

Church Hill Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116974
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	302344
Inspection dates	7–8 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Knight

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 on roll	
School	291
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Stanley
Headteacher	Phillip Hume
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2003
School address	Wood Piece Lane Church Hill Redditch B98 9LR
Telephone number	01527 585580
Fax number	01527 595247

Age group	9–13
Inspection dates	7–8 June 2007
Inspection number	302344

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This relatively small middle school mainly serves a local estate in Redditch, an area that experiences some socio-economic disadvantage. Almost all pupils are White British, with small numbers of Asian, Caribbean, African or mixed backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. High numbers of pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities, although fewer than average have statements of special educational need. The school has been awarded the Artsmark Gold award, Sportsmark award, Football Association (FA) Charter for Football Charter for Football, and Healthy School Status. The levels of skills, knowledge and understanding with which pupils arrive at the school are below average overall, especially in terms of their writing and understanding of numeracy.

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 and parental support is strong. One parent commented, 'This is a friendly, caring and happy school. Teaching and non-teaching staff always show respect towards each other, pupils and parents.' The comment echoed the views of many other parents. This respect is the basis of the good care, guidance and support that pupils receive, so that it is a generally calm and orderly environment in which they learn well. As another mother said, 'Our son has settled in very well and both his educational and social skills are developing well'; reflecting pupils' good personal development. A small number of pupils find behaving well challenging and in a few lessons this can affect their learning. Behaviour overall, however, is satisfactory.

Good leadership and management at all levels in the school, including the governing body, ensure that areas that need improvement are identified and action taken. For example, the school noted that pupils were not making the same progress in writing as in reading and the other subjects. It took effective action, ensuring that all subjects included a focus on pupils' literacy skills, and as a result progress in writing is improving and is now good. However, standards in writing have yet to catch up with the average standards elsewhere. Pupils take a good part in contributing to the school and wider community, for example through the school council. This, together with average standards and opportunities to work together on tasks, ensures that pupils' preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory. Progress in the school is good across the board and pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, achieve well. Positive relationships and effective questioning are features of the school's good teaching. However, the marking of completed work does not always offer clear advice on how to improve and, on occasions, teachers do not plan tasks that challenge the most capable. The good curriculum is adapted to the needs of the pupils in the school well with an appropriate and continuing focus on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. There is a good focus on social skills and on western culture, but the school is aware that it does not prepare pupils well enough for life in multicultural Britain.

The school knows itself well through thorough, accurate and incisive monitoring and evaluation. This has enabled it to identify and improve areas of relative weakness, making good improvement since its previous inspection. This improvement, together with the school's well prioritised development planning, indicates its good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by using the outcomes of its rigorous monitoring to share good practice in teaching, raise the challenge for the most capable and improve the quality of marking of pupils' work.
- Ensure that opportunities to develop pupils' cultural awareness, especially in terms of their understanding of life in multicultural Britain, are fully addressed in the curricular review.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From a low starting point, pupils now make good progress across the school to reach average standards. The school sets challenging targets and these are largely reached, representing good achievement. However, the most capable are not always challenged to their full capacity. Progress and standards have been lower in writing in the school and effective action has been taken to address this. A scrutiny of assessment records, completed work and progress in lessons

confirms that progress in writing is now good, especially in Year 7. However, in some lessons, the progress made is still affected by pupils' weaker literacy skills. The school has historically enjoyed good progress in science in Key Stage 2, but this has been harder to maintain in Key Stage 3 because of high levels of turnover of specialist staff. This has been resolved recently, and good progress is being maintained throughout the school. The high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported effectively through well written plans and support from teaching assistants and make the same good progress as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Overall, pupils join the school with weaker social skills than usually seen. A minority of pupils find behaving well challenging and a significant minority of parents feel that behaviour in the school affects learning. However, the school's consistent use of its rigorous discipline policy means that behaviour is satisfactory and the pace of learning is generally good. Incidents of boisterous behaviour out of class are also managed effectively. As a result, pupils really enjoy coming to school and attendance is satisfactory. The personal, social and health education programme helps pupils to thoroughly understand how to keep safe and maintain a healthy lifestyle, as shown by their enthusiastic take-up of sports activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They respond well to a wide variety of opportunities to think about their conduct and themselves. Consequently, they are polite, sympathetic and have a firm grasp on social and moral issues. However, although the school develops pupils' understanding of western culture, opportunities to appreciate other cultures and to understand life in multicultural Britain are limited.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The principal reason for the good achievement in the school is good teaching. However, this is not yet completely consistent across subjects and key stages. Most lessons proceed at a good pace because of good relationships between adults and pupils and teachers' secure subject knowledge. The school's assertive discipline system is used rigorously in most classrooms, ensuring that the few pupils who find it difficult to behave well are able to learn and not to interfere with the progress of others. However, there are occasions when teachers do not explain to pupils exactly what their misdemeanour is. The school's emphasis on improving pupils' literacy skills using all subjects of the curriculum is evident in many lessons. For example, specialist rooms have 'word walls' full of vocabulary, and writing is positively encouraged, as was seen in science lessons when pupils wrote their own definitions of terms and compared them. However, although pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported, teachers do not always plan activities that the most capable can really get their teeth into, and this affects their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum covers statutory requirements. Most pupils are catered for well. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are identified and their progress is carefully tracked. This enables the school to provide additional support both for their academic and social needs.

'Challenge workshops' in creative thinking are part of the provision that the school makes for its gifted and talented pupils, although it is aware that the challenge experienced by the most capable is not consistently high in all lessons. The school knows its intake pupils well and has amended its curriculum to suit their needs closely. A particularly successful example is the improvement to standards of writing, identified as low on entry, following the recent focus on literacy across the curriculum. Extra-curricular provision is outstanding in terms of the wide number of activities and numbers of pupils involved. A number of activities are deliberately planned to broaden pupils' social horizons, for example residential visits abroad each year. However, time is not always used well in tutorial periods when pupils' work for the week is discussed. The school is also aware that its provision to develop cultural understanding is patchy and this is a focus in the current curricular review.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, feel safe, cared for and valued as a result of the very good pastoral care which supports and promotes their personal development and good achievement. Pupils agree that there is always someone to turn to should they feel the need. The formal procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place and robust. Good systems are used to track individual pupils' progress closely and enable teachers to set manageable and appropriately challenging targets. This is especially evident in literacy. The school's focus on writing across the curriculum means that pupils have a clear understanding of the levels at which they are working and what they need to do to improve further. The quality of marking of pupils' completed work varies across the school, however. Some is exemplary in terms of its detail and successfully reinforces the effective target-setting procedures; some is vague and rather less helpful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Focused leadership and management have ensured that the school meets the needs of its pupils. This has led to the recognition of pupils' weaker social, literacy and numeracy skills on entry to the school and the effective action needed to overcome them. The results include improving personal development and better progress and standards, especially in writing. Rigorous and accurate self-evaluation by the senior leadership team, to which middle leaders in the school increasingly contribute, means that the school knows itself well. However, the focus of lesson observations tends to be on teaching rather than the quality of the resulting learning. The school improvement plan is based on this knowledge and is clearly prioritised. The governing body is closely involved in monitoring the progress of the plan in its planned improvements. It challenges the school robustly. The school recognises that there are still inconsistencies to be ironed out and the level of challenge for the most capable is not always high enough. Nevertheless, the clarity of strategic planning and the improvements evident in the school indicate a good capacity to improve further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
--	-----------------------

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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 disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	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

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Redditch, Church Hill Middle School, Church Hill, B98 9LR

Thank you for being so friendly, helpful and polite when we visited your school. Our special thanks go to the pupils who gave up some of their lunchtime to speak to us about the school. It was really helpful hearing what you had to say then and in lessons when we spoke to you. I am writing to give you the results of our visit.

Your school is a good school. Because of good teaching you achieve well. The headteacher and staff know you all and look after you carefully. They understand what you are good at and what you find hard, and have tried to make sure that you can improve. For example, they knew that you do much better in reading than in writing, so they changed the way lessons run to give you more chances to write in lots of lessons and this is beginning to improve your writing. There is an excellent range of extra activities for you, and lots of you take part and do well in these. The school also works hard to make sure that your lessons are not affected by bad behaviour and you all understand the system where you get a stamp each lesson. This means that behaviour is satisfactory, though there are times when some of you can be noisy in the corridors. The school has done some work to make the good curriculum fit in with what you need and is thinking about how to make it even better. We have suggested that it makes sure you learn about all the other cultures in Britain today. In some lessons, those of you who find learning easy have work that is not hard enough and we have asked the school to make sure that you all get work that is hard, but not too hard! The marking of your work is usually helpful, but we have asked the school to make sure that it always helps you to know how to get better.

I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

2 Ian Knight Lead inspector