

Inspection of Witton Middle School

Old Coach Road, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire WR9 8BD

Inspection dates: 14–15 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Until very recently, the school has been declining. A poor quality of education lets pupils down. Pupils underachieve in almost all subjects. The new headteacher has started to make changes. However, it is too soon for these to be making a difference. There is a lot to do.

Many pupils behave well but there are times when some do not. They stop paying attention when they are bored or find work difficult. At breaktimes and lunchtimes, some pupils are boisterous. Some teachers allow pupils to chat loudly in lessons or to mill around inside at breaktimes.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know that they can tell an adult if they have a concern. Leaders take bullying incidents seriously, including where pupils use racist language. However, leaders do not always take the action they should when pupils share concerns about things that are happening at home. This puts some pupils at risk of harm.

There is a wide range of activities on offer to broaden pupils' experiences. These include trips to the theatre, a residential visit in Year 7 and after-school clubs such as gardening and sports.

The majority of parents and carers are happy with the school. They recognise that the headteacher is starting to make improvements.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and governors were, until recently, unaware of the extent of the school's weaknesses. Therefore, they have not done enough to remedy the problems. Leaders and governors have not secured an acceptable standard of education for pupils.

The new headteacher has started to unpick what the weaknesses are. She has focused on the curriculum and pupils' behaviour. This was necessary but has absorbed leaders' time and energy. Consequently, leaders have not spotted the shortcomings in the school's safeguarding practices. They have not followed up recommendations about safeguarding from the school's last inspection.

The school's curriculum does not provide pupils with the knowledge and skills they need. Leaders have not identified the important knowledge they want pupils to learn. In some subjects, teachers receive poor guidance about what to teach and the order in which they should teach it. As a result, pupils' knowledge and skills do not build in a logical sequence. They do not learn important aspects of subjects. Pupils are often unclear about what they are learning and what they have learned before.

Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can, and should, achieve. As a result, too many pupils do not reach the standards they are capable of. Pupils in Year 7 are not well prepared for their transition to high school.

Teachers do not take account of what pupils already know when they plan lessons. Work is not demanding enough for many pupils, particularly the most able. They finish tasks quickly and easily. Too often, there is nothing purposeful for them to do next. These pupils underachieve.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have to rely too heavily on adults to complete activities. This is often because they need help with reading or the lesson content is too difficult. Pupils with SEND have individual targets. However, these are too broad to be of use. In some cases, they do not address the most important things that pupils need to get better at. Teachers do not receive enough guidance on how to support the learning of these pupils.

There is no coherent plan for the teaching of reading. Pupils take part in daily reading sessions but these add little to their ability to read well. This is because too many staff lack the expertise to teach reading. Pupils who have fallen behind do not receive the help they need to catch up. Leaders do not keep a close eye on whether these pupils' reading is improving.

Leaders have started to produce better guidance for teachers in some subjects. However, this work is at an early stage. Some leaders do not have the expertise to do this. Leaders do not check effectively how well teachers are planning and delivering the curriculum. This means that the quality of pupils' experiences is down to individual teachers. It varies considerably from class to class.

Leaders have introduced a new system for managing pupils' behaviour. This has led to a significant decrease in the number of pupils being excluded from school. However, the system is not working consistently well. Pupils often become distracted in lessons. This is because what teachers plan for pupils to learn does not meet pupils' needs. Too many are not interested in their learning.

Pupils have opportunities to take responsibility. For example, they are proud to be librarians and members of the eco council. Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and safe. They understand the importance of the school's 'PRIDE' values. Pupils say that it is 'OK to be different' in this school. However, they do not acquire enough knowledge about the different faiths and cultures that exist in modern Britain.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

When pupils raise concerns about their safety at home, senior leaders have not always shared these with the appropriate external agencies. Sometimes, leaders are

too slow to seek advice about the concerns they receive. There are occasions when leaders have not acted as promptly as they should to keep individual pupils safe.

Staff have received safeguarding training. They know what might indicate a pupil is at risk of harm. Staff report concerns about pupils' safety using the school's agreed procedures. However, leaders do not always record the actions they take in response to concerns. They do not always record the outcomes of their actions. This makes it difficult for leaders to know what they need to do next.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders, including governors, have not ensured that safeguarding practices are effective. As a result, leaders cannot guarantee that they have done all they can to ensure pupils' safety and welfare. Leaders must: refer concerns to external agencies swiftly and appropriately; review their procedures following incidents at school that put individual pupils at risk so that these are not repeated; routinely record the actions they take to keep pupils safe, along with the outcomes; and establish systems for leaders to communicate regularly with each other about pupils' well-being and safety.
- Leaders, including governors, do not have a precise understanding of the weaknesses in the quality of education or how well pupils are learning. Therefore, although they are trying to improve things, their strategies are disjointed. Leaders need to know how well teachers are planning and implementing the curriculum in each subject so that they can prioritise their actions. The headteacher needs to develop the capacity of leaders to design and implement an effective curriculum and ensure that all leaders have a good understanding of how well pupils know more and remember more.
- The teaching of reading is poor. Pupils who have fallen behind do not receive the support they need to catch up and become independent readers. Other pupils do not read as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the skills to teach reading effectively.
- Curriculum content is disconnected. Pupils do not study subjects in sufficient depth to acquire secure knowledge over time. Therefore, many pupils leave the school without the knowledge necessary for future learning. Leaders need to plan a coherent curriculum that builds pupils' knowledge in a logical sequence in each subject over time.
- Teachers do not use information about what pupils already know and understand to plan what they do next or to adjust the content of lessons. Teachers need subject-specific training so that they understand the important knowledge that pupils need to learn at different stages and in each subject. They need to routinely check pupils' understanding in lessons. Teachers need to use assessment information to plan lessons that enable pupils to know, do and understand more, including the most able pupils.

- The curriculum and its delivery are not sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. As a result, these pupils are underachieving. Leaders need to identify the specific needs of these pupils and plan for these appropriately. They need to check that provision matches pupils' needs and is helping them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders are not using additional funding well to help pupils catch up. As a result, too many pupils who have not achieved the expected standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are still behind where they should be at the end of Year 7. Leaders, including governors, need to ensure that they use the extra money available to help pupils who have fallen behind in Year 6 catch up quickly in Year 7.
- Pupils do not develop a good understanding of beliefs and cultures that are different from their own. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum broadens pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	116779
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10122510
Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	9 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	407
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Liz Haste
Headteacher	Suzie Bourne
Website	www.witton.worcs.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one alternative provider: The Aspire Academy, Worcestershire.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- We held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. We also met with a range of staff, including subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- I met with the chair of the governing body and six governors. I also met with a representative of the local authority.
- We looked in depth at reading, English, mathematics, geography and history. In each subject, inspection activities included discussions with the subject leader,

visits to lessons, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils. We listened to two groups of pupils read and talked to them about their reading.

- We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. We spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- I met with the headteacher about the school's safeguarding procedures. I reviewed policies and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and pupils who have left the school. We spoke to pupils, parents and staff about how safe pupils are at school.
- We reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and information on the school's website.
- We took into consideration the 48 responses to Parent View, including the 32 free-text comments. Two inspectors spoke to parents at the end of the school day. We also took account of the 20 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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