

# Walkwood CofE Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116987
<b>Local Authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326511
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 April 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ruth Westbrook

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	725
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Lowe
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Doubtfire
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2006
<b>School address</b>	Feckenham Road Headless Cross Redditch B97 5AQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01527 543361
<b>Fax number</b>	01527 550232

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a large middle school which includes in its provision a mainstream autism base (MAB) for 10 pupils. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language are below average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average and the number with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2009. The school has an Artsmark gold and Healthy Schools award, an Eco School green flag award and Sportsmark. The before- and after-school club and holiday care scheme on the school site are run privately.

## 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 good school where the whole school community benefits from the strong commitment to including everyone. This results in outstanding care, guidance and support being provided for all pupils. Parents and pupils value greatly the support and care which they receive. In the words of one parent, 'The staff have the children's best interests at heart and work with them to help them reach their full potential.' The quality of provision in the autism base is outstanding, as is the quality of support which pupils from the base receive when in mainstream classes. Pupils from the base and main school integrate very well, demonstrating clearly the school's motto of 'Inspiring others to achieve'.

The good quality of the curriculum, teaching and learning and outstanding provision of enrichment opportunities contribute to the outstanding personal development and well-being of pupils. The school is a lively and happy place where pupils want to be. As a result, enjoyment levels are high and pupils participate in learning and activities enthusiastically. Although the overall level of attendance is good, for many pupils it is excellent. The development of spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding with many opportunities for these skills to be enhanced with others. For example, the school organised a festival which involved large numbers of pupils sharing their feelings with others through their individually designed lanterns. Pupils' understanding of how to live safe lives is outstanding. Their responses to questionnaires show they feel very safe in school. Schemes such as purposeful play and those which encourage pupils to act as play leaders enhance these feelings.

Pupils' achievement is good. By the end of Year 8, pupils reach average standards in English, mathematics and science. This represents good progress from their starting points in Year 5. Most groups of pupils make good progress, but there are occasions when the most able pupils' learning is not extended sufficiently to enable them to reach even higher standards. There is good provision in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) lessons. However, there are currently few planned opportunities for pupils to use the basic skills learnt in other subjects. The school forms good partnerships with external organisations to enrich the curriculum and to provide additional support for the care and guidance of pupils. There was a large parental response to the questionnaires received during the inspection which was very positive about all aspects of the school's work.

Leadership and management are effective. Strengths identified in the last inspection have been maintained and standards and aspects of personal development have improved. Senior and middle leaders know the school well and their effective evaluation of the school's work has led to improvements. This indicates that the capacity for further improvement is good. Tracking systems have improved since the last inspection. School leaders and teachers are using assessment information well in most subjects to identify underachievement. However, there are some foundation subjects where its use is inconsistent and some groups of pupils, such as those from minority ethnic backgrounds, where it is not tracked as a group. Since taking up his post, the new headteacher has set a clear direction for the school. Effective plans are being put in place to move the school forward in its next stage of development. Many parents comment on the smooth transition from one headteacher to the next, and welcome the new direction building on previous strengths.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching provides consistently good opportunities for pupils to develop their key numeracy, literacy and ICT skills across the full range of subjects.
- Include more challenges for higher attaining pupils across the school so that their rate of progress increases.
- Extend the use of assessment information to measure progress and identify the next steps in raising standards for individuals and all groups of pupils.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

On entry to the school in Year 5, standards of attainment in reading, writing and numeracy are below average, although the standard has improved in reading and writing in the last two intakes. Standards at Key Stage 2, in English, mathematics and science, have improved since the last inspection. The improvement has been greater than that seen nationally in all three subjects, and has been greatest in science. The school's tracking of pupils in Year 6 and evidence from observations during the inspection show that standards by the end of Key Stage 2 are on track to rise again in this year's national tests. Standards by the end of Year 8 are currently average in English, mathematics and science, but are improving as raised standards at the end of Year 6 move through the school. School and pupil targets have become increasingly challenging to take account of this improving picture. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective additional support they receive. Generally, the standards reached by pupils in the MAB are well below those expected for their age, but they make outstanding progress in meeting their targets for learning and developing their social and communication skills. The most able pupils make good progress. However, there are a few occasions in lessons when their work does not challenge them enough and they achieve less than they might.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils say school is a place where they make friends easily and where they feel safe. That they enjoy school is evident in lessons, in their attitudes to work, in their outstanding behaviour and in the real pride they show in the school when welcoming visitors. The outstanding relationships which pupils develop with staff help them be confident and comfortable in school and when they are away on visits. Pupils learn the importance of leading healthy lifestyles and many demonstrate this by enjoying the healthy food menus that are carefully prepared for lunch. Large numbers of pupils take part in the very wide range of sports and activity clubs that operate at lunchtimes and after school. Pupils prepare well for their futures by developing effectively the essential skills for independence, such as those to do with shopping, budgeting and preparing for the world of work. Pupils make a good contribution to their school and local community, willingly accepting opportunities to volunteer for responsibilities. Of particular note is the reading partnership where older pupils show their maturity and sensitivity by helping younger ones to read.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Lessons are well planned, and teachers explain carefully what they expect pupils to learn. A strong sense of mutual trust between pupils and their teachers leads to excellent attitudes to learning. The subject knowledge of teachers is good. Pupils often work in groups or pairs, benefiting from positive interaction with their peers. The needs of pupils of different abilities within a class are almost invariably referred to in planning documents, and activities in lessons are generally well matched to these needs. Occasionally, work for the most able pupils is not always sufficiently challenging and this can affect the extent and pace of their learning. There is a developing culture of using assessment information in lessons to promote learning, and feedback to students is generally well judged and sensitively communicated. Marking of pupils' work is usually effective in providing feedback on targets met and next steps. However, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of this. Teaching in the MAB is outstanding. In mainstream lessons, the confidence and skills of teachers supported by the MAB assistants ensure that MAB pupils take a full part in all activities. In the minority of lessons where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, insufficient sense of purpose allows pupils to lose concentration and learning becomes less effective as a result. The school monitors the quality of teaching carefully, and has an effective training programme in place to support teachers and assistants.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The promotion of pupils' personal development and well-being is at the heart of the curriculum. The personal, social and health education programme is well established and does much to enhance self-esteem and promote excellent social behaviour. The range of extra-curricular opportunities is excellent and participation in fitness activities is high. Enrichment days like the recent Holocaust day provide good opportunities for cultural and spiritual development while providing opportunities to use skills learnt in other subjects. Pupils are developing their thinking skills and ability to work independently in response to recent initiatives to improve these skills. However, the planning across all subjects for pupils to use their key numeracy, literacy and ICT skills in lessons is not consistent so pupils' opportunities to practise the skills learnt in core lessons elsewhere is variable. The school reviews its curriculum provision regularly and effectively. As a result of a recent review of humanities subjects, planned changes are in place for the start of the next school year. Activities such as the Slam Poetry event and the many links with schools in other countries, including visits, contribute to pupils' good understanding of international issues. There are fewer projects which look at diversity elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Pupils in the MAB follow very effective individually designed learning programmes to prepare them for learning with others in mainstream classes.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Pupils' additional needs are met outstandingly well. The school is justifiably proud of the quality and range of its provision to help all pupils develop into well balanced young people. All are fully included in all parts of the school's life, irrespective of the cause and complexity of their needs. The new system for promoting good behaviour is well liked by pupils and is very effective in promoting positive attitudes to learning and to each other. Specialist support, for example,

in meeting pupils' emotional, social, physical and communication needs is very effective because it is readily available and managed well. In the MAB, the specialist skills of staff and their extensive knowledge and experience underpins the outstanding gains made by pupils. The systems for tracking pupils' progress are well established in English, mathematics and science. Pupils know their targets in these subjects and their progress towards them. Where pupils are identified as underachieving, there is a well established system of support to help them get back on track. Teaching assistants have a wide range of specialist skills and experience and make a very effective contribution to ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make equivalent progress to other pupils. Measures taken to secure the safety and protection of pupils are rigorous and meet government requirements. Parents report very positively on their children being safe and happy in school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The governors and school's leadership have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors are well informed and committed to working with the new headteacher and senior leaders to maintain the high quality of care and support while raising academic standards. With the headteacher and senior leaders, they are playing an effective part in promoting good community cohesion. The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress against their targets have improved since the last inspection, and are being used well by senior and middle leaders of core subjects to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils within the school. The school checks carefully the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and vulnerable pupils, but does not review the progress of different minority ethnic groups. The effectiveness of the use of data to track the progress of pupils in foundation subjects is inconsistent. The deployment of teaching staff is well managed and creates an appropriate balance between the need for specialist subject teachers, and for pupils to form secure and supportive relationships, especially when they are new to the school. Pupils benefit from good links with feeder schools and from the support they get when they transfer to secondary schools at the end of Year 8. These links have been strengthened recently and are contributing to improved standards on entry.

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## 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?	2
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	2

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

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

1 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Walkwood C of E Middle School, Redditch B97 5AQ

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly on our recent visit to your school. We appreciated the warm welcome and all the useful information you gave us about your school.

It is a good school. You make good progress in your work and reach standards which are average by the time you leave. The standards of your work have improved since the school was last inspected, particularly in science.

Your personal development in your time at the school is outstanding. You enjoy school immensely. Your understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives is excellent. We were impressed by how many of you take part in exercise and sport and attend after school clubs outside school.

Your headteacher and all the staff care for you extremely well and you take great care of each other, too. We liked, for example, the way older pupils help younger ones by being play leaders or reading partners. Many of you are very willing to take on additional responsibilities to help others. You make sure others are included in lessons and at breaks.

To improve the school even further, we are asking your headteacher and teachers to make sure that some of you are set work that will give more of a challenge and help you reach higher levels, especially those of you who find learning easier. We are asking them to create more opportunities for you to practise your literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects so that your skills increase. We would also like the school to make sure that the progress of all of you is carefully tracked in all your subjects. I hope you will help your headteacher and his staff to put these plans in place so that the school can continue to improve.

Yours faithfully

Ruth Westbrook

Lead inspector