

Church Hill Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116974
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	338928
Inspection dates	15-16 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Ruth Westbrook

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 of pupils on the school roll	271
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Stanley
Headteacher	Phillip Hume
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2007
School address	Wood Piece Lane Church Hill Redditch B98 9LR
Telephone number	01527 585580
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, key policy documents, assessment information and pupils' work. In addition, 65 parent questionnaires were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether there are differences in the rates of progress across key stages and subjects and the effectiveness of guidance to pupils on how to make good progress
- how well teaching is planned to meet the different needs of pupils in the class
- the effectiveness of strategies which have been employed to improve standards in writing
- how well all the school's leaders are checking on the quality of teaching.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than most middle schools. Nearly all pupils come from White British families and all but a few speak English as their first language. Almost one third of pupils have a special educational need and/or disability, the largest groups being those pupils with moderate learning difficulties and those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. More pupils than is usual join or leave the school at times other than the usual dates for admission. Since the last inspection, this has included a few pupils transferring from a closing, neighbouring school. The school has Healthy School and Sportsmark accreditation and has been awarded the Artsmark Silver, and Eco Bronze Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. Standards and pupils' achievement in Year 6 national tests fell after the last inspection when the overall effectiveness of the school had been judged as good. The school's leadership accurately identified the causes, and implemented an effective plan to raise standards and achievement. This resulted in attainment in 2009 which was significantly improved. The school's leadership is committed to moving forward with the implementation of its plans which build on a number of key strengths. These are:

- the provision of a wide range of enrichment activities and extra-curricular activities which effectively promote aspects of pupils' personal development
- the positive relationships which are formed between members of the school community and promote a warm and welcoming environment
- good partnerships with other schools and organisations which extend the quality of provision and lead to effective induction and transition
- good support for vulnerable pupils and their parents
- the positive response of pupils towards making a contribution to their community in many ways, including strong support for charitable activities.

There is a clear recognition by the headteacher, governors and senior leaders that there is much work to raise standards and accelerate progress from satisfactory to good. Because of sound processes for self evaluation, leaders have a clear view of what needs to be done to bring about further improvement and plans are in place to achieve this. The improvement in pupils' attainment in summer 2009 indicates that the school has satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement in those areas identified by the inspection which are that:

- the tracking of pupils' progress across subjects and key stages is inconsistent. As a result, some pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6, do not know how well they are doing. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is not tracked consistently across all subjects
- the quality of teaching is inconsistent so activities and resources are not always planned to match the different needs of individuals and groups of pupils.
- the school's leadership has not used its information rigorously enough to support its analysis and pinpoint areas of underperformance in pupils' attainment and the quality of teaching

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Establish a system to track pupils' progress consistently across key stages and subjects so that underachievement is swiftly identified. Make sure that pupils know how well they are doing.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that lessons are planned to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities and standards are raised.
- Ensure that school leaders analyse information rigorously so that their findings inform evaluation of performance and planning.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning from starting points in Year 5 which are generally lower than expected for pupils of their age. By the end of Year 8 pupils reach standards which are broadly average, but fewer pupils than expected reach the higher levels. Unvalidated test results for Year 6 in 2009 show improved attainment which is broadly average overall, but very few pupils exceed the expectation for this age. Attainment has improved most in writing. Strategies to promote writing across all subjects have been effective. Carefully chosen literature has stimulated pupils' interest and been used well as a springboard for writing. The quality of pupils' learning in lessons is only satisfactory overall because the quality of teaching is uneven. Pupils work steadily and when actively involved show high levels of interest and enthusiasm for their work and make accelerated progress. This was the case in a Year 8 science lesson when pupils worked enthusiastically in pairs, solving the problem of how to put a circuit together. Some pupils say that lessons can be boring when they are completing worksheets or copying. In some lessons, particularly where there is a full range of ability, the ablest pupils do not receive enough challenge to extend their learning. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Their particular needs are defined and there is additional support in place. However, the planning of activities and resources in lessons does not always take sufficient account of these individual needs so rates of progress in learning are slower.

Pupils enjoy being active and show this through their participation in sporting opportunities and their choices of activities at breaktimes. They understand how to eat and live healthily and the large majority put this into practice at school. Both during and outside lessons, most pupils behave well so that learning is not disrupted. The playground is orderly and calm. Pupils know how to keep safe and most say they feel safe when they are in school. Most pupils are clear that issues they raise, including bullying will be taken seriously by the school and appropriate action will be taken. The school has been effective in improving attendance particularly amongst

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some pupils who are frequently absent from school. Pupils are able to apply their basic literacy and numeracy skills appropriately across a range of subjects. They have a good understanding of the consequences of their actions, their rights and responsibilities. They socialise well with others from different backgrounds, but their ability to cooperate well in lessons is inconsistent. Pupils' understanding of other cultures and faiths is limited, but is a planned area for development in the school plan.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is not consistent across subjects, years and ability groups. The inspection findings agree with the school's own evaluation that too much teaching is satisfactory. There is strength across the school in teachers' subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject. In those lessons where teaching is satisfactory, the match of work to pupils' attainment is not sharp enough, and does not take account of the sometimes wide range of abilities within the class. Visits to lessons indicate that within different teaching sets and groups, the work is sometimes similar for all pupils. Like teaching, the quality of assessment is variable. In some lessons, teachers use their assessment of pupils' previous learning to build very carefully on their next steps. Elsewhere, although assessment is carried out regularly it does not focus sharply on an individual's progress towards the learning target. In English, there has been much closer identification of what individual pupils need to do to improve their writing and this has been shared well with them. As a result, pupils' progress in writing has accelerated.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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The school is an active participant in a number of partnerships which enable pupils to benefit from a broad curriculum that leads to some good outcomes for pupils. Increasingly, subjects are working together to provide good opportunities for pupils to develop literacy skills by using them in other subjects. The match of the curriculum to individual learners' needs and interests is satisfactory. There are some good opportunities for able pupils through particular projects in art, geography and science. Feedback to the inspection from some pupils with special educational needs indicates that there are some subjects where resources and activities are not always relevant to their needs.

Effective welfare arrangements ensure that most pupils feel well cared for. Pupils are well supervised at breaktimes and good relationships develop between staff and pupils. Support for vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs is well established and there are good partnerships with external agencies to provide additional support. Provision is effective, particularly where teaching assistants give support. There have been inconsistencies in tracking the impact of provision on the progress of pupils with special educational needs across the school as a whole. The school has evaluated the causes which are to do with changes in staffing and an action plan is in place to address this.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and other leaders are effective in sharing their commitment to improving the school and raising standards. There is a clear vision for the future and there are adequate plans in place to raise attainment. Leaders have a good general understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the analysis of the school's information by senior leaders has not been sufficiently rigorous to enable them to home in on particular causes of underperformance in both pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and to evaluate interventions to bring about improvement. The absence of a consistent system to track pupils' progress across subjects has contributed to senior leaders not always having the full picture of their progress. Subject leaders track progress well within their subject and are able to identify where intervention is needed. The use of three different systems for the core subjects leads to inconsistencies when used to track progress at classroom level. The school is beginning to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils so that equality of opportunity can be ensured. This has led to some effective intervention

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and action planning in mathematics and science as a result. School governors and leaders are developing their plans for greater community cohesion. They have a sound understanding of where they are making positive links and where there is further work to do. Governors have a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Statutory and financial responsibilities are well discharged. The school works hard to safeguard pupils including those most at risk. Safeguarding regulations and duties are met and in line with government requirements. They are regularly reviewed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are positive about the quality of the school's provision. Parents comment on the school being 'very approachable' and 'feeling comfortable' whenever visiting. A number comment on the encouragement which has been given to their children by staff and the particular help which they have received in supporting medical problems or disabilities. Of greatest concern, to a small minority of parents, is the way that the school deals with unacceptable behaviour including bullying. Leaders of the school are mindful of this parental concern. A new programme introduced this year is planned to help staff and pupils to address this.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Church Hill Middle School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 271 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	13	20	43	66	4	6	2	3
The school keeps my child safe	18	28	40	62	4	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	17	26	43	66	1	2	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	18	38	58	7	11	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	15	23	35	54	7	11	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	12	218	39	60	7	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	32	33	51	3	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	18	28	39	60	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	11	17	44	68	2	3	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	25	30	46	12	18	3	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	22	37	57	6	9	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	17	26	35	54	3	5	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	17	26	37	57	2	3	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

17 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Church Hill Middle School, Redditch B98 9LR

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us on our recent visit to your school, and for sharing your views on your school in discussions and through the questionnaires. It has been very helpful. We would like to share with you what we learned.

- You make satisfactory progress in your work and reach average standards by the time you leave.
- You have learnt a great deal about how to be healthy and it was good to see you putting it into practice at break and lunchtimes.
- Many of you volunteer to help and take on responsibilities in your school and in the community. We are impressed by your efforts to raise money for charity.
- All staff care for you well and encourage you to do your best. As a result you generally feel safe in school and most of you feel that there is someone to help you if you need it.
- There are good opportunities for you to get involved with sport and other activities after school and at lunchtime.
- You told us how you enjoy lessons where you are active and learning with others and we saw many of you doing this.

We are asking the school to make some improvements and we hope you will help your headteacher and his staff to put them in place.

- We are asking the school to track your progress in all subjects more carefully and keep you informed about how well you are doing.
- We are also asking your headteacher and other senior staff to use this and other information to check on how well the school is doing.
- So that you are able to make more progress in your lessons we are asking teachers to plan work which is carefully matched to your ability.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Westbrook

Lead Inspector

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