to the individual needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- The school runs a very successful breakfast club that is well attended by pupils. It also holds half-termly parents lunches attended well by parents and other family members.
- Safeguarding arrangements are secure. All requirements are in place and there are very tight procedures to ensure the safety of all pupils and staff.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View said they were pleased with the way the school is led and would recommend it to other parents.
- Pupils take part in a very wide range of sporting activities and are very successful in local and county team matches. The school runs the Sports Leaders Programme which helps pupils develop leadership team work and communication skills as well as helping to build pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem as they take on the responsibility of leading their classmates and younger children. The school is using the extra sports funding provided by the government to expand the range of competitive sports pupils can engage in as well as coaching and the leadership programme.
- The local authority provides good and effective support. This has resulted in the school improving the work of staff who have responsibility for subjects and strengthening how staff check and support improvements in teaching.
- The school's development plan focuses well on improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising achievement. It addresses the main priorities but does not always indicate clearly how the school will know if new actions having the required impact on improving pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body takes an active part in the life of the school. Governors know how well the school is doing, and its strengths and areas for improvement. Regular meetings help them maintain a secure overview of the effectiveness of the school and its management.
  - They have a sound understanding of the school's performance data; they are provided with clear information about pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium funding and how successful its use is.
  - Governors are well trained and make sure that there are special training opportunities for new governors. They update their training when necessary.
  - The governing body is fully aware of the school's performance management system and this helps governors to accurately assess teachers' performance against the pay they receive.
  - The governors ensure that the school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils.
  - They receive regular information from the headteacher and regularly visit the school to monitor its work.



## 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>	116967
<b>Local authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	429547

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	416
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nicki Harrison
<b>Headteacher</b>	Hilary Dowding
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 March 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01527 68430
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