

Walkwood Church of England Middle School

Feckenham Road, Headless Cross, Redditch, Worcestershire B97 5AQ

Inspection dates

13–14 February 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- New and strong leadership has established a clear vision and direction for the school after a period of uncertainty.
- A culture of mutual respect and tolerance, underpinned by inclusion and Christian faith values, now permeates the life of the school.
- Leaders have set out high expectations for pupils and staff. Most staff are responding to these well. Pastoral leadership has been highly effective. Leadership of teaching has been less strong.
- Pupils make good progress during their time at school. A well-taught and broad curriculum ensures that most pupils work at or above age-related expectations. Excellent teaching does exist in the school but it is not shared widely enough.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress, including those who are in the mainstream autistic base. Disadvantaged pupils do well in English and mathematics.
- Many senior and middle leaders were appointed after the last inspection. They have worked hard to improve provision in the school. They support staff well.
- In a few instances, middle leaders do not provide the challenge needed to ensure that teachers implement agreed whole-school approaches to teaching and assessment.
- A new system of assessment has been introduced recently. It helps to ensure that pupils do enough work at the right level. However, it is not firmly established in all classrooms. In a very few cases, teachers' expectations of pupils are too low.
- A well-organised programme of spiritual and social education makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils' behaviour and attendance are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school.
- The school has an impressive climate for learning. Pupils' contributions in lessons are often thoughtful, sensitive and articulate.
- Pupils are kept safe at the school. Leaders have ensured that pupils are well supported. Pupils know what to do if they have any difficulties. Bullying is very rare.
- Parents are supportive of the school and its work.
- Governance is strong. The governing body has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses in the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the leadership of teaching so that:
 - any low expectations of pupils are tackled robustly
 - the new approach to assessment is implemented more consistently
 - the best practice that exists is spread more widely.
- Encourage middle leaders to balance the support they give with more challenge so that all new policy is routinely and quickly translated into practice in the classroom.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new principal, appointed to the school shortly after the last inspection, has set a new direction and established a clear vision for this friendly Church of England school. Against a backdrop of local turbulence and proposals for school reorganisation, he has worked hard to make sure that the school flourishes and remains popular in the local community. He has a strong, visible presence around the school.
- An impressive ethos pervades the school. Its motto 'Love to learn, learn to live, live to love' reflects the Christian principles that underpin the school's work. The school is fully inclusive of all faiths and beliefs. It values each individual whatever their background, aptitudes and experiences. It has nourished a very positive climate for learning in the school, which helps all pupils to thrive.
- The principal is supported by a strong and new senior leadership team. Their compassion and determination provide effective leadership for staff and pupils. They have set high expectations for all in the school, including for teaching and other staff, which is usually translated into very good day-to-day care for pupils and effective teaching. In a few instances, teachers have not adopted agreed approaches to teaching, learning and assessment.
- Some new middle leaders were appointed after the last inspection, including in science. Middle leaders are eager to support teachers and want to bring about further improvements in teaching. However, they do not routinely insist that policies agreed by the school are translated into everyday practice by staff. The school makes use of local links with other schools to provide external support and challenge.
- Staff, parents and pupils speak warmly about the changes made to the school. Most staff are infected with the same desire to do their best for all pupils. They work very hard to achieve this. A very small minority of staff are more resistant to the improvements taking place.
- A new appraisal policy and revised role descriptions were consulted on recently. Together, these will allow leaders to tackle the few remaining weaknesses in teaching, and other performances, quickly and more robustly.
- More broadly, a review of wider leadership and other responsibilities, including for teaching, is still underway. This aims to strengthen leadership in key areas and hone the contribution made by more experienced staff in the upper pay range.
- A varied and interesting curriculum gives pupils ample opportunities to study a broad range of subjects. Pupils enjoy a rich diet of activities outside of lessons, including cultural and social events, competitive sporting fixtures, visits abroad, skiing trips, music clubs, reading workshops and drama performances.
- A new programme of spiritual and social education, which includes personal, health and citizenship education, adds a distinctive dimension to the school. It promotes very good awareness of personal responsibility in pupils and encourages them to explore themselves and their place in the world. Alongside this, the school's strong ethos of mutual respect prepares pupils very well for life in modern Britain.

- Funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used well. It provides for additional help and support in lessons. Year 7 catch-up, pupil premium and sport premium funding is spent effectively on providing intervention, additional equipment and coaching. Pupils in the mainstream autistic base are supported well.
- Serious staff illness led to delay in tackling weaker areas of science identified at the last inspection. However, staffing difficulties in this subject are now being well managed and reasonable progress has been made since September.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. The governing body has an estimable set of skills and brings a sharp perspective to the work of the school. It is aware of its responsibilities and is determined to improve the school further.
- Governors have good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Detailed and useful reports about the school, which include evidence about pupils' progress, allow governors to exercise regular challenge and oversight. Individual governors are linked with different areas of the school, including safeguarding, and visit the school often.
- The school regularly commissions monitoring by external agencies, and governors use the reports from these visits to complement the information given to them by the school. Some of the reports seen during the inspection were lacking in rigour. Governors recognise this and are aware of the need to ensure that all external evaluations are exacting.
- Governors discharge their statutory duties well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils in the school feel safe. They know whom to turn to if they encounter any difficulty. They are confident about raising any issues they have. Bullying is rare. It is taken seriously and dealt with firmly if it does occur.
- An effective programme of assemblies, visiting speakers and more routine lessons teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe. Pupils learn to recognise risks they may face inside and outside of school, including when they are online.
- All staff are suitably trained in safeguarding and they understand what to do to keep pupils safe from harm. Senior leaders work well with outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive any help they need. They are not afraid of being persistent to make sure that pupils are safe. Careful checks are made on all staff and any volunteers who visit the school.
- All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

- Teachers usually have high expectations of pupils. They exhort pupils to work hard and encourage them to make a full contribution in lessons.
- In the best lessons, teachers instil an impressive work ethic in pupils. There is evident ambition for all the pupils to do well. Teachers use assessment information to set suitable work for pupils. They set a fast pace and routinely ask pupils to think for themselves. In many subjects, such as English and art, they are quick to provide pupils with thoughtful extension work and challenge. Pupils regularly produce extended pieces of writing or other work, which is well constructed and accurately presented. This excellent practice is not shared widely throughout the school.
- Many teachers balance the development of pupils' subject knowledge, skills for learning and positive attitudes very skilfully. They blend the lesson objectives with the development of 'superhero learning traits' and promote pupils' understanding of the 'fruits of faith'.
- Teachers often use the positive and supportive ethos that exists in the school to draw out thoughtful and insightful responses from pupils. They question pupils frequently and incisively, eliciting lengthy responses from pupils even when discussing new or tricky topics such as Romantic poetry or the Grenfell Tower fire.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is usually good. Teachers use a variety of well-organised resources to plan work that keeps pupils enjoying, and engaged in, lessons. Pupils nearly always show willingness to participate in lessons and strive to do their best.
- In most lessons, teaching and learning is a partnership between teachers and pupils, reflecting the very good relationships that exist between teachers and pupils. Most teachers are very committed to helping pupils achieve well.
- Where teaching is weaker, for example in some science lessons, teachers underestimate what pupils can do. They do not insist on evenly high standards of behaviour. Moreover, they do not apply whole-school policies on supporting literacy, plan lessons carefully, or use assessment to set enough challenging work.
- Leaders recognise that a very few teachers are not performing as well as they should. They are tackling these weaknesses with increasing rigour, including through the introduction of new appraisal arrangements.

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 polite, friendly and respectful of each other's views. They are proud of their school and the work that they do. Pupils are smartly dressed.
- Pupils take care over their books and equipment, which they carry between lessons. They usually move very sensibly around the school. Although there are lockers in the school, these are not kept locked, which reflects the pupils' honesty and the respect that characterises relationships in the school.
- Pupils are very positive about learning. They discuss ideas and sensitive topics

confidently. They show care and support for each other inside and outside the classroom. Peer support in the school is usually mutual and very strong.

- Pupils are very well cared for by teachers and other staff. The school provides effective support for more vulnerable pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities. School staff work very well with external agencies and relevant specialist services. Transition plans for pupils who have an education, health and care plan care are sufficiently detailed and well organised.
- The new programme of social and spiritual education makes a notable contribution to the pupils' welfare and personal development. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Pupils are supported carefully when they arrive at the school. Effective liaison between most local schools helps to ensure that pupils settle into school well. Careful initial assessment and record-keeping ensure that teachers have a good understanding of the pupils' educational and other needs. Pupils are generally well supported as they leave the school. The school is updating its arrangements to provide more careers information, advice and guidance in Year 8.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is an orderly environment. Pupils' conduct in lesson is nearly always very good. Pupils listen to their teachers and they are quick to respond to instructions. Very few lessons are disrupted by silliness. Serious misbehaviour is very rare.
- Pupils' conduct around the school, including at breaktimes and lunchtimes, is usually very good. Pupils are keen to be involved in recreational activities and they get on well with one another. The school is generally calm, although a few younger pupils can become a little over-excited when moving about the school. Supervision is ample but unobtrusive.
- Pupils take reasonable care of the learning environment, which is attractive and well kept. Displays are kept tidy and equipment is looked after carefully. There is very little litter around the school.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality are above average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points, including in English and mathematics.
- Pupils join the school at the start of Year 5 and leave it at the end of Year 8. This means that published key stage 2 results are not a reliable indicator of how well pupils do at this school.
- Pupils are tested on entry to the school and tested again when they leave. These tests are nationally benchmarked and validated. They provide useful 'entry to exit' data about outcomes in English and mathematics; these data show that pupils do well overall.

- Progress in nearly all other subjects is good. Standards are very high across all years in art, humanities, social and spiritual education and physical education. Standards are high in modern foreign languages in Year 5 and Year 6. Standards in science are lower because some teachers' expectations are too low.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress. They are integrated well into the wider life of the school. The differences between them and other pupils are diminishing, although most still work below their chronological ages. Pupils who are supported in the mainstream autism base are doing well.
- Disadvantaged pupils are supported well and make good progress.
- During their time at school, pupils develop into confident, hardworking and articulate pupils. They acquire good social skills, develop tolerance of others and are resilient. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

School details

Unique reference number	139185
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10043069

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 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	660
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Father Glenn Reading
Principal	Reverend Clive Leach
Telephone number	01527 543 361
Website	www.walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk
Email address	office@walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 November 2014

Information about this school

- Walkwood is an average-sized Church of England middle school. Most pupils at the school are White British. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school roll is increasing steadily.
- The proportions of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average. No students attend any off-site alternative provision.
- A specially resourced provision, the mainstream autistic base, caters for a small number of pupils who have an autistic spectrum disorder. Six pupils are supported in this base.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is below average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards. It meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on Key Stage 2 academic performance results in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a large number of lessons to observe teaching and learning. They met with pupils and spoke with them about their experience of school. They observed pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, teachers, other school staff and a group of governors. They spoke with a senior representative of the diocese on the telephone.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including detailed information about safeguarding and the pupils' progress. They reviewed records of pupils' attendance and behaviour. They looked at the quality of work done by pupils in a large sample of exercise books and folders.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 194 pupils who completed the pupil questionnaire. They also took account of 48 responses to the staff questionnaire and 110 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 69 written comments.

Inspection team

Mike Cladingbowl, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Martin Spoor	Ofsted Inspector

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