

Inspection of a good school: Westacre Middle School

Ombersley Way, Droitwich, Worcestershire WR9 0AA

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 September 2022

Outcome

Westacre Middle School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

All staff and pupils speak of the school's motto of Inspire, Challenge, Achieve – it permeates everyday school life. Senior leaders' high expectations are frequently met by pupils and staff. Leaders want all pupils to achieve their best, and they generally do. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils are happy and safe. They enjoy learning. Pupils are proud of their school and would recommend it to anyone.

Leaders' work to promote pupils' personal development is a strength. They have planned a comprehensive extra-curricular offer of clubs, excursions and visits. These include cooking, reading, choir and gardening clubs as well as the annual whole-school theatre trip and year group residential trips. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about the many opportunities available to them to continue their learning beyond the classroom. They value these opportunities.

Pupils behave well in lessons and during play times. They know the school rules and adhere to them. Lessons are hardly ever disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils describe their school as a 'telling school'. They say that bullying is very rare. All pupils are confident that if it ever happens, someone would tell and staff would act immediately to stop it.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum. It is aspirational for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have developed their curriculum carefully and have considered the period of time pupils will spend in their school.

All pupils study the full range of subjects as outlined in the national curriculum. Additionally, leaders have underpinned their curriculum with daily, guided reading and mathematics sessions. Pupils generally achieve well and have closed some of the learning gaps resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reading is a priority at the school. Leaders have ensured that pupils have daily opportunities to read and practise vital reading skills. Pupils chose from a wide variety of books from the well-stocked library. They read often and widely across the curriculum. Teachers use a range of assessment tools to make sure that pupils read at the age that is appropriate for them. Those who fall behind or are at the early stages of learning to read benefit from a range of interventions. However, not all strategies help pupils to improve their phonics knowledge. As a result, pupils do not automatically know how to sound words out that are unfamiliar.

Teachers use in-class checks effectively in order to determine what pupils can do. Consequently, they know how well their pupils are learning and this effectively informs their future planning. However, teachers' knowledge of what pupils can do or have learned is not always added to by frequent use of more formal assessments. Additionally, this impacts negatively on teachers' workload.

Pupils learn the intended curriculum well. They grasp key concepts and apply them in future learning. Lessons are free from disruption and pupils enjoy learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They present subject matter clearly and coherently. They select resources well to underpin the intended learning. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND generally achieve well. Teachers have the same high expectations and give pupils appropriate support when they need it.

Pupils' wider development is at the heart of what the school does. Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities available to them. Clubs, visits, leadership opportunities, residentials and outside guest speakers are just a few examples of the comprehensive offer. These activities further enhance pupils' learning outside of the classroom. The majority of pupils take part in these activities, including disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have made the decision to include appropriate careers information in their curriculum. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education.

Staff are unanimously proud of their school. They feel valued and all speak of the 'Westacre Team'. Staff say that leaders care about them and their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are trained well to spot signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Teachers know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. Teachers report concerns, however minor, to the specially trained safeguarding team. Staff know their pupils well and use this information to ensure pupils are safe.

Leaders keep oversight of pupils they know to be vulnerable. They work well with external agencies, such as social services, to make sure that these pupils receive the support they need. Leaders complete required checks on all staff they employ.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all strategies used to support pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read are effective. When this is the case, pupils do not know how to sound out or blend letters together to read an unfamiliar word. This hinders pupils' learning to become fluent readers. Leaders should ensure that all strategies used to support pupils with their reading are grounded in synthetic phonics.
- Leaders have not carefully thought about how summative assessments add to teachers' knowledge of what pupils can do or have learned. Additionally, the number of assessments contributes to teachers' workload. Leaders should ensure that assessments check effectively what pupils can do and remember over time and do not negatively impact on staff's workload.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2013.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	116778
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10226896
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	450
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Charles Hill
Headteacher	Donna Evans
Website	www.westacre-middle-school.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized middle deemed primary school for Year 5 to 7 pupils.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with senior leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteachers and assistant headteacher. She held a meeting with governors, including the chair of governors. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders and early career teachers.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, reading and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes and spoke to many pupils during the inspection.
- The inspector scrutinised documents and policies with regards to safeguarding. She examined school records and spoke to many staff, including kitchen and support staff about safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspector took account of parents' free-text comments and the responses on Ofsted Parent View. Responses to the surveys for pupils and staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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