



Droitwich, Witton Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116779
LEA Worcestershire
Inspection number 279896
Inspection dates 4 May 2006 to 5 May 2006
Reporting inspector Terry Elston AI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary	School address	Old Coach Road
School category	Community		Droitwich
Age range of pupils	9 to 12		Worcestershire WR9 8BD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01905 773362
Number on roll	540	Fax number	01905 795474
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Judy Price
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mr David Coll

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very large middle school. Around 10% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Only 2% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and none speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. The school is experiencing considerable difficulty recruiting and retaining staff, and nine teachers are on temporary contracts. In 2003, the school attained Activemark Gold and Artsmark awards and achieved Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The provision is satisfactory. This contradicts the school's view that it is good. Despite difficulties in recruiting staff, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but it varies too much across the school. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and standards when they leave the school are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. However, boys generally do better than girls. Higher-attaining pupils benefit from good teaching and generally do well. Some of the lower-attaining pupils, especially girls, do not get enough support in lessons and this limits their progress. Pupils enjoy school and are particularly enthusiastic about music, art and design and games, subjects in which they do well. Attendance is good, although irregular attendance for a few girls affects their progress. Most pupils behave well, are keen to take responsibility and show a pride in their work. Most boys take an active part in lessons but occasionally girls are too passive. Pupils take full advantage of the many activities at lunchtime and after school that enrich the curriculum. Pupils feel safe at school and benefit from good care, support and guidance. They feel lucky to have access to the excellent grounds, woodland and playing fields. The headteacher and senior staff provide clear direction to the school, which provides satisfactory value for money. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, but while it has done well to rectify the main weaknesses, standards remain similar. The school has a sound capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all girls achieve as well as they should by providing more support in lessons, finding strategies to engage them more in learning and encouraging their regular attendance.
- Help pupils make better progress by providing consistently good teaching.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress. They enter the school in Year 5 with skills that are below average in writing and mathematics and average in reading, science and other subjects. The 2005 national tests showed that Year 6 pupils had made satisfactory progress to attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. The school's results have improved in line with those nationally over recent years, although, in 2005, performance in science was significantly lower than in the previous year. The school exceeded its reasonably challenging targets in both English and mathematics. In English, however, whilst pupils attained very well in reading, their writing was below average. The school has worked successfully to rectify weaknesses in writing and science this year, and attainment in Year 6 has improved. More able pupils did well in the tests and attained high standards. Girls' achievement, particularly by those in the lower-attaining groups, was significantly below that of boys in all subjects. By the time pupils leave in Year 7, they have made steady progress and their

attainment is average in English, including writing, and in mathematics and science. However, boys are still doing better than girls.

Throughout the school, pupils achieve very well in music, art and design and games. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress overall. Those with statements of special educational need benefit from specialist teaching in small groups and do well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and has improved since the last inspection. In particular, the school has done much to improve pupils' spiritual development and encourage them to think deeply about the world around them. Pupils feel safe in school and are quick to say how issues such as bullying are dealt with effectively. Relationships are good and most pupils are keen to ask questions and contribute their ideas in lessons. However, girls tend to answer fewer questions in lessons than boys. Attendance is above the national average and most pupils enjoy school. However, the attendance of a few pupils, mostly girls, is erratic and this affects their progress. Most pupils work hard in lessons and behave well, in line with the 'Witton Way'. Occasionally, a few older ones, particularly those in lower ability groups, lose interest easily and sometimes disrupt the learning of others. Pupils have a good awareness of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and what they should do to keep safe. They make a good contribution to the improvements in their school and they are also keen to be involved in the wider community. Good personal development, combined with satisfactory academic standards, ensures that pupils are adequately prepared for their futures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but the quality varies significantly from class to class. Most lessons are satisfactory or good but there are occasional examples of both outstanding and inadequate practice. The most effective lessons are often those in literacy or numeracy for the most able pupils. In these lessons, lively, challenging teaching is matched very closely to the range of pupils' capabilities. Allied with pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and effort, this often leads to very good progress. In a few lessons, activities are not matched well enough to pupils' interests or abilities and they quickly become silly or distracted. There are also occasions when pupils approach lessons with low motivation despite the best efforts of the teacher to make the lesson enjoyable.

The school has good systems for keeping track of pupils' progress and levels of attainment. Pupils are given a clear understanding of their individual targets, and teachers' helpful marking shows them how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets national requirements and is generally well adapted to meet the range of pupils' needs and capabilities. There are good programmes of work for pupils with significant learning difficulties. The school's provision in physical education and the arts has received national recognition. In these areas, pupils benefit from good subject expertise of the staff, lots of encouragement to succeed and excellent facilities to improve their skills. Pupils appreciate the substantial help they receive to develop personal and social skills and learn how to be healthy and stay safe. The curriculum benefits from an excellent range of enrichment activities, including educational visits, visitors and the many after-school clubs. Sporting opportunities are extensive and include opportunities for sailing and basketball. The benefits are seen in pupils' many successes in competitive sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Procedures for health and safety and child protection are very robust. The school provides a safe and very attractive place in which to work. Procedures to support the most vulnerable pupils are good. Personal and social education lessons provide good guidance for pupils. Pupils' personal development is promoted well and monitored carefully. Useful information about individual pupils is passed on to the next teacher. Teachers provide pupils with very effective personal and academic support which helps them feel secure and shows them how to improve their work. Pupils with significant learning difficulties or disabilities benefit from good support from specialist staff who know their problems very well. However, inspectors agree with some parents who have concerns about the levels of support for some lower-attaining pupils. As a result of budget constraints, the number of teaching assistants is below that found in most schools and this means that extra support is not available in many lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has been successful in creating a good team spirit, and staff are very supportive of each other. In particular, new staff speak highly of the very good guidance to help them settle quickly into school life. The school's self-evaluation procedures are sound, but tend to be over-generous when judging the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' progress. The leadership is generally successful in identifying and rectifying weaknesses in provision, as illustrated by recent improvements in writing, science and the achievements of more able pupils. However, despite extensive research, the issue of underachievement for lower-attaining girls remains and there is little evidence in lessons that teachers are making much headway in accelerating their progress. The leadership has nurtured very good links with local schools which have helped improve

the curriculum and do much to help pupils transfer from one school to another. The governing body provides good support and guidance to the school. Governors have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and work closely with the headteacher and staff to make improvements.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for letting us come to visit your school. We really enjoyed seeing you work hard in lessons and play so energetically in the playground. We saw you in assembly and thought your singing and playing of instruments were excellent. Those who were kind enough to speak to us told us a lot about your school.

What we liked most about your school

You are very friendly and helpful to visitors.

Most of you work very hard in lessons and enjoy learning.

Your headteacher makes everyone feel special.

Your behaviour is good, both in class and in the playground.

You think a lot about other people who are not as lucky as you.

Your parents are pleased with the school.

You do very well in music, art and physical education.

What we have asked your school to do now

Some girls could do better work. I have asked your teachers to set more work that girls find interesting and make sure that girls answer as many questions as boys. A few girls do not attend school regularly and they could help the school and themselves by improving their attendance.

You learn faster in some lessons than in others and I have asked your headteacher to make all lessons as good as the best ones.