



Walkwood CofE Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116987
LEA Worcestershire
Inspection number 279970
Inspection dates 19 June 2006 to 20 June 2006
Reporting inspector David Biltcliffe AI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Feckenham Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Headless Cross
Age range of pupils	9 to 13		Redditch, Worcestershire B97 5AQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01527 543361
Number on roll	729	Fax number	01527 550232
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Paul Lowe
Date of previous inspection	1 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr Peter Garner

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Walkwood is larger than most middle schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is higher than usual. Included in the school's provision is a base for ten pupils with autism. About three per cent of pupils do not have English as their first language; two pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Pupils' social and economic background is relatively advantaged. Ninety-three per cent of pupils are of White British origin.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Walkwood provides a good standard of education for its pupils and gives good value for money. It has many strengths and few weaknesses. 'It is a brilliant school to learn in' sums up the views of very many parents. It is a good school for many reasons. It is a thriving, purposeful community where pupils enjoy school and make good progress through good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching. The classroom climate is calm, interesting and purposeful. Teachers know their subjects well, do their best for pupils and exude confidence. High standards are expected. Attendance is good. Extracurricular activities are unusually rich. Pupils achieve well and leave school with above average standards. Relationships amongst staff and pupils are warm, encouraging and understanding, partly as a result of the outstanding quality of care shown for all pupils as individuals. The school's good curriculum and ethos are enhanced by its Christian beliefs and values. Senior management is good. It has created an innovative, 'can do' culture that values teamwork and high standards. As a result, staff morale is high and there is a happy, buoyant feel around the school. There are a few things the school needs to do to raise standards further. Some teaching does not enable pupils to think for themselves. Management does not assemble enough information with which to review the school's academic performance accurately. Attainment on entry is below average: pupils do not quite catch up to where they are capable of being by the end of Year 6, but are above average by the end of Year 8. At 22.9 hours per week, teaching time falls well short of the nationally recommended 25 hours. Management has addressed well the weaknesses in teaching and planning identified at the last inspection. Inspection evidence supports the staff's view of the school's good quality. Staff have the capability and will to make Walkwood still better.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' attainment in Years 5 and 6 and ensure that pupils always have to think deeply enough about their tasks.
- Increase the amount of teaching time.
- Use management data more effectively to review the school's academic performance accurately.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good overall. By the time they leave school, more pupils than usual reach or exceed nationally expected standards, showing a good rate of improvement on the below average levels they had when they started in Year 5. Standards are at their best in Years 7 and 8. English is the strongest of the three 'core' subjects: high attainers achieve particularly well and attainment is above average. Standards are rising in mathematics, which was recently the lowest-attaining subject. This improvement is the result of high-quality teaching, thorough planning and increasingly close links with contributory first schools. Achievement in the subject is now good. Standards continue to rise steadily in science, where most pupils make

good progress. The vast majority of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and high attainers, achieve well. As a result of high-quality specialist teaching and support, pupils with autism make good progress. The school met the reasonable Year 6 targets it set in 2005 and is on track to meet the slightly higher ones of 2006. Overall, although pupils make good progress from entry, the school fully recognises it has important work to do to raise levels of attainment in Years 5 and 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. During their time in school, pupils mature significantly as a result of sensitive, first-rate support and monitoring by form tutors and heads of year. Most pupils are good at reflecting on the world around them and expressing their thoughts clearly. Pupils use the 'Talk Shop' well to raise and discuss issues that affect them and appreciate what it achieves for them. They readily and effectively assume responsibility in several areas of school life, for example, as prefects or as play leaders for younger pupils. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Attendance is good. Pupils' great enjoyment and very positive approach to work are notable strengths of school life. Pupils' excellent spiritual development is a strength of the school and is especially evident in assemblies and the whole-school Eucharist. Their cultural awareness is good. They develop a strong moral and social sense, largely because teachers are very good role models. They act safely in and around the buildings. Many pupils make healthy choices of food in the dining room and a large number take part in sports activities. Pupils make a substantial contribution to their school community as well as to other communities abroad through the unusually wide international links the school has established. The early development of careers education and workplace skills is satisfactory overall. A strength is that pupils are adept at working in teams and managing money through such events as running charity stalls and using the school bank.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, an improvement on the position at the last inspection. This improvement has partly come about because the school has put more emphasis on monitoring how well pupils learn as well as what makes good teaching. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils create mutual respect, so that pupils behave well and want to learn. Teachers are confident with their subjects and plan work that is well matched to pupils' differing capabilities. Lessons usually include a variety of activities that strongly motivate pupils. In the best lessons, teachers enthuse pupils with a desire to learn more, set demanding tasks, work at a brisk pace and give pupils good opportunities to learn independently. These lessons are at once both rigorous and fun and, because pupils enjoy their work, they learn rapidly and willingly. Where teaching is weaker, teachers do not demand enough

of pupils or ask sufficiently probing questions that ensure pupils think deeply about their work. A few lessons are too slow. Sometimes teachers talk too much and, as one pupil put it, 'do everything for us and that's boring'. The quality of marking varies. Sometimes exercise books have a few ticks or comments. Most marking, however, is good and many teachers give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good, innovative curriculum – part of the reason why pupils enjoy their time here. 'Activities Week', for example, allows about half the pupils to visit London or organised activity centres, whilst other pupils benefit from a well-organised, alternative programme in school. The normal curriculum includes many visits and talks by outsiders. By national standards, however, the amount of teaching time is low and squeezes a little the time available for subjects other than English, mathematics and science. The school's website offers substantial support for out-of-hours learning and effectively encourages independence in learning for all pupils. The range of extracurricular activities is exceptionally wide and a great strength of the school. The school's extensive links with schools in Italy, Hungary and Finland significantly broaden pupils' horizons. The great value placed on relationships, sensible lifestyles and a Christian ethos is strongly reflected in the citizenship programme and thought-provoking assemblies. The fruits of this are borne out in the well-rounded young people the school turns out by the end of Year 8.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding, perhaps encouraged by the school reception's display that claims 'Care is Cool'. Staff sensitively value all pupils as individuals, with a strong commitment to ensuring their well-being. As one pupil said, 'teachers always sort out any problems quickly'. Health and safety routines and risk assessments are fully in place. The arrangements for child protection are secure. The pastoral team provides strong support for pupils who find it difficult to settle to their work. Guidance for pupils' academic progress is good. Pupils are usually given a clear understanding how well they have done and what they need to do to improve further. Pupils with learning difficulties are very well supported by well-trained teaching assistants. Good arrangements are in place to support vulnerable pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are normally challenged appropriately. Pupils with specific learning difficulties make good progress against their targets. Induction and transfer arrangements ensure that most pupils settle happily into new routines. Substantial links with parents and outside agencies enhance pupils' welfare, health and safety, and all-round development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision and an effective presence around the school. His reputation is deservedly good with parents, pupils and staff. Other leaders work hard and successfully for the children in their care. Together they provide the school with a strong Christian ethos and ensure that pupils have the facilities, staffing and support they need to achieve well. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The school values the involvement of parents and provides them with a wide range of information and opportunities to support their children for instance, through its website. The school has involved the local authority constructively in monitoring its work and evaluates pupils' progress accurately. Management's review of its overall academic performance and some subject areas, however, is not precise enough to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. Governance is good. The governors are actively involved in school life and know the school well. All key issues from the last inspection have been addressed. Managers throughout the school have the capacity and determination to improve the school still further.

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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?	2	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	1	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	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	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?	1	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	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	2	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	Yes
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

21 June 2006 Dear Pupils As you know, inspectors visited your school recently to check on its progress. Thank you all very much for your views and your welcome. Both you and your parents told us how much you enjoy school. Walkwood is a good school. Some things are outstanding. We hope you enjoy reading about the many good things we found. • Most of you make good progress in your schoolwork. • You are well taught, work willingly and carefully, and want to do well. • You are polite and thoughtful, behave well and readily take on responsibilities. • The way you are cared for and given spiritual opportunities is outstanding. • Many of you take part in an exceptional range of activities outside lessons. • You are rightly very proud of your school and enjoy your lessons. There are a few things that need to improve to make your school even better. • Sometimes you are not asked to think hard enough in lessons. • Teachers need to have more information about how well you are doing. • Classroom teaching time needs to be increased. We hope you continue to work hard and enjoy your time in school and that those of you soon to leave Year 8 will look back with fond memories of your time at Walkwood. Yours sincerely David Biltcliffe Dr David Biltcliffe Lead inspector