

West Moors Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113861
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311411
Inspection dates	9–10 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Stuart

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	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pauline Whale
Headteacher	Simon Adorian
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2002
School address	Heathfield Way West Moors Ferndown BH22 0DA
Telephone number	01202 872474
Fax number	01202 872474

Age group	9–13
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

West Moors is relatively small compared with similar middle schools. Most pupils are of White British origin and come from a wide range of backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. A number of pupils leave each year at the end of Year 6 to attend selective schools at the age of 11.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

West Moors Middle School is a good and rapidly improving school. It is clear that most parents share this view. Large numbers returned the parents' questionnaire and well over a third also wrote comments, nearly all of which were very supportive. This comment from a parent typifies the views of most: 'West Moors values, encourages and supports its pupils. Staff help pupils with both strengths and weaknesses. This brings out the best in them and makes them more confident.'

There are many reasons why pupils' achievement is good and standards are improving so that they are now slightly above average, and above average in some subjects. One of the most important is the excellent way the school is led. The headteacher leads by example and he is particularly well supported by his senior staff and governors. Their strengths complement one another and they are a united and coherent team. Just as important is their ability to encourage the same sense of purpose in other staff – leaders, other teachers, teaching assistants and support staff. As a result, morale is high and improvement is rapid. Furthermore, clearly identified priorities and strategies for the future give the school significant capacity for further improvement. Recent developments have occurred at a time of falling rolls, which have required the loss of staff because of reduced funding. However, the extremely well considered restructuring of both teaching and other staff has strengthened the way the school is run. Prudent use of available funding, including tapping additional funding sources, has also enabled the school to make substantial improvements to buildings and facilities, which have significantly improved classrooms and other areas of the school.

Although year groups vary in their attainment levels, the trend in pupils' achievements is upward. Much of this reflects the good teaching in the school. It also reflects the well-balanced curriculum and the strong care, support and guidance the pupils receive. For a relatively small school, the curriculum, including the very wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, is enterprising and interesting with a good emphasis on broadening pupils' experiences. However, there is not yet a sufficiently coherent whole-school approach to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

In the main, good and some outstanding teaching is having a positive impact on the progress of all groups of pupils, from those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to the most gifted. However, sometimes, teachers' planning does not consider sufficiently the capabilities of different pupils in the class. The school has very good systems to record pupils' progress but the assessment information is not always used as well as it could be to guide teachers' planning. Also, whilst most teachers mark books regularly, they do not always indicate clearly in their marking how individuals can improve.

The school's links with other schools and with outside bodies are first-rate and provide a strong boost to pupils' learning. Another notable strength of the school is the way it develops and encourages pupils' good personal development and well-being. The result is a school where pupils are very well supported, behave well, feel safe and healthy and participate fully. Pupils contribute significantly to the school community. For example, the influential school council helps bring about many positive improvements and pupils trained as peer mediators provide much support for their classmates. Pupils are developing into fine young people, well equipped to play their full part as citizens of the 21st century.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers' planning always takes account of the range of different needs of pupils in the class.
- Building on the best of existing practice, improve marking and how assessment is used to give pupils clear direction for improving their work.
- Maximise opportunities for pupils to use literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum to reinforce work in English and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From slightly below average standards on entry, pupils' achievement is good. Standards are now slightly above average at the end of Year 6 and Year 8. In science, where teaching and the use of assessment are particularly effective, they are above average and better than in English and mathematics. The trend in national test results and in tests used by the school in Years 7 and 8 is upward. This is partly because the school analyses its performance in all subjects very well and uses the information gained with precision to formulate plans for further improvement. There are no significant differences in the performance between different groups of pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are particularly gifted and talented. The school works very hard to raise levels of achievement of the larger than usual number of pupils who join the school at times other than the beginning of Year 5.

The effective systems the school has to assess pupils' levels of attainment and to track their progress across all subjects have helped with the setting of challenging but realistic targets. Most pupils are on course to meet their targets, which is an indication of the school's continued success in raising standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well in class and around the school and enjoy good relationships with each other. Attendance is satisfactory and improving. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise. This has been recognised in the school's Healthy Schools status awarded in July 2007. Pupils know how to stay safe in the ways they live their lives including, for example, the ways they use the Internet. Pupils make a good contribution to the community. For instance, members of the school council are confident in giving their opinions on how to improve school playground equipment, lockers and uniform. Older pupils assist their Year 5 partners in paired reading. Pupils' development of the skills needed later in life, such as literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), is satisfactory.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They learn to value themselves and others and show an informed awareness of their own cultural traditions and those of others. Most enjoy coming to school and think that learning is fun. 'It's a wonderful school where everyone is treated as an individual' is the way one pupil described the school. Pupils develop a sound awareness of the world of work through learning about budgeting, saving money and raising money for charities such as Children in Need.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Some is very good or outstanding. Friendly relationships encourage a positive learning atmosphere and, because staff have high expectations about behaviour, pupils are keen to learn and listen carefully. In most classes, the aims of lessons are explained well to pupils enabling them to be clear about what they are to learn. However, sometimes planning does not always identify clearly enough how the different needs of all pupils will be met. This means that, whilst overall learning is usually good, opportunities for all pupils to reach their full potential are not always realised. Pupils with specific learning needs make good progress because they are well supported in their learning by teachers and teaching assistants. Individual plans are successfully matched to each pupil's needs. A parent correctly commented that, in most lessons, teachers connect well at the pupils' level and make learning enjoyable. Modern technology, such as interactive whiteboards, is used well in ways that enable pupils to be fully involved in their learning. All pupils are involved in setting targets in their subjects. However, the value of this process is sometimes weakened because the use of assessment information is not consistently good. Therefore, on occasions, pupils are not always clear about the next steps in their learning. Furthermore, marking sometimes does not show pupils how their work could be improved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad and balanced curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs. There are a number of commendable features including the visual and performing arts course. The curriculum is sensitively adapted to meet particular needs in certain year groups. For example, there has been a much increased focus on literacy skills for the group of pupils now in Year 8 whose skills in this area have been significantly weaker than other year groups. However, despite this successful example, the school does not yet plan rigorously enough to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills across all areas of the curriculum. The decision to concentrate the Key Stage 3 curriculum into two years, starting this year, is a bold one but it is a coherent part of the school's overall strategy to raise standards further. There have been developments in the school's programme of health and social education which is doing much to aid pupils' personal development. The very good coordination of the curriculum between the school's partner first schools and upper school prepares pupils very well for the next stage of their education. Specialist teaching across the different schools in subjects such as art and physical education is particularly helpful in motivating pupils. Another particular strength of the curriculum is the range of extra-curricular activities, including visits, music, sport and those related to health and fitness. These are enthusiastically supported by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are good. Child protection procedures are rigorous. There are extensive and most helpful links with outside agencies and very effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good health and safety procedures are in place. Provision of facilities and opportunities, such as the lunchtime social skills club, peer mediation and 'chill out' rooms, are particularly useful for pupils who find it difficult to

manage their own behaviour. Pupils have become involved in setting and reviewing their own targets and most teachers provide pupils with helpful academic guidance. However, sometimes, as mentioned earlier, staff do not always set clear and precise targets to help pupils improve their work. Links with parents are good and most believe that they are kept well informed of their children's personal and academic development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads the school with conviction and vision. He is very ably supported by senior staff, governors and other leaders. The cohesion and sense of purpose of the school's leaders and of the staff as a whole are palpable. They are a major factor influencing the rapid progress of the school and giving it the capacity to improve further in the years ahead. High morale and a shared vision are all the more commendable because the school has been through a period of falling rolls and consequent loss of staff and funding. However, the headteacher and governors have implemented a restructuring of the staff that is very effectively addressing the school's educational priorities as well as meeting the need to reduce costs. This restructuring provides clarity of roles and strong accountability both for teaching staff and for the enhanced roles of the very well qualified and effective teaching assistants and support staff.

Because senior staff and governors know the school very well through their critical and effective self-evaluation, priorities for further development are very relevant to the school's fundamental aim of continuing to raise standards for all pupils. These priorities are seen in many ways. For example, many of the buildings and facilities have been updated very successfully recently so that the learning environment for pupils and staff is attractive and welcoming. There is more still to do to parts of the building but careful use of limited resources and intelligent attracting of additional funding have brought about much improvement. Some inconsistencies in the school's performance remain so there is still some way to go before all pupils' achievements reach their full potential, but the school's leaders are successfully raising the aspirations of the pupils in their care.

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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?	2
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

11 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Moors Middle School, Ferndown, BH22 0DA

Thank you very much for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed greatly our time with you.

- We think your school is a good one and that it is rapidly getting even better. In our many conversations with you and in letters from your parents, we are pleased that most of you and your parents think the same. These are the main reasons we think West Moors is a good school:
- Your headteacher is leading the school extremely well so that all staff are working well together for your benefit.
- Your standards and your achievement are improving mainly because you are well taught, receive a good curriculum and are well cared for and supported.
- Most of you behave well, get on with one another and do your best to make the school a pleasant place to be in.
- Although there is more still to do, recent improvements to the buildings and facilities make the school a good place in which to learn.
- You play a very good part in school life, taking on responsibilities in many ways from helping with reading to running your important school council.
- You enjoy and take part in the many opportunities you have outside normal lessons in sport, music, clubs, school trips and many more activities.
- Although you are getting on well, we think you could do even better! So we are asking the school to look at a number of things, in particular to:
 - make sure that teachers plan all their lessons to take into account the needs and capabilities of every pupil in each class
 - improve some marking of your work and make better use of information about how you are getting on. This will help you to have the best possible advice about ways of improving your work
 - take more opportunities in all lessons to help you to improve your listening, reading, writing, speaking and number skills.

You are growing up as fine young people who are proud of your school. We are sure you will want to work with your teachers and other staff to improve the school further. We send our very best wishes to all of you.

Yours Sincerely Lead inspector

Annex B

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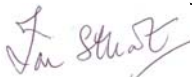
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Lead inspector