

# Penkridge Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124423
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	340563
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mark Sims HMI

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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	414
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Davenport
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Singer
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	0 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Marsh Lane Penkridge Staffordshire
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Just under half of the time was spent looking at learning in classes. The inspectors visited 22 lessons and saw 22 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's priorities, analysed recent test results, scrutinised child protection and safeguarding documents, read 137 parental questionnaires and studied staff and pupil surveys.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement of students in English
- the quality of provision and support for lower attaining and pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable
- the impact of staffing turnover and falling rolls on attainment
- the contribution of governing body to strategic development
- the promotion of community cohesion in a culturally diverse society.

## Information about the school

Penkridge Middle is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It is situated on the outskirts of a small town close to Stafford. Almost all of the pupils in the school are of White British background. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, although the proportion with statements is low. A very small minority of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has very recently been awarded specialist status in science and mathematics.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Penkridge Middle is a good school that is led well by the headteacher and senior managers to ensure it continues to improve. According to one parent, 'I would highly recommend it and wouldn't consider sending my children anywhere else.' The level of care, guidance and support the pupils receive is of the very highest quality. Consequently, pupils say overwhelmingly that they feel safe in school. They have an excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles and they make a very significant contribution to the community. Provision for their spiritual, moral social and cultural development is outstanding.

Pupils make good progress overall during their time at school. From a starting point of broadly average attainment, they reach standards that are in line with the national average by the end of Key Stage 2. By the time they leave at the end of Year 8, standards in English, mathematics and science are above the national average. Pupils make more rapid progress in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 2 and they do better in science and mathematics, where test results are continuing to improve, than they do in English, where there has been some variability in their progress in recent years. All groups of pupils make equally good progress and there are no significant variations in their achievement. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other learners whose circumstances make them vulnerable are supported well.

Learning is good in lessons because of the good quality of the teaching. Pupils generally respond well in lessons but become particularly animated when learning is active and involves them in practical activities. As one lesson plan stated, 'One of our learning objectives is to enjoy yourselves.' Behaviour in the classroom and around the school is good. The few incidents of disruption are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils get on very well with each other and with all the adults who work with them. Marking of work, however, is inconsistent and pupils do not always receive sufficient feedback on how well they are doing and how they could improve.

The curriculum is good and offers all pupils a rich variety of subjects taught by specialist teachers in purpose-built accommodation. Pupils also enjoy a diverse range of clubs and activities to suit their different needs and interests.

Leaders have risen well to the challenge of falling rolls and staff departures which has led to a new staffing structure. Whilst some classes have grown in size, there are small groups for lower attaining pupils to ensure they have every opportunity to make good progress, which they do. The leadership of middle leaders is developing well but not all subject leaders have sufficient opportunity to monitor teaching to ensure that assessment is used consistently to inform learning.

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The governing body is very supportive of the work of the school and members give freely of their time to attend events such as parents' evenings. Their contribution to the strategic planning of the work of the school is less well developed. Nevertheless, the school is well placed to improve further and gives good value for money. Leaders have accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses and have made significant improvements since the last inspection in strengthening the leadership and management of the school in this area.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- – Ensure that teachers are consistent in the way they use assessment and feed back to pupils.
- Ensure that subject leaders develop their monitoring role, including checking how well assessment is used in lessons.
- Build on the commitment of the governing body by ensuring governors have a greater role in strategic planning and evaluation of the work of the school.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Learning in lessons is good and is at its best at Key Stage 3 where pupils have greater access to teachers' specialist subject knowledge and show a very positive attitude to their work. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 2 and good progress at Key Stage 3. Over time, test results and the progress pupils make have improved rapidly in science and mathematics. The school has successfully focused in English on raising standards in writing, but in recent assessments at the end of Key Stage 2, pupils did less well in reading than in previous years. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 8 they have exceeded the expected level of attainment for their age in English, mathematics and science.

Although the school draws pupils from predominantly one culture, they are developing an understanding and experience of the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom and the wider world through reflection in assemblies and registration time, an extensive citizenship programme, trips and exchanges. They know the importance of looking after each other, for example as mentors. Pupils have the opportunity, for example through the school council, to participate in important decisions affecting the life of the school. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are fully included in activities such as musical and drama productions and charity events. There is a very high uptake by pupils in these activities. Pupils also take responsibilities as house captains, 'buddies' and 'bright sparks'. Through a personal learning and thinking skills programme, pupils are preparing themselves well for the future. Attendance is good but there is a lack of urgency for some pupils in getting to lessons on time.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

In the best lessons, pupils take a greater responsibility for their own learning and participate in evaluating the work of their peers. They respond well to taking part in group discussions or practical tasks. In French, having fun is built into the planning of their learning. Older pupils particularly benefit from the good subject knowledge of specialist teachers. In other lessons, they are not given enough opportunity to develop independent thinking for themselves and they are at times too readily prepared to be led by the teacher.

Pupils generally know their targets in English, mathematics and science but are less sure in other subjects. Marking and other feedback does not consistently let pupils know how well they are doing. At its best, pupils have a clear idea of what they have achieved and how they can improve further. Pupils are beginning to get involved in setting targets for themselves but this is at an early stage of development.

The wide variety of courses on offer to all pupils is enhanced by an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, visits and speakers and special events such as 'India day'. Provision is outstanding in modern languages where all pupils have access to a very high quality programme of French. Further programmes for the most able students, such as master classes and university trips, are in place but less well developed.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for others

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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whose circumstances make them vulnerable is good. Targets are set to meet individual needs through 'passports to learning' and pupils' progress is tracked closely. Individual needs are met through specific programmes to access the curriculum or support outside school hours, such as physiotherapy. Increased use of data to track the progress of individual pupils enables the school to provide one-to-one tuition for those at risk of falling behind. Small group work helps to develop learners' confidence in a safe and secure environment. Teaching assistants provide effective support to learners in lower sets.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher, supported by his senior leaders, has a strong focus on raising standards and bringing about improvements through an accurate self-evaluation process. Leaders are making increasing use of data to track learners' progress. This work is further developed in English, mathematics and science than in other subjects.

The school has established good partnerships with the local authority and works actively with local first schools and the high school to bring about improvements in provision. Transition arrangements with these schools are strong.

All requirements for safeguarding are met. The central record is well organised and detailed. All staff have been trained to the expected level and those with specific responsibilities for safeguarding are experienced and knowledgeable. Governors are kept regularly up to date. The promotion of community cohesion is good. The school is an active participant and responsible contributor to the internal and local community. National and international links are developing well. The school demonstrates its commitment to equal opportunity by rigorously monitoring outcomes and participation to ensure no group or individual is left behind.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>

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<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

**Views of parents and carers**

A very large majority of those parents and/or carers who responded to the survey said that they are happy with their children's experience at Penkridge. In particular, almost all said that the school is well led and managed. One parent summed up the views of many by stating, 'We especially admire the headteacher's leadership which influences the whole school ethos.' Most parents agree that teaching is good and that their children enjoy school. A very small minority of parents had concerns about how well behaviour is dealt with and did not agree that the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. This view was not shared by inspectors or the very large majority of other parents.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Penkridge Middle School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 137 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 414 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	28	90	66	4	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	53	39	68	50	4	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	34	25	90	66	8	6	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	23	91	66	6	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	37	27	94	69	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	27	86	63	10	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	23	95	69	6	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	48	35	77	56	3	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	28	85	62	8	6	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	32	68	50	17	12	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	26	80	58	13	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	60	44	72	53	3	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	59	43	71	52	4	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



22 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Penkridge Middle School, Penkridge ST19 5BW

You will recall that we recently came to inspect your school and I thought you might like to know what we have said in the published report.

We found that you go to a good school that is continuing to improve. Your headteacher leads by example and almost all of your parents agreed that the school is well led and managed. The level of care, guidance and support you receive is excellent. You have told us that you feel safe in school. You have a very high awareness of healthy lifestyles and make a significant contribution to the community.

You achieve well in your learning particularly in science and mathematics and we agree with you and your parents that the quality of your lessons is good. You are fortunate too to have a good curriculum that gives all of you access to specialist subject teaching and facilities. You have an impressive range of clubs and activities too.

There are a couple of things we have suggested that we hope will help the school to continue to get better. The leaders of the different subjects you study are checking your progress in lessons. We have asked them to make sure that teachers always let you know how well you are doing and how to improve further through feedback and marking. We have also asked those who lead the school to work closely together with your governors on planning for the future and reviewing how well the school is doing and how it can improve.

We very much enjoyed our visit. Thank you to all of you who spoke to us and gave us your views. I wish you every success in the next stage of your education and hope that you will play your part by asking your teachers if you are not sure how well you are doing in a lesson.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims

Her Majesty's Inspector

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