

# Whitchurch Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131316
<b>Local Authority</b>	Harrow
<b>Inspection number</b>	315781
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nicola Davies

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 primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8–12
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	356
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Jamie Price
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Tara Gratton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 June 2004
<b>School address</b>	Wemborough Road Stanmore HA7 2EQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8951 5380
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8951 5385

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<b>Age group</b>	8-12
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a 3 form entry middle school in Stanmore educating pupils from Years 4–7. Most pupils join the school from the first school which shares its site. Around half of the pupils are of Asian, mostly Indian, heritage, and other pupils come from a wide range of heritages including White British, Caribbean and African. A higher than average proportion of pupils are bilingual. A few pupils join the school at earlier stages of learning English. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities, mostly these relate to difficulties in literacy and numeracy. The school also has a higher than average number of pupils with complex difficulties and disabilities.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Whitchurch Middle School provides its diverse pupils with a good education. The school rightfully prides itself on being fully inclusive and its provision for the personal, social, emotional, moral and cultural education of pupils is outstanding.

Whatever their backgrounds, strengths and challenges, pupils leave the school having made good progress in their basic skills and with exceptionally well developed social and personal skills. These can readily be seen in their friendly and very mature attitudes and, in particular, in their confident approach to challenges and problem solving. This confidence can also be seen in the activities of the hardworking staff. A noteworthy feature of the school's work is that staff are eager to explore innovative answers to tricky issues. For example, the analysis of pupils' progress in mathematics in 2007 highlighted a difference between the proportion of boys and girls who make good progress in the subject to work at higher levels. This year, staff tried teaching some boys and girls separately. This has proved extremely successful in helping the girls to make equally good progress to boys. The school had rightly identified a need to strengthen more able pupils' progress further. Pupils enjoy the good curriculum but staff recognise that opportunities and activities to challenge and stretch more able pupils are not yet consistent enough across all subjects. They are also planning to provide a greater range of additional activities that help foster their pupils' talents.

Since the time of the last inspection, the school has made very good progress in improving the progress that pupils make. Pupils achieve well throughout the school and the standards which they reach are consistently above average. This is the result of the good, imaginative teaching they receive and of successful innovations led by the school's leaders and managers. The process of setting challenging targets for pupils to achieve is now first class. Similarly, support for pupils with complex difficulties and disabilities is excellent and is one exemplary aspect of the school's outstanding care, guidance and support.

The school's success in identifying and taking action on its relatively weaker areas, as well as celebrating and sharing its many strengths, is an indicator of the quality of leadership and management. Inspired by the outstanding headteacher, staff are fully involved in school development. In addition, the contribution of pupils to this process is outstanding. For example, the school council regularly surveys the views of pupils and takes independent action on pursuing these issues further with other bodies, including, for example, local councillors and businesses. This very effective process of self-evaluation and improvement provides the school with its excellent platform to continue adapting and improving.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure opportunities to challenge more able pupils are consistent across the curriculum.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils join the school with standards that are in line with, or above the expectations for their age. Standards at the end of Year 6 are consistently above average and demonstrate pupils' good progress from their starting points. This good progress has emerged strongly over the past two years as teachers and pupils have become more involved in setting challenging targets and monitoring how well they are achieving. The school's records show that pupils continue

to make good progress in Year 7, including the significant number of pupils who join the school at this time.

Within this picture of good overall achievement, the school is alert to any differences in progress that pupils make as they go through the school. The school has recognised that whilst more able pupils' achievement is improving and is generally good, this is not yet fully consistent. A useful range of extra programmes support pupils who are struggling with literacy and numeracy and pupils who are not yet fluent in English. As a result, these pupils make good progress in line with their peers.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The personal development and well being of pupils are outstanding. Their enjoyment and appreciation of the school is reflected in their above average level of attendance and engagement in both lessons and other activities. Pupils' behaviour is excellent as are relationships between, and amongst, pupils and adults. As a result, the atmosphere throughout the school is lively but purposeful. Pupils report that bullying is rare and when it does occur it is taken seriously and dealt with promptly.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are reflective and thoughtful and have a strong sense of fairness and sympathy. This is evident in their efforts to raise money for many charities. Pupils take great pride in making their voices heard in the school. The active school council has taught them about democratic processes, such as representing and respecting majority decisions when requesting an outdoor classroom or additional playground equipment. The school takes good account of their diverse backgrounds and pupils develop a very good understanding of other cultures through linking with schools and pupils in India, Trinidad and Uganda. Pupils have an exceptional understanding of what is necessary to stay fit and healthy and how to avoid unnecessary risks in school and in the world outside. Contacts with professionals from the world of banking and science, for example, have contributed well to their excellent understanding of finance and work. Such skills and attitudes support them very well through the next stage of their education and in later life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good and the school has a secure understanding of what makes effective classroom practice. Pupils achieve well because of the consistently good teaching and pupils' high levels of motivation. Pupils see the value of education, enjoy their lessons, and work hard. Where teaching and learning are most effective, relationships between pupils and teachers are characterised by mutual respect and humour. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and pupils understand what they are learning and why. Resources are used creatively to make activities engaging and interesting. Elements of outstanding teaching are evident in some classrooms, for example in some teachers' highly skilled questioning. Similarly, some teachers make very good use of assessment during lessons to help pupils to move on to the next level. All pupils are able to describe their targets in some way, but are not always as clear on how they could improve their work. The school rightly acknowledges the need to build on current good practice and have identified key priorities as more consistent challenge for more able

pupils and improving the quality of questioning. The introductions to some lessons are over long, which leaves less time for pupils to work independently.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The well managed curriculum is good and provides a broad and interesting range of activities which motivate pupils to work hard. Pupils develop their literacy, numeracy and computing skills well across a range of other subjects. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is strong and teachers use ICT well to add an exciting dimension to many subjects. An attractive computer suite, interactive whiteboards, laptops, digital cameras and an informative website further enhance the curriculum. The good personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship programme has had a very positive impact on pupils' social development and maturity. For example, an innovative project to set up a school bank, staffed by older pupils and linked to a high street bank has contributed well to pupils' understanding of the world of work. A weaker area is how consistently the curriculum is adapted to challenge pupils with particular strengths in different subject areas.

Pupils enjoy a range of sports led by specialist coaches which contributes very well to their positive attitudes to keeping fit and healthy. The school council is actively investigating how to extend the range of extra activities provided further. Pupils delight in being able to study French and Spanish for the first time and themed weeks, such as creative arts and enterprise week, further enhance the activities planned in the different areas of learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The overall quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The school's outstanding pastoral care contributes very effectively to pupils' attitudes and excellent behaviour. Policies and procedures for pupils' health, safety and risk assessment are well understood, not only by adults but also by children. For example, pupils feel that 'the CCTV camera keeps us safe' and the school council has taken a very active role in encouraging healthy eating at school.

All pupils are fully included in the life of the school. Support for pupils who are vulnerable and those with more complex disabilities or difficulties is exemplary and enables them to make very good progress. A drop in club for pupils on the autistic spectrum is just one successful example. As one parent of a child with complex difficulties wrote 'The school has always treated my child as an individual and looked at the best way to meet his needs and his medical issues too'. Academic guidance and support for pupils is good and in some cases excellent although this not yet fully consistent.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

There are significant strengths in leadership and management. The head, together with the able deputy who is currently the acting headteacher, make a very strong team. Together they have significantly improved the education that the school provides. Two successful examples of this are the way that pupils are now able to influence the work of the school and the year on year improvements in the progress which pupils make. This has been achieved with the enthusiastic cooperation of teachers and those with particular responsibilities for year groups

or areas of the curriculum. All staff are involved in training and coaching partnerships which means that the quality of teaching is maintained and improved. Good leadership from senior teachers means they accurately identify weaker areas as well as strengths within their areas of responsibility. One example is provision for English as an additional language. The coordinator has made sure that staff provide good support for pupils at early stages of learning English. She is now moving on to ensure that the curriculum provides bilingual pupils with the academic English skills they need to excel in their further studies.

Governors provide good support to the school. Their role is being further developed as they audit their own efficiency in ensuring the school meets all of its statutory requirements.

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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	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### 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?	1

<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>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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

26 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitchurch Middle School, Stanmore, HA7 2EQ

Thank you all for giving us such a warm welcome to your school and spending time with us. In a letter sent on your behalf, your school councillors provided us with information about the school and hoped that we would be pleased and satisfied with your behaviour and the respect you give to everyone and everything. As you can read in the attached report, we found that your behaviour is outstanding, as is the contribution you all make to developing Whitchurch Middle School. So well done to all of you and keep up the good work. We were interested in hearing about the findings from your pupil survey in your school assembly and to hear about your plans for developing some aspects further.

In your report, you will see we found that you get a good education at Whitchurch Middle, whether you join in Year 4 or Year 7 and whatever your background. Your standards and results in national tests are above those found in many schools as is the progress that you make. Your headteacher, deputy and all your staff have worked very hard over the past two years to track your progress. They want to make sure all of you are making the most of your talents. This is why they are so keen to set challenging targets with you and to feed back to you how you are doing and how you could improve further. This has had impressive results so far and is one reason why we have judged that the school has an outstanding capacity to carry on improving. We have agreed with your teachers that your progress would be even better if more opportunities to challenge you were built in across the subjects you study. Your teachers have some really useful ideas on how they can make this happen so next time you survey pupils' views, you may find that 100% of you feel you are challenged in all of your lessons!

A particular thanks to the Year 7 chefs for the excellent meal they prepared for us on the last day of the inspection. We hope that staff and visitors enjoyed your 'menu du jour' as much as we did.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector