

Walkwood CofE Middle School

Feckenham Road, Headless Cross, Redditch, B97 5AQ

Inspection dates 11–12 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- All groups of students, including the disabled, those who have special educational needs, disadvantaged students and the most able, make good progress and achieve well.
- Students' behaviour and safety are outstanding. They are very keen to learn and are excited by their lessons and the extra activities provided for them. They are polite, kind and thoughtful and are very proud of their academy. They say that the academy keeps them very safe.
- The quality of teaching is good and improving strongly as a result of leaders' rigorous monitoring and high expectations. Teachers have established warm relationships that promote students' excellent attitudes. They set tasks that are fun and interesting.
- The feedback teachers provide on students' work, to show them how to improve, is of a consistently high quality. Students value this and the teachers' willingness to provide extra help and support.
- The acting headteacher has been inspirational in the way that she has restored the academy after a period of turbulence. She is well supported by her senior team and by governors. The academy is well led and managed and is very well placed to improve further.
- Staff morale is high and all are keen to work as a team to do even better. Effective procedures ensure that all are held fully to account for students' progress and their wellbeing.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as a result of the curriculum that students follow and the caring atmosphere that the academy provides. It promotes respect, tolerance and British values very well.
- The mainstream resource base (MAB) provides good provision for students with autism. It is well led and managed so students receive expert care and are fully integrated into mainstream classes wherever possible.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching is yet good or outstanding. A small minority of teachers do not set tasks that sufficiently challenge the most able students or move them on quickly enough once they show understanding.
- Teachers do not always make sure that students have responded to the advice they provide when they mark students' books.
- The overall effectiveness of science in the academy requires improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students’ learning in lessons across all year groups and subjects. Four of the lessons were seen with one of the academy’s senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with students, members of the governing body and staff. A telephone conversation took place with the academy’s improvement partner.
- The inspectors observed the academy’s work and looked at policies, the academy’s own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its plans for development, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of lesson observations, information about students’ progress, safeguarding documents, and samples of students’ work, including a scrutiny of students’ mathematics books.
- The views of the 65 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. Inspectors also took individual communications from parents into account as well as the 43 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- As part of a pilot study, science was inspected by a specialist inspector.

Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Andrew Fulbrook

Additional Inspector

Beverley Strange

Additional Inspector

Ruth James

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy in January 2013. When the predecessor school of the same name was last inspected, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized middle school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average at 20%.
- The academy has specially resourced provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs from Year 5 to 8, supporting eight students with autism, some of whom are fully integrated into mainstream classes. This is known as the Mainstream Autistic Base (MAB).
- The majority of students are from White British backgrounds. A small but increasing proportion of students speak English as an additional language (about 5%).
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average at about one sixth.
- No students attend any off-site alternative provision.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- In the past year the academy has experienced considerable turbulence in its staffing. The science department is currently without a substantive leader.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that all teaching, particularly in science, is consistently at least good, by ensuring that all teachers set tasks that provide appropriate stretch and challenge for the most able students, moving their learning on at the right time once they show understanding.
- Ensure that all students respond to the advice they are given on how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The inspirational acting headteacher has been extremely effective in establishing her high expectations of all, and in providing stability after a period of turbulence. She has surrounded herself with a strong senior team and is well supported by the governing body. Staff express strong support for her leadership.
- Robust procedures have been established which have resulted in a very secure chain of command through which all are held responsible for students' well-being and for their progress. Senior leaders hold subject leaders to account, who in turn closely monitor the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility, driving improvement and providing support where needed. This has resulted in close teamwork and high staff morale.
- Leaders rigorously check the quality of teaching and ensure that any underperformance is quickly addressed. They provide good support for newly qualified teachers. Leaders have been relentless in ensuring that inadequate teaching is eliminated and that clear processes are in place to manage the performance of teachers.
- Teachers are keen to improve their practice and professional development, including coaching and mentoring, is well matched to their individual needs. Teachers support each other and share teaching ideas that have worked well within the academy and with other schools in the local pyramid. These discussions also help build good subject leadership. Leaders are held to account by governors and external advisors through a regular programme of subject reviews. Subject leaders of English and mathematics drive improvement well.
- The enhanced resource provision is overseen by the special needs coordinator who has been extremely effective in ensuring that disabled students and those with special educational needs are able to thrive. Her strong leadership of the provision has resulted in all groups making good progress, which accelerates as they go through the school. Students in the MAB are well prepared for their integration into mainstream classes and for the next stage in their education, including in respect of their social skills.
- The academy has a clear view of its strengths and areas for development and robustly addresses any area of underachievement. Progress is carefully tracked and any students falling below their targets are identified as a 'Record of concern' (ROC). They are immediately supported as part of a special focus group throughout the school. This group includes students of all abilities, including any more-able students who are falling behind. This process ensures that all students are treated equally. The school has been rigorous in ensuring that all groups are able to reach their potential and that there is no discrimination.
- Strong pastoral leadership has resulted in students' outstanding behaviour and ensured that they feel very safe and well looked after. Safeguarding procedures are extremely robust and meet government requirements.
- The curriculum that students follow provides exciting and memorable experiences, including through a wide range of enrichment activities and clubs. The leaders' drive to promote reading has resulted in students showing a great love of books and an enthusiasm for reading. During the inspection, the library was constantly full of students throughout the day, including before and after school. One boy told inspectors, 'Reading's great!'
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The academy's constant focus on creating a climate where students are kind and considerate stems from the promotion of the key values, 'respect, tolerate and support'. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Students say that the academy has very strict rules about derogatory language and that there is no racism. The family atmosphere of the academy is reinforced by the vertical tutoring system where students from all years are grouped together so that all ages know each other and get on well together.
- The additional primary sports funding is used effectively, for example to enable students to go swimming and to provide expert support for other local schools, including the promotion of inclusive sport such as

wheelchair basketball. As a result students across the school enjoy a wide variety of opportunities to keep fit and to compete against other teams in the local area.

- Additional funding provided through the pupil premium is also used effectively and the gap between this group and others in the academy is closing rapidly. Students who speak English as an additional language, including those newly arrived from Poland, are well supported. The latter group are helped by adults and students that speak Polish, and are quickly included.
- Independent careers advice is effectively provided from Year 7 when students visit careers fairs.
- The current lack of leadership in science has resulted in this subject requiring improvement, as procedures to improve teaching and achievement are less effective than elsewhere in the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is good. Governors have a clear vision for the academy, using their range of expertise and experience to give a strong lead to its direction, particularly in their planning for the future. They have been rigorous in their procedures to appoint a new headteacher, using students to contribute to the interview process.
- They are well informed about data relating to the academy's performance and how it compares to schools nationally. They value the clear information that is provided by the senior leadership team about all aspects of the academy's work. This enables them to provide a balance of challenge and support for senior leaders.
- Governors are fully involved in the life of the academy. They make regular visits, including visiting lessons and regularly reviewing the effectiveness of each subject. They ensure that performance management procedures are effective and that teachers' salary progression is linked to the achievement of their students. They carefully monitor the impact of additional funding on the progress and well-being of disadvantaged students.
- Governors ensure that they access training and are constantly seeking to improve their practice. They focus strongly on ensuring that safeguarding procedures are followed; the governor responsible for safeguarding regularly reviews the academy's work alongside senior leaders. They work effectively as a group to ensure that the academy continues to promote the core values that have been so well established.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. In lessons, their positive and enthusiastic attitudes contribute very well to learning. They are keen to contribute their ideas and work extremely well together in groups or alone, often totally engrossed in the tasks that are set. When tasks are active and generate a lot of excitement, they are quick to respond to their teacher's instruction when they need to be quiet and listen.
- Students say that their learning is rarely disrupted but show a mature understanding of students with behavioural difficulties and spoke of the need to support them. Students supported through the MAB behave well in mainstream classes.
- Behaviour around the academy is calm and orderly. Students are polite and welcoming to visitors and were keen and confident to talk to inspectors about their school, expressing very positive views. Their response to the two minutes silence on Armistice Day was immaculate and students showed a high level of respect and understanding of what the silence means.
- Attendance is above average and students are punctual to lessons. The academy environment is well maintained and secure. There are no litter or graffiti.
- Exclusion rates have dropped dramatically over recent years and great care is taken to ensure that those who are excluded to ensure the safety of others are safe and secure in their new setting. The academy

states that these students are not 'rejected' but are still cared about.

- Students take an active part in school life, taking responsible roles such as acting as members of the school parliament or acting as buddies or reading partners. They very effectively lead assemblies, including the remembrance service held during the inspection.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All students told inspectors how safe they feel and of the care that all adults provide, one commenting, 'sometimes there is a falling out, just disagreements, but teachers and especially lunch ladies, are really kind and help'.
- Students have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe including when using the internet and concerning 'stranger danger', and they know what to do if they are concerned in any way. They also have a very good understanding of different forms of bullying but say that this is very rare and that other students would step in to help anyone who they could see was unhappy. Students get on well with each other.
- The academy works closely with families facing challenging circumstances, providing support such as parenting classes. Leaders also work to support students who are disaffected by providing short projects through the 'engagement group' where students can achieve success, raise their aspirations and build self-confidence in a supportive environment.
- Nearly all parents and staff agree that students behave well, are happy and kept very safe.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Leaders' rigorous monitoring of all aspects of teaching throughout the year and the progress that students make shows that most teaching has improved. It is now good with some that is outstanding.
- Where students make the fastest progress, teachers have high expectations, enable students to build on their previous learning and set tasks that are well matched to the different abilities within the class. Teachers are well organised, for example when they give clear success criteria that enable students to check for themselves on how well they are doing. In an English lesson observed, students worked together to compare the pros and cons of a character's actions in the book they were studying and to empathise with the character. They imagined what it would be like to leave home to go on a sea voyage. The teacher's organised approach and good subject knowledge established a systematic method of working, which enabled all groups of students to make rapid progress.
- Literacy and numeracy are promoted well across different subjects with most teachers focusing closely on the technical language for each subject and using graphs where appropriate, for example, to present data. They place a strong emphasis on promoting reading skills and challenge students to use adventurous vocabulary when writing.
- Teachers promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. They promote the development of teamwork and leadership skills, for example when they provide opportunities for students to work together. The use of 'super hero' learning skills throughout the academy enables students to focus on developing as learners and to identify when, for example, they need to explore something in more depth as an individual or cooperate within a group.
- Relationships between adults and students are warm and classrooms calm. Students told inspectors that teachers make lessons fun. For example, a teacher enthused students by encouraging them to move round the room acting out a drama to develop their understanding of what it was like to visit Shakespeare's Globe theatre.
- During the inspection, many students expressed their gratitude for teachers' extra help and support for their learning and for the time that they give to run clubs and other activities for their benefit. One Year 6 boy commented 'even if we get low scores in tests or get stuck, they help us', and a Year 7 girl said, 'School's good! Teachers really help you get better and better.'

- Most teachers plan tasks that provide appropriate challenge and support for the range of ability in their classes, so that students do not find tasks too easy or too difficult. Teaching assistants are used well to support disabled students and those with special educational needs. These are often subject specialists and work in close partnership with the teacher. Expert teaching assistants also provide excellent support for MAB students when they are integrated into mainstream classes, knowing when to provide close support and when to stand back to make sure students do not become dependent on them.
- Teachers know their students well and will often challenge the most able students individually with an extension task. A small minority of teachers, however, do not consistently set tasks or use questioning that fully challenge and stretch the most able students or recognise when these students are ready to move on to something more challenging.
- Students have a good understanding of their challenging targets and can describe what they need to do to achieve them. This is aided by the established marking practice across the school where students are informed about the things they have done well and their next steps. They are frequently asked to reflect on their own learning and identify how they can improve further. Occasionally they forget to do what has been suggested, and sometimes teachers do not pick this up.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most published data are not good guides to the achievement of students in this school. As it is a middle school, the published achievement data include progress made during a pupil's two years in another school (Years 3 and 4) and do not cover the Years 7 and 8 spent in the academy.
- Pupils are carefully assessed on entry to the academy in Year 5. These assessments show that, although many pupils join the school having done well at their first schools, for others, basic skills in reading, writing, communications and mathematics are below the expected levels for their age. Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2014 remained below average in mathematics but were average in reading and above average in writing. The 2014 Year 8 students had left Year 6 with standards below average in their Key Stage 2 tests. By the end of Year 8 however, on exit from the academy, they had caught up in all subjects and most reached standards usually expected by the end of Year 9. Standards at the end of Year 8 are rising year on year.
- Progress accelerates as students go through the academy. In 2014, the proportion of Year 6 pupils making and exceeding expected progress from their entry to the academy, in reading, writing and mathematics, compared well with students nationally. By the end of Year 8, all students made expected progress in mathematics and almost all made more than expected progress. Likewise, nearly all students made or exceeded expected progress in reading and writing. There is no significant difference in the progress of students from different ethnic backgrounds or between the few who speak English as an additional language and other students.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has been effectively used, with the result that all students with low skills in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6 made good progress by the end of Year 7. The large majority are on track to achieve their challenging Year 8 targets. As a result of the strong focus on reading across the academy, including daily silent reading sessions, students of all ages express a love of reading and they are able to read fluently by the time they leave in Year 8.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs also make good progress. This is as a result of the timely, high quality help from an exceptional special needs coordinator and her highly committed team, who are well trained to address the needs of students with a variety of complex needs and low starting points. Students supported through the MAB achieve equally well; they are provided with a nurturing and stimulating environment. Students speak warmly of the support they receive here that has helped them to meet their personal challenges.
- The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and other students in the academy and students nationally is narrowing across the school. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 were just over three terms behind their classmates and five terms behind pupils nationally in mathematics. In reading they were one term behind their classmates and two behind those nationally. In writing they were two terms behind both their classmates and one term behind national figures. However, at the end of Year 8

in 2014 there was no attainment gap in reading or writing, and only a small gap remained in mathematics. Assessments show that for current disadvantaged students in Year 8, attainment in mathematics is above other students in the academy.

- As a result of the strong focus by leaders on the achievement of disadvantaged students, the gap in the proportion making or exceeding expected progress in these subjects is now closing substantially. Their progress is closely monitored across the academy and assessments indicate that for current cohorts, particularly those in Key Stage 3, there is now no gap.
- All teachers identify the most able students in their planning of learning and leaders check on their progress. Rates of progress are good and are increasing year on year. The academy focuses strongly on this group of students and the provision to promote their achievement, and students comment on how well they are supported, including through independent careers guidance from an early age. The expectation is that all students identified as most able will make accelerated progress and are set exceptionally challenging targets.
- Achievement in science requires improvement because the quality of teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure that all make good progress.

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	139185
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	447993

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	600
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Glen Reading
Headteacher	Joy Vater (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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