

Weald Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102200
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	307928
Inspection dates	8–9 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Nicola Davies

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	8–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	322
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Keith Holroyd
Headteacher	Mr Michael Curtin
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2005
School address	Robin Hood Drive Harrow Weald Harrow HA3 7DH
Telephone number	020 8954 2733
Fax number	020 8954 8845

Age group	8–12
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a three form entry middle school on the outskirts of Harrow educating pupils from Years 4-7. Pupils come from a wide range of heritages, the largest being White British, African and Asian. A higher than average proportion of pupils are bilingual. Around one in ten pupils is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language when they join the school. The percentage of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is above average, as is pupil mobility. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities, mostly these relate to difficulties in reading and writing.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Weald Middle School is a friendly community where pupils from all backgrounds behave well and enjoy their studies. Pupils of different backgrounds and from different faith and ethnic communities mix harmoniously and learn to understand more about each other. They build good relationships with other pupils and with the adults who teach them. As a result, they enjoy school, feel safe, and work hard. Pupils enjoy playing their part in improving the school through, for example, the school council, which represents their views well or by acting as peer mentors. Their initiatives, such as the new adventure playground, add well to pupils' good uptake and enjoyment of healthy lifestyles.

In recent years, the standards that pupils have reached in their work and in national tests at the end of Year 6 have declined to below average. This is because the progress which pupils have made from the time they enter the school to leaving at the end of Year 7 has been inconsistent, and in some cases, inadequate. Staff have worked with commitment and determination over the past year to raise standards and ensure that all pupils make satisfactory or better progress. The school has improved the way it collects information about pupils' standards and progress. This means that staff are now clearer about what pupils have achieved and can identify pupils who are not achieving their potential and so help them to 'catch up'. The result of their hard work is beginning to be seen. For example, a focus on mathematics has meant that pupils are now making satisfactory progress overall and standards are rising. Similarly, pupils currently in Year 6 have achieved satisfactorily and are reaching expected standards. More pupils are already working at higher levels.

This focus on achievement is leading to improvements in the effectiveness of day-to-day teaching, which is satisfactory and improving. Although many good lessons were observed during the inspection, teaching is still inconsistent. For example, pupils' progress slows when teachers do not always ensure that activities and support are well matched to the needs of particular groups of pupils in their classes. This includes pupils who are potentially more able. The school has rightly identified this in its plans for this year. A second weaker area is how consistently teachers guide and involve pupils in improving and evaluating their work.

The school's leadership and management is satisfactory. Although initially slow to recognise a decline in the pace of learning, leaders and managers have worked well as a team over the past year to reverse this. Their work is now supported by an effective tracking system in English and mathematics. This is not yet sufficiently comprehensive to support managers in other subjects to monitor and review the impact on standards of any changes they introduce. However, plans are in place to extend this to science and information and communication technology (ICT) this year.

The curriculum is satisfactory. For example, weaknesses in pupils' skills in English are being tackled through a new approach to the teaching of writing. The school provides good pastoral care for pupils and support for pupils who have difficulties learning to read and write is well managed. Similarly, pupils who join the school at earlier stages of learning English as an additional language benefit from a clear programme to help them learn. The school's successes to date provide evidence that it has a satisfactory capacity to further improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress to further improve standards in English, mathematics and science.

- Ensure that activities and support in all lessons are well matched to the interests and needs of different groups of pupils.
- Provide more consistent guidance for pupils on how to improve their work through marking and the involvement of pupils in assessment.
- Ensure systems to monitor and evaluate improvements are comprehensive.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When pupils join the school in Year 4, their attainment is broadly average. Since 2005, pupils' standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 have been a little below average. Teachers' assessment in 2008 shows that pupils' progress has now improved. Pupils in Year 7 last year made good progress in writing and mathematics. Support from skilled staff helps pupils with difficulties in reading and writing to make expected progress. Although standards are still a little below average, progress over the past year has been satisfactory or better for the majority of pupils across year groups. Pupils who spend all four years at the school make sound progress overall.

The school is beginning to identify and take action when, on occasions, groups of pupils such as girls or pupils from particular ethnic backgrounds do not achieve as well as others. For example, a significant number of pupils from Black African backgrounds join the school at earlier stages of learning English as an additional language. These pupils benefit from additional support and make satisfactory progress from their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Most pupils show positive attitudes to their work. A few pupils are occasionally distracted in class but they are well managed and learning is only briefly interrupted. A strong feature of the school is the mature and responsible manner in which peer mediators and school councillors fulfil their role. They are respected by other pupils and contribute well to the school community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show good awareness of the different cultures and faiths represented in their community and through their fundraising for charities an awareness of the needs of others. Pupils show a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and staying safe. Attendance, judged unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, has improved but more remains to be done; it is still a little below the national average. Pupils develop satisfactory basic skills which will support them in their later lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers create a calm and purposeful working environment and have good relationships with the pupils. In the best lessons, pupils enjoy their learning because teachers plan sessions which are lively, give clear instructions and incorporate a good range of engaging activities. This

includes tasks and presentations on the school's interactive whiteboards. Pupils appreciate opportunities to talk to each other and work in groups. This develops their self-confidence as well as their thinking and social skills. On occasions, lessons lack pace and planning does not highlight well enough how support and activities are matched to pupils' needs and interests. Consequently the level of challenge dips. Teaching assistants work hard to support individual pupils' learning and the progress of groups, but teachers do not always plan to fully utilize their skills.

Teachers use performance data increasingly well to set pupils suitable targets for improvement. The quality of feedback is variable. Whilst lesson objectives are consistently displayed, pupils' success in meeting the lesson's criteria is not always properly measured.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is balanced and meets statutory requirements. The school provides a wide range of additional activities which pupils enjoy, including a very good range of clubs, visits and residential trips, such as the Year 6 visit to York. These opportunities help pupils to develop their personal and physical skills successfully. The curriculum for personal, social, health and emotional development is good because it is well planned and encourages strong personal skills. The curriculum is enriched by a range of visitors such as a theatre group who worked with Year 7 on acting scenes from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Opportunities to promote communication skills, including ICT, across all subjects are not yet sufficiently developed. Similarly, work is at an early stage in ensuring that the science curriculum helps bilingual pupils to develop the specific English they need to do well in the subject. The curriculum promotes good cultural and religious understanding and this leads to harmony and the strong sense of community at the school. Pupils learn about communities across Britain and overseas and this makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school has pupils from widely differing backgrounds and provides them with a good quality of pastoral and emotional support. The school's systems for promoting good behaviour ensures that pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils who start the school other than at the usual time are well supported to integrate into the school community, both academically and socially. There are sound links with a range of outside agencies to support pupils' learning. Parents are generally supportive of the school. Academic support and guidance is satisfactory. Pupils have targets which they know and understand. However, teachers when marking do not always provide clear guidance about how pupils can improve their work, or make links between learning targets and their day to day work in class.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management, like other aspects of the school, have improved significantly over the past year and are satisfactory overall. Until recently, procedures for monitoring learning and progress were not systematic enough to ensure good progress across year groups, nor to

alert senior staff to weaker areas. This is now changing. Leaders and managers are well focused on raising standards and rightly plan to extend their regular monitoring and tracking to include, for example, science, ICT and the impact of attendance on progress.

Staff morale is good and teachers are enthusiastic about tackling weaker areas. Senior staff, teachers and specialists from the local authority have worked together well on areas such as English and mathematics. This useful work is helping to raise standards in these subjects and to inform the school's clear plans to improve other areas, but it is too early to see the full effect of these initiatives. Governors are knowledgeable, involved, and are now robustly holding the school to account.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
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	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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 learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

22 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Weald Middle School, Harrow, HA3 7DH

Thank you for making us welcome and answering our questions during our recent visit. We really enjoyed meeting you and were impressed to see how well you were settling in to your new classes. We were pleased to hear from you and your parents that you enjoy school and your lessons.

We have judged that your school is satisfactory. Your teachers have recognised that in the past not all of you have made as much progress as you should in your studies. This is one reason why over the past year they have been checking your progress very regularly and setting you targets to achieve. They have also been looking at how they can approach some subjects differently so that more of you can make good progress. You and your teachers' hard work is beginning to make a difference so that most of you are making the progress you should. In order to carry on improving the standards and progress you make we have asked the school to make sure that the activities in lessons are well matched to what you need to learn next. Also that you are given more advice on the next steps you need to take to improve your work and meet your targets. We have also asked them to carry on carefully judging whether changes they have made are working well.

With best wishes for your futures.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector