



Walton Priory Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124426
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281721
Inspection dates 7 June 2006 to 8 June 2006
Reporting inspector David Anstead HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Beacon Rise
School category	Community		Walton
Age range of pupils	9 to 13		Stone, Staffordshire ST15 0AL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01785 814930
Number on roll	572	Fax number	01785 819304
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr David Towers
Date of previous inspection	14 February 2000	Headteacher	Miss Susan Taylor

Age group 9 to 13	Inspection dates 7 June 2006 - 8 June 2006	Inspection number 281721
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Walton Priory Middle School has children in the last two years of Key Stage 2 and the first two years of Key Stage 3. Although it is smaller than the average secondary school, it is of about average size when compared to middle schools nationally. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities has fallen in the last few years and is now just below average. Children from minority ethnic backgrounds represent a much lower proportion than the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'This is a very good place to be because everyone is so friendly' one child told inspectors. Parents agree. 'Walton Priory Middle School is a fantastic place to be both academically and socially' wrote a parent. The school is a happy community which children very much enjoy being part of. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. Children feel safe at school and are appreciative of the excellent range of lunchtime and after school activities. The school is highly successful in encouraging children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

Teaching and learning are good and ensure children make good progress overall. However, during Key Stage 2, children make better progress in reading than in writing. Children's work is regularly assessed but written guidance on how they can improve their work is only provided in some subjects. The headteacher's purposeful leadership has created a culture which places meeting the needs of every child at its centre. The school evaluates its own effectiveness as satisfactory but inspectors judge it to be good. Children's personal development and the contribution made by governors to improving the school are outstanding. Good progress has been made on issues from the last inspection and the school has a good capacity to continue to improve. It gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistency in written guidance to children on how to improve their work.
- Improve progress made in writing during Key Stage 2 to match that made in reading.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. The standards achieved by children in Key Stage 1 tests before they join the school are above average. Two years later children take nationally prepared progress tests just prior to joining the school. The school's analysis of these test results, which has been shared with the first schools, shows that overall standards in English and mathematics have not been as strong by the end of Year 4. Consequently the prior attainment of children joining the school has been broadly average.

During Years 5 and 6 children make good progress in mathematics and reading. Progress in writing is slower and is satisfactory. The school is aware of this and has plans to employ an additional teacher next year to provide extra support. By the time children sit the Key Stage 2 tests, standards overall have improved to be above average with none significantly below average.

At the end of Year 8, children sit national progress tests. These show that children are exceeding the Key Stage 3 national average for mathematics a year early and are just below the national average for English. By the time children leave the school, their overall standards are above average. Considering their starting points, children are

making better than expected progress. Less able children make good progress. There is no underachievement amongst any particular groups of students.

The school follows national guidance in setting performance targets derived from prior attainment. The target for last year was met in mathematics but not in English. The school is predicting that it will achieve both targets this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development is outstanding. They enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in good attendance and excellent behaviour both in lessons and around the school. There is a high level of participation in extra-curricular activities. Children feel safe and well cared for and all the statutory requirements in this respect are well implemented. Incidents of bullying are rare and children feel that any are dealt with very effectively. The use of exclusion by the school as a sanction is exceptionally low. The school does outstandingly well in encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. There is a high level of participation in physical education activities and children choose to eat a healthy diet. The personal, social and health education programme is very well planned and, along with the citizenship curriculum, successfully heightens awareness of such issues as the dangers of smoking and drugs. All aspects of the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are at least good and their social development is outstanding. They collaborate well and show responsibility, such as in their fundraising for charity and the good work they do in the local community. They are very effectively made aware of other cultures through work in the curriculum, for example singing African songs in music lessons, and through the links with a school in Sri Lanka. The school is effective in helping children to acquire the skills they will need for their future economic well-being; for example standards of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. There is rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching by the headteacher and senior managers. In the best lessons, teachers provide well planned, varied and stimulating experiences to which children respond enthusiastically. They appreciate being actively involved in learning. They enjoy the imaginative topics they are presented with and respond by working hard and achieving good standards. This is particularly evident in English and science where children are challenged to be creative in their work and derive great satisfaction and pleasure from their success.

Following the last inspection the school has focused on using assessment data to track the progress of pupils and effectively uses this to plan lessons around individual and group needs. However, a significant number of children are unsure about the National

Curriculum levels at which they are working and unclear about their individual targets for improvement. There are inconsistencies in marking and written guidance to children. Assessment ranges from cursory ticks in some subjects to detailed information in others on how well children are performing and what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is good. It is broad, balanced and fulfils statutory requirements. The deficiencies in the ICT and the design and technology curriculum identified in the previous inspection have now been rectified. Time is now set aside specifically for citizenship and personal, social, and health education, in addition to those aspects of these areas which are covered in other subjects, such as science and English. There is good provision for literacy and numeracy. The school maintains an outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities which considerably enriches the children's experiences. A wide variety of the children's interests are developed through the many clubs and activities. These are well attended by the children. The principles of healthy eating are very well taught. There is good involvement with the local community and a range of activities to develop responsibility, commitment and teamwork. Children with learning difficulties are helped to make good progress through individual help and activities designed to take account of their starting points. The school does not fulfil the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship. However, in spite of limitations of space, children do take part in an act of worship three times a week.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The school complies with statutory requirements for health and safety and child protection. The school has an effective pastoral system which carefully monitors the children's welfare and progress. Various strategies are employed to promote good attendance. It is monitored well and absences are promptly investigated. The children feel secure and know who to turn to for help and support. The school has good systems for monitoring children's academic progress which provide teachers with good information on how well they are doing. However, this is not always used effectively to suggest ways in which children might improve their work. The school cares very well for those children with learning difficulties. Sometimes, when appropriate, they are taught separately in small groups but mostly they are helped within their class groups by a small but effective team of learning support assistants.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is very effective in bringing about the school's continuous improvement. Her determination, dedication and clear direction are shared by the senior management team and other managers. There is a

whole school culture aimed at raising overall standards whilst ensuring that the needs of each individual child are met.

Since the last inspection, there has been increased delegation of responsibilities to subject and pastoral leaders. They have clear job descriptions and all are involved in rigorous monitoring of the quality of provision within their areas of responsibility. They are encouraged to take initiatives, are given autonomy, and are held accountable for improving standards and sharing good practice. A good performance management system is in place which is used effectively to identify the training needs of both teaching and non-teaching staff.

The governors are very well informed and clear about the role that they play in monitoring the school's work. They are highly effective in both challenging and supporting the school and are making an outstanding contribution to school improvement. The majority of parents and children feel that the school values their views and, where possible, the issues that they raise are acted upon. For example, the recently created school council of voices has successfully been involved in planning changes to the school playground to provide additional seating and benching areas. Self evaluation is accurate and informs planning, which is thorough and detailed. There is a good school development plan which identifies priorities for improvement with clear criteria for measuring when they have been achieved. The school is self-critical. Inspectors judge the school to be doing better than the school's own evaluation of its performance does.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

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	2	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?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	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	1	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	2	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?	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?	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	2	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	1	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

Following our visit to inspect your school, I am writing to tell you about our findings. I would like to thank you for your friendly welcome and thoughtful answers to our questions. We found this helpful in deciding what is good about your school and what needs to be improved. We think the education you receive at your school is good.

These are the strengths of your school:

The school is a happy place to be and you enjoy being there.

The school looks after you well and you feel safe.

The school does an excellent job of helping you live healthy lifestyles.

You appreciate the excellent range of lunchtime and after school activities.

Your behaviour is excellent.

Teaching and learning are good and you are making good progress.

The governors and your headteacher lead the school well.

There are some aspects of the school's work which we think can be better. In Years 5 and 6 you make better progress in reading than in writing. We have asked your headteacher to make sure you improve your writing skills more quickly in these year groups. We have also asked that you receive better guidance on what you need to do to improve your work in all subjects. You can help by always trying your best and by acting on the advice you are given on how to improve.

I wish you every continued success in the future.