

# Oldfields Hall Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124429
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314929
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30–31 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clive Kempton HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	507
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carole Postlewaite
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nikki Gillman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Stone Road Uttoxeter ST14 7PL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01889 562770
<b>Fax number</b>	01889 568472

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Oldfields Hall Middle School is a larger-than-average school situated close to the centre of the market town of Uttoxeter. Approximately half of the pupils come from the southern area of the town, with the rest from surrounding rural areas. Pupils are nearly all White British. They are from a variety of backgrounds, although the general socio-economic profile of the pupils compares favourably with the national picture. Pupils display the full range of academic abilities, with standards on entry being broadly average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. The school has achieved the Sportsmark Award. During the inspection, the substantive headteacher was on a 12-week secondment abroad and his deputy had assumed the role as acting headteacher in his absence.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Oldfields Hall Middle School is a caring community that develops its pupils as confident, mature young people and provides a satisfactory quality of education. One parent described the school as 'very friendly, where we are made to feel very welcome', and said, 'I knew this was the right school for my child as soon as we walked in'. It has the potential to be much better than satisfactory, but standards are not yet high enough in English. One pupil commented, 'It would be good to get more homework in English'. Whilst standards achieved are higher than national averages in some subjects, for example, in science, French, music, art and design and physical education (PE), the standards achieved by pupils are broadly average overall. Pupils progress satisfactorily but they could move on at a better rate, particularly in English, and this is most significantly the case for those with learning difficulties.

Some of the reason for the inconsistencies in standards achieved in different subjects is due to the variability of the teaching. The quality is satisfactory overall. Whilst some teaching is outstanding, there are instances of inadequate teaching. In the best lessons there are very high expectations of the pupils and a sense of purpose to their learning: performing their compositions to a high standard at the end of a music lesson or using maps convincingly in geography. In such lessons, there is clear evidence that pupils make significant progress. The objectives for these lessons are made clear to the pupils and learning against them is checked at the end. In the weaker lessons there is a lack of clarity about what pupils are expected to learn by the end of the lesson, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to participate actively and there is not enough challenge for pupils of all abilities. The overall care, guidance and support provided for pupils is satisfactory rather than good only because staff make inconsistent use of data to set clear objectives in lessons and to provide individual targets to help pupils to improve their performance.

One of the main reasons why the overall effectiveness of the school is currently satisfactory rather than better is that senior leadership has not focused sharply enough on creating strategic plans with measurable success criteria to improve identified areas of weakness and raise standards. For example, too little has been done to address the weaker teaching, to rectify underperformance in English and to accelerate the progress of pupils with learning difficulties in English. However, the leadership and management by subject leaders are generally good. Subject leaders have a secure understanding of self-evaluation through positive support from the local authority. The overall quality of leadership and management when taken at all levels is satisfactory.

A strength of the school is the good promotion of pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils enjoy coming to school and, as a consequence, their attendance is above the national average. Their behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. They engage confidently in conversation with visitors and talk with enthusiasm about the good extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils enjoy the educational visits and the wide range of clubs. Pupils in Year 8 who are peer counsellors have been successful in achieving the Princess Diana Memorial Award for their work. There is a good focus on developing pupils' understanding of global issues and their ability to empathise with those who are less fortunate than themselves, for example, in the annual visits by children from Chernobyl.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve progress in English for all pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties.
- Ensure that all lessons have clear learning objectives, provide opportunities for pupils to participate actively and provide challenge for all abilities.
- Ensure that strategic planning is sharply focused on a few key priorities with measurable success criteria that will rectify weaknesses and raise standards.

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

Standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. The pupils enter the school with standards expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress in Years 5 and 6, and national tests indicate they reach the expected levels by the end of Year 6 in mathematics and English.

Standards are above average in science throughout the school as a result of consistently good teaching and subject management. There are impressive curricular links with the five first schools which means that the staff have a clear picture of pupils' prior attainment in science. Year 9 national test data from the high school indicates that pupils go on to achieve above national expectations in mathematics and science.

Pupils make good progress in Years 7 and 8 in mathematics because of good teaching and achieve standards above those expected for their age. However, progress in English is slower and by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8, standards are only satisfactory. The lower standards in English are due to inconsistencies in the teaching of this subject. Progress made by pupils with learning difficulties is inconsistent in English, but acceptable overall.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school greatly and almost all learn and play with enthusiasm. Attendance is good. During their time at Oldfields they develop into mature, confident and outgoing young people, well prepared socially for the next stage of education. Their behaviour is generally good and often exemplary. Exclusions are rare and short-term. Pupils take on responsibilities for themselves, their fellow pupils and their school. They take part well in the growing number of activities requiring teamwork and initiative. The school council is a democratic means of consultation between staff and pupils that results in changes in school life, for example, the provision of fruit bags at the tuck shop and enhanced outdoor seating areas. Some older pupils, however, do not feel they have sufficient opportunity to debate such issues.

The Peer Counsellors are an amazing group of Year 8 pupils who have taken on such tasks as settling in Year 5 pupils, mediating minor disputes on the playground and running an anti-bullying campaign. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is good. They have a clear understanding of Christian beliefs and festivals and visit the local church. However, their awareness of other faiths and cultures is less well developed. They understand the difference between right and wrong but do not always understand the impact their actions have on others.

Many pupils take part in sporting activities and are adopting increasingly healthy lifestyles. Pupils keenly participate in the good range of extra-curricular sporting activities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching ranges from outstanding to inadequate. Teaching in English is inconsistent and sometimes not good enough for pupils with learning difficulties. It is not always sufficiently focused or challenging enough to ensure that all pupils make the expected progress. In the good or better teaching observed during the inspection, teachers were clear about what it was they wanted the pupils to learn. Questioning probed pupils' understanding, relationships were good, and a range of learning strategies was used. In less successful lessons, the teacher dominated the lesson and teaching was not focused well enough on what it was the pupils needed to learn.

Pupils and parents are particularly enthusiastic about teaching in music and art and design. Lessons in these subjects very effectively foster a love of the subject and contribute significantly to pupils' personal development. The school now has good assessment data, but this is not always used well enough to provide appropriate challenge for pupils. Marking has also improved recently but the quality remains patchy, and pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work. Increasingly, pupils are encouraged to assess their own work and the work of others, but too many lessons are teacher directed and do not give pupils enough independence in their learning.

The setting of homework is inconsistent, with Year 8 in particular having insufficient homework to prepare them for the next stage of education.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory, with some good features. The range of extra-curricular activities, including lunchtime clubs, is over and above that normally found. Large numbers of pupils take advantage of the many and very varied opportunities, including model aeroplane club, line dancing, drama and chess. The many sports and fitness activities encourage a healthy lifestyle.

Dedicated days and weeks are used to enhance provision for the gifted and talented pupils and to develop multicultural awareness across the school. However, these do not always provide enough meaningful experiences, particularly where multicultural education is concerned.

Subjects are generally taught by specialist teachers in Year 6, 7 and 8. The school works closely with the first schools on transition work. Although it does not always build well enough in Year 5 on the work done in Year 4, the arrangement for pupils to stay with their class teachers for much of the time helps ease their transfer to a new school.

Visitors are used to motivate and inspire pupils, but there is currently no programme for careers education.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

Assessment of pupils' academic standards now takes place for all subjects. Since the previous inspection, the school has rectified the lack of a comprehensive database for tracking the progress that individual pupils make through the school. Pupils are set personal targets in English and mathematics but these are sometimes too long-term. Individual targets do not always provide pupils with sufficient guidance on how to improve their performance. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified appropriately but are not always challenged sufficiently to raise their standards, particularly in English.

Staff know pupils well and give good pastoral support. Good use is made of external agencies to meet pupils' personal and learning needs. Bullying is unusual and is generally dealt with effectively, although some parents and pupils are dissatisfied. Whilst incidents of misbehaviour and bullying and the action taken are recorded in pupils' files, the school lacks a centrally held behaviour log to enable effective monitoring of incidents.

Health and safety and safeguarding procedures provide good protection for staff and pupils. The school has worked hard and effectively to raise pupils awareness of the importance of physical activity and diet, and plans are in place to extend this to those with the greatest need. The school council introduces pupils to the principles of democracy and playing a part in the life of the school community. Older pupils play a positive role in pastoral care.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Whilst there are some good subject leaders who have successfully driven up standards in their own subjects, the senior leadership has not driven the whole-school improvement agenda with the same rigour. For example, the school improvement plan lacks clear success criteria for its actions and is insufficiently focused on the few key issues that would raise standards. The whole-school self-evaluation process is not shared enough with other managers and this restricts the extent to which key priorities are jointly owned and clearly understood. Job descriptions for senior staff do not hold them sufficiently to account for standards achieved.

The acting headteacher has been in post for only a few weeks. She has already augmented the leadership group and is determined to tackle the underachievement and weaker performance issues in the school. This new senior team has a satisfactory capacity to make the necessary improvements identified in this inspection. Many challenges still face the team but the commitment is now evident to move the improvement agenda forward.

Some successful middle managers clearly demonstrate their management skills, not only within their own subjects through high expectations and consistency of teaching throughout the department, but also by liaising with first schools and high schools to ensure smooth transition arrangements. Higher standards are achieved as a result of these collaborations, especially in French, music, physical education (PE) and science. Partnership working with other agencies is therefore good. The school is also taking sensible action to involve parents more in their children's learning.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are regular visitors in the school, but they have not been involved enough in school improvement planning, the self-evaluation process, or in asking challenging questions to get senior leaders to deal with weaker performance.

Outside professionals associated with the school hold the school in high regard. They acknowledge the hardworking staff, both teaching and non-teaching, and the manners and enthusiasm of the pupils. They enjoy coming to Oldfields. One commented, 'The staff are very willing to share, and to take on new ideas'. Parents, too, are full of praise for the school and the way it develops confident, articulate young people. One parent commented, 'Oldfields is a school full of opportunities'.



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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 disabilities make progress	3

### 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	2
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	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

1 February 2008

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like to know the outcome of the inspection and what we thought the school could do to become better.

- We think you go to a satisfactory school that gives you lots of opportunities to develop into mature young people.
- You all look very smart in your school uniform.
- You achieve good standards in music, French, PE and science.
- Many teachers work hard to prepare interesting lessons for you.
- Other adults in the school provide good support in other ways.
- You are well behaved in lessons and around the school.
- You enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in your good attendance.
- You make a difference to the lives of those less fortunate than yourselves in other countries.
- You are good at holding conversations with visitors and in expressing your views.
- You and your parents are proud to say you come to Oldfields.
- A lot of you take part in the very wide range of extra-curricular clubs.
- You enjoy taking on leadership roles such as those of peer counsellors or members of the school council.

In order to make your school better, we have asked your headteacher and senior staff to do the following:

- make sure that your teachers help you to do as well as you can in English, especially those of you who need extra help
- make sure that all teachers tell you what you are going to learn in each lesson, involve you, and provide the right level of challenge
- ensure that the leaders of your school write a plan and put it into action to improve the school.

Clive Kempton HMI Her Majesty's Inspector

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**Clive Kempton HMI**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**