



Westley Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124807
Local Authority SUFFOLK
Inspection number 293119
Inspection dates 2–3 October 2006
Reporting inspector Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Oliver Road
School category	Community		Bury St Edmunds
Age range of pupils	9–13		Suffolk IP33 3JB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01284 755144
Number on roll (school)	461	Fax number	01284 703619
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Ken MacDonald
		Headteacher	Mrs Julie Bidwell
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2002		

Age group 9–13	Inspection dates 2–3 October 2006	Inspection number 293119
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized middle school, where all but a very few pupils are of White British background. Free school meal entitlement is low. Attainment on entry is broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. An attached unit with provision for up to nine pupils with hearing impairment means that the school has an above average number of pupils with statements for their special educational needs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The evaluation by staff and governors that Westley Middle School provides a good education for its pupils is an accurate one. The school has the overwhelming support of parents in all that it does, which is reflected in the large numbers trying to get their pupils into the school each year. It immediately strikes the visitor as a happy school, and this impression is strengthened the longer the time spent in it. It has many strong and several outstanding features. The pupils learn and develop into thoughtful young citizens in the harmonious and purposeful atmosphere. They are prepared well for the next phase of their education and benefit considerably from the strong links with other schools and outside organisations. Parents are very happy that securing their children's well-being is paramount to the work of staff. Pupils say they feel safe at school and that bullying is very rare. The pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The pupils have excellent attitudes to school and to learning, are courteous and act with consideration to others. They relate well to adults and other pupils, and show great respect for each other. Behaviour in and around the school has improved considerably and is now excellent. Pupils work very hard, play happily together and thoroughly enjoy their time in school. A key strength is their participation in large numbers in the wide range of additional activities, particularly the various clubs and sporting activities on offer at lunchtime and after school. Pupils adopt safe practices to a high degree showing a clear awareness of the need to act sensibly and responsibly towards others, and when using apparatus where risk might be encountered.

Achievement is good. Pupils reach above average standards by Year 8 from broadly average attainment when they enter in Year 5. Test results in Year 6 fell in 2005, having risen substantially since the last inspection, but rose again considerably in 2006 to continue the improving trend of recent years. The good progress made by pupils is a combination of the good teaching in the school and the pupils' positive attitudes to their learning. Much of the teaching engages and interests the pupils who respond by working very hard and showing considerable interest in their lessons. Teaching challenges pupils more in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6. Consequently, the progress made by pupils is more rapid in the older years. Targets are mostly challenging but the next steps in achieving them are not made consistently clear to pupils. Marking is not always helpful in this respect, although there are examples where teachers give good guidance and check that pupils have taken this on board. Pupils identified with particular talents are challenged and extended successfully through a wide range of additional activities. The school also successfully enables pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities to be fully included in all aspects of school life. These pupils make good progress because of the skilled support provided by staff that encourages them to be independent learners wherever possible. A close working relationship between the specialist unit for pupils with hearing impairment and the main school ensures that their learning needs are swiftly identified, their progress carefully monitored and programmes of support adapted where necessary. A key to the school's success and its improvement in recent years is that it is well led and managed by the headteacher, senior staff and governors. The school has a clear direction. Members of staff are continually striving to improve their work, although planning is not always sharply

linked to targets for improving learning and raising pupil achievement. Procedures by which the quality of the work of staff is checked and improved are in place, but do not focus sharply enough on the impact on the pupils' learning and how their learning could then be improved. Governors understand the school's strengths and how weaknesses are to be tackled, acting as a critical and challenging friend to the senior staff. They have high expectations of what can be achieved and challenge the headteacher and senior staff to improve the education provided further. This track record of improvement and the further developments taking place in self-evaluation place the school in a strong position to improve further. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers set challenging curriculum targets, plan to enable these to be reached and use assessment information and marking more effectively to help pupils see clearly how to improve. - Focus school evaluation and improvement planning at all levels on the impact of action taken on the outcomes for pupils, their learning and their subsequent achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress during their time at the school, although this is generally more rapid in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6. Standards are rising as shown in both test results and the pupils' current work. National Curriculum test results for Year 6 pupils rose considerably in 2006 after a fall in 2005. The 2006 test results were well above average in English and broadly average in both mathematics and science. Pupils are set challenging targets for their performance which they generally reach and very often exceed by the time they leave in Year 8. However, they do not have quite the same degree of success in meeting targets for Year 6 tests.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are punctual, attend regularly and have a high regard for their teachers. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They look forward to their lessons, and also to the wealth of extra-curricular activities in which they participate in large numbers. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community through their involvement in many out-of-school activities, including charity work, and by the positions of responsibility they hold and undertake eagerly. They collaborate very well in teams and learn how to take leadership roles. They are aware of the dangers of drug misuse and of the need for healthy eating, although not all choose the healthy options provided by the school canteen.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

By skilfully managing behaviour and encouraging the pupils, teachers have established a very positive atmosphere in their lessons. This gives the pupils the confidence to contribute and makes them feel valued. They enjoy the well thought-out and well paced lessons. They can often be fired by their teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects. Teachers creatively use new technology such as the interactive whiteboards to make lessons more interesting and to stimulate learning. Most pupils are well challenged, although at times teachers set insufficiently demanding targets and tasks and do not mark work in a way that helps the pupils understand how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good and carefully planned curriculum that enables all pupils to progress well. Key skills such as literacy and numeracy are developed across a wide range of subjects. The application of the pupils' information and communication technology skills are also promoted well. The extensive additional learning opportunities for all pupils include numerous school clubs, trips and visits. These encompass many sporting, music-making, signing and creative activities. A recently introduced 'Thinking Skills' programme is enabling pupils to analyse their views and express them with confidence.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a good level of care, guidance and support. Robust systems are in place to ensure the welfare, protection and safety of the pupils. These are complemented by very effective links with outside agencies and with parents to ensure that vulnerable pupils are well supported. Parents are very pleased with the carefully planned arrangements with local primary schools that help new entrants to settle into Westley quickly. Pupils are also carefully prepared and supported as they move on to the next stage of their education and beyond. Regular assessment is used to track pupils' academic and social progress so that those at risk of underachieving are given appropriate support by teaching assistants.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and other senior staff form an effective team. They have successfully led the school through a period of sustained improvement, and have more than reversed the dip in test performance in 2005. Self-evaluation is based on systematic monitoring

and is providing an honest and accurate view of the school, but staff are only just beginning to analyse performance data rigorously to demonstrate the impact of their action on pupils' achievement. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well and ensures that resources are directed towards meeting the school's main priorities. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils are given the opportunity to succeed whatever their aptitudes or background. This is manifested in the way pupils with learning difficulties and those with hearing impairment are included fully in all aspects of school life.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 October 2006 Dear Pupils Westley Middle School, Oliver Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. IP33 3JB I am writing to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. You were all very kind, helpful to us and showed how proud you are of your school. We enjoyed talking to you and your teachers and watching you learn. There are very many aspects of your school that we liked. You and your parents are right in thinking that you go to a good school. You make good progress during your time at the school because of the quality of the teaching. Almost all of you achieve or often exceed the standards expected of you by the time you leave. You work very hard and with enjoyment, attend regularly and your behaviour is excellent. You are cared for and looked after very well, and the youngest of you are given good support to help you settle in. You have a very interesting range of activities in which to take part, both in lessons and after school. Those of you who need extra help with learning are given good support to do so. You take your responsibilities very seriously and make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and the community. We are very pleased to see how your teachers and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. There are two areas where we all agree that improvements could be made. You need to be set clearer targets and given more guidance to help to achieve them, and the school needs to be sure that when it introduces something new it has the best effect possible on your learning. We wish you well for the future. Yours sincerely Martin Beale Lead inspector