

Woodhouse Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124432
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340567
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Deborah James

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	388
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Brown
Headteacher	B M Mirza
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors who visited 28 lessons, observed 20 teachers and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and a small group of governors. They observed the school's work and studied a range of documentation, including the school's development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, departmental monitoring evidence and records of pupils' progress. Inspectors also reviewed responses to questionnaires returned from pupils, staff and 144 parents and carers.

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

- the progress made by pupils, particularly girls, at Key Stage 2
- the evidence held by the school to support their evaluation that all pupils are making good progress by the end of Year 8
- the effectiveness of the school's actions in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Information about the school

The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The entitlement to free school meals is also below average. The school has achieved the Sportsmark and has Healthy Schools status.

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?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

Woodhouse is an inclusive caring school where individual pupils are supported well in developing strong moral values, self-confidence and consideration for others. The vast majority of pupils say they feel safe at school and know that there is always an adult who will help and deal quickly with any problem. They are very proud of their school. The majority of pupils participate enthusiastically in a broad range of curriculum enrichment opportunities that include sports, languages and creative activities. By the end of Year 8 pupils reach standards that are broadly in line with the national average. Girls and boys make the expected progress from their Year 5 starting points. A dip in mathematics attainment at Key Stage 2 last year has been addressed through a focussed intervention programme for those pupils not making the expected progress.

The school has put into place a number of strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning and has been successful in eliminating inadequate teaching. However, the leadership's assessment of the quality of teaching and learning is over-generous and, consequently, the school has not placed sufficient emphasis on improving this key area. Some teaching is good or outstanding but the large majority of teaching remains satisfactory. As a result, pupils are not consistently supported to make good progress. Pupils learn best when expectations are clear and they engage with challenging tasks that interest and motivate them. The most skilful teachers listen well and use effective questioning to check and extend individual pupil's learning. In less effective lessons, teachers provide pupils with very specific step-by-step instructions, giving them few opportunities to develop independent learning skills and slowing the pace of learning. The quality of marking and feedback is inconsistent, with a significant amount of marking that is too brief.

Senior leaders understand the school's current strengths and what needs to be done to bring about improvement. The leadership team has worked collaboratively, sharing responsibility for key areas of the school's work. However, this approach has led to some confusion in accountability and a lack of focus on driving improvement. Actions to bring about necessary change have not always been implemented with enough urgency and rigour and, accordingly, they have had limited impact on improving pupils' achievement. In particular, this applies to the school's approach to improving the quality of teaching and reducing the variation in the use of assessment data. Nevertheless, since the last inspection, the school has made tangible progress in some key areas. The school day has been restructured to place a greater emphasis on learning. Pupils now have excellent attendance and punctuality. Provision for the care and support of pupils has improved through a new staffing structure and good links with a range of outside agencies. Data tracking systems have been introduced in departments to monitor the

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progress of pupils. These changes for the better demonstrate the school's capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to support pupils in making good progress, so that, by April 2011, at least 60% of lessons are good or better and 10% are outstanding, by:
 - planning lessons with a clear expectation of what pupils should learn
 - engaging pupils in relevant, challenging activities that offer opportunities for developing independent learning
 - strengthening teachers' questioning techniques so that they are better able to monitor and extend pupils' learning
 - ensuring that all pupils receive regular feedback on their work through good quality marking so that they know how well they are doing and how to improve on their current performance.
- Build the school's leadership capacity by developing leadership at all levels. In particular:
 - review the roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders to clarify accountability for key areas of the school's work
 - increase the rigour and consistency of both whole-school and departmental systems for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work
 - make better use of use assessment information so that areas of underperformance are identified quickly and appropriate interventions are introduced promptly.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most pupils enjoy their learning and make satisfactory progress. They are keen to learn and they participate enthusiastically in lessons. Pupils respond appropriately to instructions and take responsibility for their own behaviour, particularly in group work. They collaborate very well in lessons and in other activities, demonstrating that they have positive relationships with and mature attitudes towards each other and staff. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make the expected level of progress as a result of additional support and intervention, both in and out of the classroom.

Pupils are polite and welcoming and keen to talk about what they are doing. Their mature and thoughtful conduct in lessons and around the building contributes to a calm and purposeful atmosphere that is immediately evident on entering the school. They are

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supported very effectively in making the right choices and developing positive and confident attitudes to learning and life. Pupils develop a good understanding of the world of work, both through a regular personal, social, health and economic education programme and through specific targeted interventions. For example, the 'Aim Higher Programme' has enabled many Year 8 pupils to experience a visit to a local university. The school provides an extensive range of activities which enable pupils to develop a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle in terms of diet, physical activity and emotional health. Pupils' spiritual development is well supported by opportunities for reflection in weekly assemblies. There are very good opportunities for pupils to celebrate their cultural heritage and broaden their cultural experience through theatre visits and contact with visiting artists and musicians.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good subject knowledge and make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to illustrate teaching points. Teachers generally make good use of starters and plenaries to summarise each lesson. They provide relevant

¹ 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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activities so that pupils show interest in their work and make the expected progress. Departments generally use accurate tracking systems to monitor pupils' progress against targets. However, there is considerable variation in these systems between departments and this limits the effectiveness of whole school analysis of pupil progress. The majority of pupils are aware of their current performance and their target grades. In some lessons, these are used effectively and pupils are clear on how they can improve their work and make further progress, but this is not applied consistently across the school. Pupils are keen to acknowledge the extremely valuable feedback given through marking in some subjects, for example English. However, much marking is less useful, with a focus on presentation and completion rather than prioritising the means by which learning can be improved.

The curriculum is well organised and meets the needs of all learners. At Key Stage 2, the school has been keen to ensure the focus on literacy and numeracy does not limit pupils' access to a broad and balanced curriculum. All pupils study a second language and have the opportunity to experience a range of sporting and musical opportunities. African drumming has been particularly popular, and pupils recently performed at a local festival. A strong feature of the curriculum is its programme of enrichment and enhancement activities. For example, all pupils in Years 6, 7 and 8 have the opportunity to participate in an outdoor pursuits programme; this adds to pupils' enjoyment and contributes to other aspects of their personal development and well-being.

The school pays particular attention to individual pupils who need additional support and who face barriers to their learning. Good provision is made for pupils who have diverse and challenging needs. Working closely with a broad range of agencies, the school offers individualised programmes of support to pupils who are at risk of failing at school. There are strong partnerships with local first schools to ensure that pupils who join Year 5 settle into their new school quickly and smoothly. Year 5 pupils felt very well supported by the buddy system and described how it made them feel really welcome. Parents are very aware of the school's supportive pastoral structure which has developed the confidence and interpersonal skills of their children. For example, one parent commented on how her daughter had 'grown immensely in confidence during her time at the school'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

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The headteacher and senior leaders are committed to creating an inclusive, caring school that values the achievements of every child. Whole-school self-evaluation has identified areas for development and suitable plans have been put in place. However, it is not always clear who is accountable for improving key areas of the school's work. Middle leaders lack clear and explicit direction from senior leaders about their role in driving the school forward. They track the progress of pupils and lead curriculum change but take little responsibility for monitoring teaching and learning within their areas. As a result, they have not adopted a sufficiently rigorous approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure appropriate interventions are in place for pupils who are making slower progress. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and support the headteacher in setting priorities for improvement.

All requirements for the safeguarding of pupils were in place at the time of the inspection. The school has thorough and robust systems for assessing risk and ensuring the health and safety of staff and pupils. The school communicates with parents through reports, regular newsletters and parents' meetings. Equality policies are in place and effective: the school accurately identified inequality in the achievement of boys and girls in reading and put in place appropriate action to address this issue. The school is a cohesive community and has a good understanding of its context. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together and the school has actively sought activities and experiences to develop pupils' understanding of other cultures. Woodhouse Middle works well in partnership with other local schools, supporting transition and providing additional opportunities to enhance pupils' learning.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Views of parents and carers

Over a third of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. Of these parents and carers, the overwhelming majority are happy with their children's experiences in the school. They agree that their children enjoy school and feel safe. A few specific concerns were raised about instances of bullying but inspectors found that any incidents of bullying were dealt with effectively. Parents and carers expressed confidence with the way that the school is led, the quality of the teaching and the progress being made by their children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woodhouse 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 144 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 388 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	39	75	52	6	4	4	3
The school keeps my child safe	63	44	77	53	4	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	49	34	86	60	7	5	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	31	91	63	7	5	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	48	33	86	60	7	5	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	26	91	63	13	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	33	91	63	5	3	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)	43	30	83	58	10	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	35	79	55	7	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	31	80	56	9	6	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	22	91	63	11	8	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	60	42	74	51	5	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	70	49	64	44	6	4	1	1

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



2 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodhouse Middle School, Stoke on Trent, ST8 7DR

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and talking to you and were impressed with the honesty and maturity with which you answered our questions.

These are the main findings of the inspection.

You enjoy school, feel safe and participate well in a broad range of extra-curricular activities.

Your attendance is excellent and the school values you and looks after you well.

Teaching supports you in making the expected progress but does not always provide enough challenging activities to help you progress faster.

Your teachers' marking does not always give you clear information on what you have achieved and how you can improve.

Senior leaders have made progress in improving your school since the last inspection. However, some changes have not taken place quickly enough and further changes are needed.

We have asked your school to make the following improvements.

Provide lessons that are more challenging and interesting to help you to make better progress.

Mark your work in more detail to help you understand how to improve.

Improve the systems that school leaders use to make sure that teaching is good and you are given support if your progress slows down.

We would like you to help your school by continuing to work hard and behave well.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Deborah James

Lead inspector

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