

# Walton Priory Middle School

Beacon Rise, Walton, Stone, Staffordshire ST15 0AL

## Inspection dates

20–21 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, new leaders have been appointed. They are making wide-ranging changes to the school.
- These changes are very recent and have not yet led to enough improvements in middle leadership, teaching and learning.
- Pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 still have significant gaps in their mathematical understanding as a consequence of weak teaching in the past.
- Pupils are not given enough help to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Pupils do not make consistently strong progress across a range of other subjects.
- Middle leaders are not given enough guidance on how to use the information available in the school to plan and refine actions to improve the school's work.
- Not all teachers are sufficiently aware of what pupils are capable of, and the work set is sometimes too easy. Tasks given to pupils do not always help them learn what they need to learn.
- Governors and senior leaders have not ensured that performance management arrangements are effective until recently.
- External support given to the school has not been effective enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- A new leadership team and a reconstituted governing body have been put in place over the last 12 months. Together they have begun to transform the school.
- Test results at the end of Year 6 are improving and teaching usually engages pupils well.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and hardworking. Relationships between teachers and pupils are nearly always very positive.
- Pupils are very well cared for at the school and their behaviour is usually very good.
- Governors and senior leaders have established strong systems for keeping children safe.
- Innovative approaches to science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and a programme of competitive sport, are supporting pupils' academic, sporting and personal development very well.
- New staff are inducted well into the school. Training for teachers is given high priority and teachers are well supported in developing their skills.

## **Full report**

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

- Strengthen the contribution made by middle leaders to improving the school by:
  - giving them a greater role in monitoring the progress made by pupils
  - ensuring their improvement plans are focused on areas that need most improvement, look forward, and are linked to the wider school improvement plan
  - providing greater clarity about what is expected of them and how their performance will be evaluated.
- Tackle the remaining weaknesses in pupils' outcomes by:
  - establishing higher expectations of pupils across different subjects in all years
  - setting tasks in lessons that always enable pupils to meet their learning objectives
  - remedying gaps in mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding
  - strengthening the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Ensure that further external support is commissioned that meets the needs and priorities of the school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Not enough was done immediately after the last inspection to tackle weaknesses in leadership. Following delay, the local authority intervened in the school. In turn, this led to the appointment of a new headteacher and other senior staff. The support commissioned by the local authority for the new headteacher was slow to materialise.
- The new senior staff and governors have agreed an ambitious vision for the school. It has been welcomed strongly by parents, staff and pupils.
- Plans for improving the school are in the early stages of implementation and have not yet led to consistent enough practice in the classroom. A few plans lack focus or do not look far enough ahead.
- Middle leaders and teachers are using new assessment systems inconsistently. Some assessment information, and other data used by the school to check on its work, is inconsistent. Middle leaders have not received enough guidance on setting objectives, checking on teaching and monitoring outcomes.
- Performance management has not always led to rapid enough improvements in teaching and leadership.
- A few leaders have an overly optimistic view of how well the school is doing. They do not always assess the quality of work done by teachers with enough precision to be sure about what needs to be improved.
- Pupils study a good range of subjects and the curriculum challenges them to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in a variety of relevant contexts. Improvements have been made to the English and mathematics curricula across the school. In Year 5 and Year 6, each class now has its own teacher and this is helping pupils to make better progress across different subjects.
- New approaches to developing pupils' experience of science, technology engineering and mathematics, and a new programme of competitive sports, are supporting pupils' academic and personal development very well.
- The pupil premium, sports premium, and Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium are used effectively to support those pupils who are most in need. Additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well so that these pupils mostly make good progress.
- Pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is good. Pupils are given ample opportunities to grow as individuals and to refine their views about the world they live in. There are extensive and well-attended extra-curricular opportunities for pupils. Effective and timely guidance is given during Year 8 about the subjects that pupils can choose to study when they transfer to their next school.
- Leaders have improved the learning environment and new technology has been introduced into many classrooms very recently. However, some areas of the school need further refurbishment and parts of the school are untidy.
- A growth in the number of pupils starting at this school has led to several new staff joining the school, due in part to an increase in popularity with parents. Parents' views

of the school are very positive.

- Around a third of all teachers joined the school at the start of this term. These new teachers are being very well supported.
- Leaders have made better links with other schools in recent months, including local first schools, and relationships with social services and related agencies are now strong.
- The new leadership team is now fully in place and tackling weaknesses in the school with urgency.

### **Governance of the school**

- The recently reconstituted governing body functions effectively. Governors are clear about their roles because of the detailed objectives that guide their work.
- Governors have access to relevant training. They possess the skills and expertise needed to hold senior leaders to account and to ensure that the school continues to improve. The recommendations arising from an external review of governance and of the use of the pupil premium have been implemented.
- Governors are well trained in safeguarding and make routine visits to the school to monitor its effectiveness.
- Governors understand that further work is needed to ensure that their ambitions for pupils are translated into more consistent practice in the classroom.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have developed an effective culture of safeguarding in the school. The approach taken by the school to keeping pupils safe, and supporting pupils when they are at risk, is diligent.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are confident that they know whom to speak to if they have any concerns. Pupils are taught to stay safe by their teachers as well as through a programme of visiting speakers.
- Training for safeguarding is effective and ensures that all adults in the school contribute to a culture where children feel safe.
- The leadership of safeguarding is vigilant. A recent review of the accuracy of data collected about pupils' safety, which is provided routinely to governors, led to immediate improvements in the way that this information is recorded.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- Leaders have set out new expectations of teaching in the school. Although these 'teaching essentials' have led to greater clarity about what pupils can expect in lessons, there is still some inconsistency in how they are implemented in different classrooms. Many of the teachers are new in post and are still getting to know their pupils.

- The level of challenge has improved markedly since the last inspection. However, middle and senior leaders do not always check carefully enough that teachers set work for pupils that is suitably challenging. They are therefore not always aware of whether the level of challenge is consistently high enough for all groups of pupils.
- New arrangements that ask pupils to choose their own objectives in each lesson have been introduced. In most lessons, pupils choose work that is sufficiently challenging. Teachers do not guide pupils towards work that is hard enough in a few.
- Some teachers have not fully understood the school's approach to setting learning aims, success criteria and outcomes for pupils. This leads to a lack of precision in teaching and work that is ill-matched to the desired learning. In Year 8 science lessons, for example, pupils were engaged in lively experiments but without enough time being spent on the key lesson objectives.
- In some instances, teachers do not know accurately what pupils can do already. In Year 7 English and in Year 8 art, for example, the teaching did not make use of what pupils already knew and the lessons lacked some challenge and depth.
- In other lessons, for example in Year 7 mathematics and Year 8 French, the teachers are having to teach pupils basic or simple skills, and help develop knowledge and understanding which pupils should have acquired already.
- Teachers do not consistently follow leaders' expectations for marking. Poor-quality work, including errors in presentation, is often left uncorrected. Pupils are not always clear as to how they should improve their work. In this respect, the school policy is not being applied consistently.
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar are not taught sufficiently well across the school.
- Pupils nearly always show a positive attitude to learning and respond enthusiastically to their teachers. In lessons where pupils use computer programmes to support their learning in mathematics, pupils are sometimes slow to settle or lose concentration easily. In these lessons, the pupils do not always work hard enough or tackle problems at the right level.
- The work done by pupils who have been withdrawn from lessons for extra help is usually appropriately challenging. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from detailed individual provision plans.
- Teachers feel very well supported at the school, including the many new teachers who have just started at Walton Priory. An extensive programme of training supports all teachers.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are encouraged to play an active role in the school and make the most of the many opportunities presented to them, including by eagerly taking on positions of responsibility, which helps to develop their leadership skills. Pupils say that they are

happy at the school.

- There is a good range of interesting clubs, activities and trips provided. This supports pupils in developing confidence, resilience and a strong sense of community.
- The staff in the school are very caring and know the circumstances of individual pupils very well. This ensures that pupils are helped to settle into the school quickly, that any difficulties are identified early and that pupils are nurtured carefully as they grow older.
- Effective arrangements for the pupils' transition between schools are now in place. The school has made this a priority. Pupils are supported fully when they arrive at the school and are prepared well for when they move to their next school.
- The arrangements for ensuring the welfare of pupils are thoughtful and robust. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including online. Pupils understand what to do if they encounter any bullying.
- A comprehensive programme of external visitors and speakers supports pupils in healthy living and helps to enrich the pupils' experience of the wider world.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school provides a calm and welcoming environment. Most pupils regulate their own behaviour well and cooperate positively with others. They are smartly dressed, properly equipped and wear their new uniform with obvious pride.
- Pupils are polite and generally courteous. They greet visitors warmly and open doors for each other. When expected to do so, they line up and wait quietly.
- Pupils conduct themselves very well in lessons. They are helpful and listen attentively. They settle down to work quickly and follow the instructions they are given.
- Pupils' relationships are usually harmonious, including at breaktimes and lunchtimes, and they are adept at looking after each other. Some parents expressed concerns about recent disagreements between pupils at lunchtime. However, the school's records show that these concerns have been dealt with effectively.
- A clear set of guidelines exists for the pupils' behaviour. These are implemented consistently. Any serious misbehaviour is rare and, if it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly and firmly.
- At breaktimes and lunchtimes, the supervision of pupils is unobtrusive but effective. This helps encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Pupils' levels of attendance are broadly in line with national figures. A few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are absent from school too frequently. Their absence is being tackled steadily. Pupils' punctuality to school and to lessons is good.

**Outcomes for pupils**

**Requires improvement**

- Outcomes for pupils have improved since the last inspection but these improvements are not sufficiently widespread. Pupils make better progress than they did at the time of the last inspection but it is still too patchy overall.
- Year 5 and Year 6 pupils are making better progress in mathematics than previously. More focus on problem-solving and developing mathematical understanding has led to better teaching and greater progress. However, pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 still lack basic skills and understanding that they should have acquired in earlier years. Although the school has begun to tackle this issue, these gaps are limiting the rate at which pupils progress.
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar are weak across the school. Results in the most recent English, grammar, punctuation and spelling tests for Year 6 pupils were particularly poor.
- In mathematics and English, pupils with previously low levels of attainment performed poorly in the most recent external tests at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils who started the school with higher than expected levels of attainment achieved well in the recent external tests in English and mathematics. However, the general level of challenge provided across the school for these higher-attaining pupils is not consistently high enough across all year groups.
- Although national outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 are not yet finalised, leaders expect that in both mathematics and English disadvantaged Year 6 pupils will have achieved broadly at the expected level in the 2017 external tests.
- Many pupils join the school with levels of attainment lower than might be expected given their key stage 1 results. The school has made some adjustments to the curriculum to support these pupils and introduced new measures to assess the progress that pupils make in English and mathematics. However, these developments are very recent and have not yet brought about enough improvement in progress.
- In a range of other subjects, too few pupils make good progress from their starting points. In French, for example, the school's own data shows that two thirds of the Year 8 pupils are working below the standard expected.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make good progress from their starting points despite the poor attendance of a few.

## School details

Unique reference number	124426
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10037163

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	442
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Mrs Amanda Brooke
Headteacher	Mrs Lindsay Taylor-Potts
Telephone number	01785 814 930
Website	<a href="http://www.waltonpriorymiddleschool.co.uk">www.waltonpriorymiddleschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@waltonpriory.staffs.sch.uk">office@waltonpriory.staffs.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	17–18 November 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- Walton Priory is smaller than most middle and secondary schools.
- Walton Priory and Manor Hill First School form the Stone Community Federation. The two schools share a single governing body.
- Most pupils come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.



- The school makes no use of alternative provision for pupils.
- A new leadership team has started at the school since the last inspection and the governing body has been reconstituted.
- The local authority has commissioned external support for the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors scrutinised the quality of pupils' work in their books.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning by visiting lessons, speaking to teachers and pupils, and looking at pupils' work. Senior leaders joined inspectors on many visits to lessons and in carrying out the scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, other staff, pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered 63 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 38 written comments. Inspectors considered 25 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation provided by the school, including its own self-evaluation and plans, information about how well pupils are doing, governing body records, school policies and local authority external evaluation reports.

## Inspection team

Mike Cladingbowl, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Derek Barnes	Ofsted Inspector
Clare Considine	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
M1 2WD

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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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