

Welldon Park Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102221
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	323603
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	8–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Skipworth
Headteacher	Mr M Courtier
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2006
School address	Wyvenhoe Road South Harrow HA2 8LS
Telephone number	020 8422 4304
Fax number	020 8422 0204

Age group	8–12
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. A high proportion of pupils come from a wide variety of minority ethnic backgrounds, with a significant number from refugee or asylum-seeking families. Seven out of ten pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. These include speech and language difficulties. The school has the Activemark award for promoting physical education.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Welldon Park Middle is a satisfactory school. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, as they behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. It is a caring school, with good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with speech and communication difficulties. Staff know the pupils well, and have created a safe, friendly environment for them. Achievement is satisfactory, as pupils enter the school with attainment generally in line with national expectations in Year 4, and leave Year 7 with the skills and abilities normally expected. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 6 are broadly average, although a little below in science. Too few pupils attain the higher levels in national tests because teaching and the curriculum do not always challenge them sufficiently well, and consequently their progress slows. While there is some good and better teaching, this is not consistent throughout the school.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school that treats each pupil as an individual and caters for their specific needs. This is proving successful in terms of the pastoral care of pupils and in helping those pupils who find learning difficult to make good progress towards their individual targets. Too much data are collected about pupils' performance, to the extent that this is difficult to manage, and there is no one system for presenting the information in a clear and accessible way. Senior leaders understand what the school does well and identify areas to improve through regular monitoring. Initiatives to bring about change are not always pursued rigorously enough to ensure they are being fully implemented and to measure their impact on outcomes for pupils. Governors are very supportive of the school, and are beginning to evaluate their own effectiveness more systematically, but have not given a strategic lead that is focused on key priorities for improvement. Consequently, the school has made sound progress since its last inspection and has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

The personal development of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and get on well together. Those from different backgrounds and cultures mix freely and show one another respect. Attendance is good. Pupils take plenty of exercise and benefit from participating in a good range of sports. They know how to make healthy choices and run a healthy tuck shop. They say they feel safe at school and value the support they receive from adults when they have a worry. The school council has an influential role in taking forward pupils' ideas for improving aspects of school life, such as in organising more clubs and increasing lunchtime activity. Pupils take on responsibility willingly, with Year 6 pupils looking after the new Year 3 pupils during their induction week. Pupils are beginning to develop their independence through a curriculum that is becoming more creative, and are satisfactorily prepared for high school.

The school has made a start in developing its curriculum to become more relevant and enjoyable for pupils, although aspects of this work are at an early stage. Pupils take part in a range of interesting activities in mixed-age groups once a week, such as photography and origami. The school recognises the need to develop more links so that pupils can apply their skills across all subjects. This is particularly so for information and communication technology (ICT). The curriculum is enriched well by clubs, visits and visitors, as well as themed days such as World Book Day, which was celebrated with the nearby First School.

There are good links with parents, and the school provides useful opportunities for them to find out more about their children's education. During the inspection a well-attended workshop took place, showing parents how they could help their children with mathematics at home. A

parent wrote, 'The school is constantly in touch with parents and there is always someone to answer the questions we have.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Make teaching consistently good so that all pupils, and especially the more-able, are sufficiently challenged.
- Improve the relevance and creativity of the curriculum by extending links across subjects throughout the school.
- Increase the momentum and pace of change by:
 - streamlining procedures for recording and monitoring pupils' progress;
 - focusing on the impact of new initiatives on pupils' learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Progress is satisfactory overall, although some pupils make faster progress when teaching is good. There are variations in achievement between classes because of inconsistencies in teaching. Expectations of more-able pupils are not always high enough, resulting in work that does not challenge them sufficiently. This is why, in Year 6 national assessments, more pupils do not attain the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language are well supported so that they can take a full part in lessons. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so that they achieve well. This is because teaching assistants are well trained and enthusiastic and make a valuable contribution to their care and support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have a good understanding of moral codes and socialise well. They find out about and celebrate their own and others' cultures, drawing from the rich and diverse range of backgrounds found in the school. Their spiritual development is satisfactory, although the curriculum does not often inspire them. Many pupils enjoy learning to play musical instruments. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The award of the Activemark recognises the energetic lives pupils lead, including swimming lessons for Year 5 all year, and tennis coaching. Most pupils walk to school. A pupil said, 'You don't have to be good at sport to be in a club', thereby recognising the school's inclusive approach that results in a wide range of pupils taking part. Pupils contribute to buddy systems so that no one feels left out. They raise large sums of money for charity and take part in special events such as International Food Day. In some classes, pupils develop thinking and negotiating skills, although this does not happen across the school. Their basic skills are at expected levels by the time they leave for high school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching focuses appropriately on speaking and listening skills, taking account of the large numbers of pupils learning English as an additional language. However, the quality of teaching and learning is variable, with some good and outstanding provision, but with too much that is only satisfactory. The most successful teaching uses careful questioning to allow pupils to consider their learning and to make links with their prior understanding. This was the case in a lesson on timetabling in Year 7, when pupils worked together highly effectively to arrive at solutions, putting their previous knowledge to good use. There is some confusion about how a learning objective can be broken up into manageable segments of learning for pupils to understand how successfully they are progressing. In several classes the 'success criteria' were the same as the objective. Weaknesses of the satisfactory teaching include lessons that proceed at too slow a pace and work that does not fully match pupils' abilities, especially in the level of challenge for more-able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has begun to link subjects together and to introduce creative opportunities, but these are not sufficiently widespread. An exciting development was the setting-up of an archaeological dig on the school site, which produced a wealth of 'artefacts' for some pupils to study and link to their history topic. Such pockets of good practice do not yet extend throughout all classes. Themed days help to enrich the curriculum, with pupils dressing up as Victorians or presenting a Tudor exhibition. They have many opportunities to go on interesting visits, including a residential trip to France and an activity week. There is a good range of clubs, including basketball, orchestra and crochet. The school's extensive specialist facilities assist staff in providing experiences in art and technology, science, ICT, cooking and music. Some of these areas are rather tired and cluttered.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares for all its pupils well. They value the support they receive, especially those who come to the school from abroad as refugees speaking no English. As one pupil put it, 'If you need help, the teachers are there for you.' Another said, 'Whatever happens, you can tell the teacher and they'll sort it out.' This high level of care is provided by all adults, including teaching assistants, learning mentors, midday supervisors and administrative staff. The school has a happy and purposeful atmosphere, which is why pupils enjoy coming and are positive about learning. Good links with specialist staff and other external agencies and partners ensure that all learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well. There is particularly strong liaison with the language support staff at the First School. Good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to achieve well, better than other pupils. Effective induction of Year 3 pupils, including a week in school when Year 7 pupils are in France, means pupils settle in quickly. The school involves pupils well in assessing their own learning through filling in learning grids, and makes sure they all know their targets for improvement. Pupils keep their own learning portfolios, which they share with parents at consultation evenings,

so that parents have a good idea about how well they are doing. The quality of marking is generally good, but there is some variation between classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The impact of leadership and management on standards and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make the expected progress and leave with sound levels of basic skills. Too much information limits the effectiveness of the school's use of data to pinpoint where improvement is needed for some groups and individuals. Inconsistencies in provision, especially in teaching and learning and through the curriculum, mean that good practice is not yet widespread throughout the school. Teachers have not been held sufficiently to account in the past for the progress of their pupils, or for implementing initiatives effectively. Governors have not focused enough on the key priorities for improvement to ensure they are tackled rigorously. The appointment of a new deputy headteacher has brought additional teaching expertise and a fresh perspective to the school. Subject leaders are given the time to develop their roles and have generally gained good insight into what works well and what needs improving. This is recorded in detailed subject reports that are used to support the school development plan. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have an accurate view about the quality of teaching and learning, and give some useful feedback to staff. Overall, the school's opinion of itself remains too high, as it was at the time of the last inspection, because neither governors nor the local authority have asked searching questions of leaders to justify the judgements they have made. Leadership and management are effective in promoting a positive ethos in the school, developing good relationships between staff and pupils, and establishing good links with parents and the wider community. Community cohesion is good, with considerable support for local groups and links with schools further afield in France and in Trinidad.

Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Welldon Park Middle School, South Harrow, HA2 8LS

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited and telling us about your school. The school is providing you with a satisfactory level of education. Here are some of its strengths.

- You enjoy good relationships with one another and with the staff.
- You work hard and are keen to learn.
- You take plenty of exercise and keep healthy.
- Attendance is good.
- There is a good range of clubs for you to enjoy, and visits for you to experience.
- The school cares for you well, and particularly helps those of you who find learning difficult.
- You have a good idea about how well you are doing at school, especially through keeping your personal portfolios.

Some of you who find learning easy could be challenged more in your work. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you always have something difficult to do! While some of the things you do in school are really exciting, such as the archaeological dig, we have asked your teachers to provide more opportunities for you to learn in a creative way. It would be good if you used information and communication technology more in different subjects. The teachers have plenty of information about how well you are doing. We have asked them to set it out in a way that is easy for everybody to follow. We also believe that it would be helpful for them to check carefully how well any new things they try are working. You could help them out here by telling them what you think of some of the changes that are being introduced.

Thank you once again for your help. Our best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mr N Butt

Lead Inspector