

Oldfields Hall Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124429
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359668
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2011
Reporting inspector	David Anstead HMI

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	509
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Postlethwaite
Headteacher	Nicholas Brown
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspection team saw 25 lessons taught by 24 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, the school council, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at students' books, analysed assessment data, checked policies and read reports about the school from the local authority. The views of 181 parents and carers, 95 students and 25 members of staff, expressed in questionnaires, were taken into account.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- What do school assessments and lesson observations show about the progress and attainment of pupils between Years 5 and 8?
- Are lower attaining students making sufficient progress, particularly in mathematics?
- How well has the school tackled the issues from the last inspection?

Information about the school

The school is of average size in comparison to other middle schools. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. Most students are White British, with around 2.5% of students coming from several minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has been awarded Sportsmark and holds Healthy Schools status and the Princess Diana anti-bullying award.

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

This is a good school. It is situated in a Grade II listed building and landscaped grounds. Further classrooms have been added through the construction of a substantial extension which is bright, clean and attractive. Students respond well to their imposing surroundings. Their behaviour around the school is exemplary and they are considerate of each other and adults. Students hold doors for others and wait politely for them to descend the impressive curved staircase which is a feature of the old hall. The climate for learning is excellent but not all lessons make the most of this. Students' experiences in some subjects are variable resulting in only good behaviour overall

Teaching and the use of assessment have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Inconsistencies remain, however, and a student's experience of a subject may be dependant upon the quality of a particular subject teacher. Around two thirds of teaching seen was judged good or outstanding with the remainder being satisfactory. Students are well motivated, work extremely well with each other and enjoy the majority of lessons, which are fast paced and active. Even in the best lessons, however, there is a tendency for teachers to overly dominate learning which restricts the opportunities students have for working independently or collaboratively, which they are manifestly capable of doing. Students are aware of their targets and their current attainment in relation to them but some students were unaware of what they needed to do to reach their targets. This is because some teachers do not mark books with sufficient regularity to provide students with the feedback they need. Students' achievement has improved as a consequence of the better teaching and learning they receive.

The good curriculum is broad and balanced although students have insufficient opportunities to use information and communication technology to improve their learning in other subjects. The curriculum enables students to learn about the United Kingdom as a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society but students have too few opportunities to experience at first hand other cultures and faiths. Care, guidance and support are good. An excellent tracking system enables the school to spot any individual who is falling behind and to put extra support in place to help them catch up. This is particularly effective at Key Stage 3 where lower attaining students are helped to make good and, for some, outstanding progress. The arrangements for easing students' transition in joining the school and on moving on to their next school are a strength which parents and carers comment positively about. However, parents and carers are less positive about the way in which the school communicates with them. They would like more information about the progress their children are making and more information about what they can do to help. Parents and carers also express concerns that there is no routine procedure in place for informing them if their child does not arrive at school as expected if, for instance, there is a problem with the school bus service.

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The impact of the good provision is seen in the good and outstanding outcomes. Attendance is high and has been so for the last three years because students enjoy school and because the school is highly effective at managing more reluctant attendees. The extent to which students feel safe is outstanding. Almost all parents and carers say they feel their children are safe at the school and students spoken to agree. Incidents of oppressive behaviour are rare and students say these are dealt with very well when they occur. The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles is outstanding and reflected by the Sportsmark and the Healthy Schools status. There is good provision and take-up of opportunities to be active within the curriculum and through a range of lunchtime and after school pursuits. Compliments were paid by parents and carers to the good quality of the school catering which helps students eat healthily.

Self-evaluation is good and the school knows itself well. The school's evaluation of the quality of teaching, for example, closely matched that of inspectors. Actions have been targeted tightly at tackling the weaknesses identified at the last inspection and the school has monitored the impact of its actions rigorously. Consequently, the school is much improved. Almost all aspects of its work that were judged satisfactory three years ago are now good; there are consistent upward trends in the performance data and high attendance has been maintained. This shows the school's good capacity to sustain its continuing improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning further by:
 - providing more opportunities for students to work independently and collaboratively
 - ensuring students' work is marked with sufficient regularity by all teachers to inform students of what they need to do to improve
 - providing more opportunities for students to use information and communication technology to improve their learning in other subjects.
- Improve communication with parents and carers by:
 - providing more information about the progress their child is making and how they can help
 - putting in place arrangements for swiftly notifying them if their child does not arrive at school as expected.
- Provide more opportunities for students to interact with others from different cultures.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students join the school in Year 5 with broadly average attainment. They make satisfactory progress during the remainder of Key Stage 2 to attain average standards in the national tests at the end of Year 6. Progress during Years 7 and 8 is better so that, by the time students transfer to upper school at the end of Year 8, their attainment is above average. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of the good intervention strategies that are deployed to support them. These

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are particularly effective in Years 7 and 8, where students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make better than expected progress. Achievement of all students from Year 5 to Year 8 is good.

In lessons where learning was best, students were clear about what they were trying to achieve and there were a variety of tasks which actively engaged students enabling them to make good progress. In some lessons, there was a lack of variety with teachers overly dominating proceedings leaving students to play a passive role in their learning. Although behaviour is excellent around the school, it is only good overall because teachers tend to over control what happens in lessons and where learning is uninspiring, some students lack motivation. Most teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to take responsibility and show they can make a strong contribution to improving the learning of the class.

Students value one another as individuals and recognise each other's different qualities, celebrating each other's accomplishments in a generous spirit. They learn to empathise with people from different cultures, are encouraged to reflect on the predicament of less fortunate members of society and appreciate the wonders of science, art and poetry. They display compassion for the suffering of others, both fellow students and victims of society. The high moral tone displayed by the majority of students is reflected in the respect shown towards peer counsellors. For the past three years, this group has achieved the Princess Diana Award for preventing bullying. Many aspects of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent but their limited opportunities to interact with others from different backgrounds, restricts their multi-cultural development to being only good.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching is good with students being set differing learning objectives appropriate to their different starting points so that they work at the right level of challenge. This, together with good classroom management, ensures learning proceeds at a good pace. Questioning is used well to check and extend understanding. Good use is made of teaching assistants in supporting students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Where teaching was satisfactory, teachers tended to talk for too long. The pace of learning was slower and students' concentration sometimes wavered towards the end of lengthy teacher explanations or when the activities lacked variety. In such lessons, assessment information is not used well to plan future learning and students do not always get sufficient feedback about how they might improve their work.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is well modified to meet individual students' needs. Those experiencing difficulties in their reading and number are supported through a range of programmes and, as a result, make marked gains. Students very much appreciate and benefit from the wide range of enrichment activities available and which are well attended. A strong pastoral team is dedicated to eliminating barriers to learning as far as possible. Extensive links with a range of outside agencies provide support for students with emotional problems or trauma, and great efforts are made to individualise provision to meet all students' needs in this respect. This creates confidence among

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parents and carers and promotes positive attitudes to school which are seen in the students' high attendance and their enjoyment of school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Action since the last inspection to improve the quality of teaching and learning has been concerted and effective and involved a number of complementary strategies. Advice from the local authority was sought, a choice of training sessions was offered to staff and collaborative working arrangements were established which utilised individual strengths within the school and partner schools to spread good practice. This is illustrative of the good drive and ambition behind leadership and management at senior and subject levels throughout the school. The quality of governance has improved since the last inspection when it was satisfactory. The governing body is now systematically involved in monitoring the work of the school and is influential in setting the strategic direction of its work. For instance, the governing body initiated a review of the school's strategic relationships with other local middle schools and the upper school when plans for opening a new academy nearby were implemented.

Action to promote equality of opportunity is good. The school has successfully tackled the past underachievement at Key Stage 2 of lower attaining students in mathematics and there are no discernible differences in the achievement of various student groups now. There are ambitious plans for the promotion of community cohesion beyond the school itself but these have yet to be implemented. Safeguarding arrangements are good because the school is rigorous in implementing its policies and procedures and proactive in working collaboratively with external agencies.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers were most positive about the extent to which the school keeps their children safe and about how well it helps their children to adopt healthy lifestyles. Students agree that they feel extremely safe and this aspect of the school's work is judged outstanding. Students are able to contribute their ideas on healthy lifestyles through, for example, the 'food club' and they have plentiful opportunities to engage in physical activity. This outcome was also judged outstanding. Less positive views were expressed about the information the school provides to parents and carers about the progress their children are making and about the guidance they receive about how they can help. The school maintains an attractive and informative website but has already identified the need to provide more regular communication to parents and carers about the progress their children are making.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oldfields Hall 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 181 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 509 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	33	105	58	13	7	4	2
The school keeps my child safe	74	41	101	56	3	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	38	21	101	56	37	20	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	21	118	65	17	9	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	41	23	120	66	15	8	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	19	113	62	30	17	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	19	130	72	13	7	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	24	113	62	9	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	20	121	67	17	9	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	21	111	61	21	12	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	21	103	57	24	13	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	54	30	104	57	15	8	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	53	29	106	59	15	8	3	2

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



10 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Oldfields Hall Middle School, Uttoxeter, ST14 7PL

Thank you for your friendly welcome when we inspected your school.

We found that your school is good. Teaching and the assessment of your work are good and, consequently, the progress you are making is also good. By the time you reach Year 8, the National Curriculum levels you attain are above average. The school looks after you well, your behaviour is good and you told us that you feel extremely safe. Your adoption of healthy lifestyles is excellent and your attendance is among the best in the country! Your parents and carers told us that they would like more information about your progress and about how they can help you with homework. The headteacher and senior staff are doing a good job of making your school better.

I have asked the headteacher to continue to improve the school by:

- creating opportunities for you to interact with students from other cultures and backgrounds
- making sure your work in all subjects is regularly marked, that teachers explain to you how you can improve and that your parents are informed more often about this
- ensuring lessons include more opportunities when you can work on your own or in small groups and to use computers
- introducing a system for quickly alerting your parents if you don't arrive at the school as expected.

You can help by maintaining your excellent attendance record and by following the guidance you get from teachers about how to improve your work.

With best wishes for your future,

Yours sincerely

David Anstead

Her Majesty's Inspector

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