

# Walton Priory Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124426
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	328138
<b>Inspection date</b>	27 April 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Cox

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	523
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Amanda Brooks
<b>Headteacher</b>	Max Pierzchalla
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2006
<b>School address</b>	Beacon Rise Walton Stone ST15 0AL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01785 814930
<b>Fax number</b>	01785 819304

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<b>Age group</b>	9–13
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the effectiveness of the school's strategies for improving the progress of middle and lower attaining pupils, particularly in mathematics
- the effectiveness of leaders at all levels in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school
- how well the school promotes pupils' understanding of the wider community.

Evidence was gathered from observation of the school's work, assessments of pupils' standards and achievements, curriculum planning documents, the school improvement plan, and discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff, pupils, the chair of governors and one other governor. Parents' responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Although Walton Priory Middle School is smaller than the average secondary school, it is about average in size when compared to middle schools nationally. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

## 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. It has many good features and pupils flourish in its warm and supportive environment. Pupils' personal development is good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils know that they matter at Walton Priory. Behaviour is exceptional and pupils say there is very little bullying and that they feel safe and secure. Relationships between pupils and adults, and with each other, are outstanding, reflecting the school's welcoming approach. Parents were very clear how much they value this aspect of the school's work. 'Walton Priory is a very supportive school,' and, 'There is a warm and nurturing environment for pupils to learn and grow in,' were typical comments. These were not surprising given the good care, guidance and support their children receive.

Pupils are happy at the school and speak highly of their teachers and other adults. They have high self-esteem and are confident learners. Pupils want to learn. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school and as a result their attendance is well above average. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. They throw themselves enthusiastically into the life of the school, taking full advantage of the excellent range of extra-curricular activities provided, especially in sport but also in other activities such as music, dance and chess. Boys from Years 7 and 8 recently performed dance routines at the Victoria Hall in Hanley. Pupils also have the opportunity to develop their literacy skills through involvement in the 'Creative Partnership Project'.

Pupils make a good contribution to the running of the school through the school council and the 'council of voices'. Their recommendation for improving playground equipment has attracted sizeable funding and is at the final stage of planning. Pupils make a positive contribution to the wider community through recycling schemes and have raised funds to support a school in Sri Lanka. Good development of basic skills means that pupils are well prepared for high school and their later lives. However, pupils' skills for learning independently are not as well developed as other aspects of their learning. This is because they are not provided with enough opportunities to develop and practise these skills.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well because of the good teaching they receive and the excellent attitudes they bring to their work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils. Based on tests carried out by the school at the start of Year 5, pupils join the school with standards of attainment that are above average overall, although their mathematical skills are closer to average. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 8, standards of attainment are very high in comparison with the national average. Higher attaining pupils do well because teachers challenge them to do their best. Pupils achieve especially well in science because of the interesting curriculum. Most pupils make good progress in mathematics, although a small minority of middle attaining pupils do not make the same good progress. This is because teachers do not ensure tasks are matched closely and consistently enough to the needs of all pupils, which leads to work not always being demanding enough.

The good teaching, along with a good curriculum, effectively promotes pupils' personal development and well-being. Teachers make the lessons interesting and use a variety of strategies that make learning enjoyable. Good use is made of visits to motivate and enhance pupils' learning and pupils speak enthusiastically of their trip to the Natural History Museum. However, the quality of marking is not always consistent or rigorous enough and does not model clearly enough how teachers want pupils to improve their work.

The good care, guidance and support pupils receive are based on the secure relationships with staff and the effective communication with parents. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are fully met and robust. New systems for tracking pupils' academic progress are in place but are not embedded fully or used consistently enough by all staff. This results in some pupils not knowing how well they are doing.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher is giving clear direction to what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. He is very well supported by the deputy headteacher. The school has made good progress since its previous inspection and is well placed to improve further. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of various cultures and faiths, and pupils of different backgrounds work well together. The school invites the school community to contribute to its evaluation of its effectiveness. Through good planning and evaluation of its actions, the school recognises its many strengths and has identified the need to broaden pupils' awareness of the wider community. This need is already being tackled through a close link with a school in Birmingham whose pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are generally good. However, middle leaders are not yet fully accountable for monitoring and evaluating those aspects of the school for which they have responsibility. This results in inconsistent practice in some areas of the school's work. Governors take a keen interest in the work of the school and work effectively to support its continuing development. They act as critical friends, support the school and hold it to account for its performance.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in mathematics for middle attaining pupils by ensuring all staff match tasks more closely to the needs of all pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring marking is more rigorous and indicates to pupils how they might improve their work.
- In order to achieve greater consistency of practice across the school, ensure that middle leaders are more accountable for monitoring and evaluating those aspects of the school for which they have responsibility.

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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	1
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>	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	1
The attendance of learners	1
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?	2

## 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**

28 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Walton Priory Middle School, Stone, ST5 0AL

Thank you all very much for making me feel so welcome in your school when I visited recently. You and your parents are rightly proud of Walton Priory. Like you, I think your school is good. Here are some of the many good things to report about your school.

Your headteacher and staff want the best for you. You make good progress and reach high standards of attainment because you thoroughly enjoy school, attend very well and really work hard. You have lots of other exciting opportunities through visits and many of you take part in a wide range of local events. It is clear that you go to a caring school. Your behaviour is exceptionally good and you have outstanding attitudes to learning. You show a good awareness of how to stay healthy and enjoy the many sporting activities that are available to you. The school council and 'council of voices' work very effectively to improve your school. You have a good knowledge and understanding of cultures from around the world. However, you do not always develop the skills necessary to work independently.

Almost all of you make good progress with your work. Those of you who need extra help make the same good progress because the staff give you lots of attention to help you learn. There are lots of good things happening in your classrooms. You have lovely relationships with all the staff.

I have identified three main ways in which your school can get even better.

- Ensure that work in mathematics is demanding enough to allow all of you to really do your best.
- Ensure that when they mark your work teachers show you how to improve your work.
- Ensure that teachers with responsibility for subjects check more closely that all classes are doing the same good things.

You can help by asking teachers how to make your work better.

Thank you again for making me feel so welcome.

Yours faithfully

David Cox

Lead inspector