

Perton Middle School

Gainsborough Drive, Perton, Wolverhampton, Staffordshire WV6 7NR

Inspection dates

11–12 July 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has improved rapidly since its previous inspection. Behaviour, teaching and outcomes have all improved considerably, especially since the head of school's appointment at the start of this academic year.
- Leaders and governors are ambitious. They are determined to see the school improve further. Pupils, parents and staff support this ambition.
- Middle leaders form a strong team. They are increasingly leading the improvement of teaching in their subjects.
- Governance has improved greatly in the last two years. Governors know the school well and provide effective support and challenge to school leaders.
- Pupils, especially in key stage 2, benefit greatly from specialist teaching and facilities in several subjects. A wide range of clubs, activities and visits adds to the taught curriculum. Sport is particularly strong in the school.
- The school's systems to measure pupils' progress are new and improving. However, assessment information is currently of variable quality and therefore not as useful as it ought to be.
- Pupils make good progress in most subjects in key stage 2. In English and mathematics, their progress is improving rapidly. Pupils make good progress in all subjects in key stage 3.
- Pupils' progress in key stage 2 in English and especially mathematics has been too slow in recent years. It is now improving. Although teaching in English and mathematics is effective, pupils do not practise their reading and arithmetic skills enough in other subjects.
- Provision for disadvantaged pupils is strong. They are well supported and are making better progress as a result.
- Teaching is now consistently good across all years and subjects. Teachers provide activities that usually engage and challenge most pupils, especially the most able.
- Teachers plan well for pupils of different abilities. However, planning does not always take into account pupils' special educational needs as well as it should.
- Pupils behave well. They typically work hard in lessons and are keen to do well. They are polite, thoughtful and courteous. The school is calm throughout the day.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Adults ensure that pupils are well cared for. Pupils with medical needs receive high-quality support to ensure that they are fully included in school life.
- Relationships are strong across the school. Pupils like and respect their teachers. They enjoy school and attendance is consistently higher than the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English and mathematics in key stage 2 by ensuring that pupils regularly practise:
 - arithmetic skills and methods in subjects other than mathematics
 - reading application and inference in subjects other than English.
- Strengthen leadership by ensuring that:
 - assessments of pupils' attainment are accurate and reliable
 - teachers' planning consistently takes account of pupils' special educational needs.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- There has been significant improvement in all areas since the school's previous inspection two years ago. Initially, this was led by the executive headteacher of the Codsall High Federation of Schools, who took up post shortly after the inspection. The rate of improvement has accelerated this year, after the head of school joined Perton. Leaders are ambitious to see the school continue to improve. They are well supported by governors, staff, parents and pupils in this vision. Almost all staff who completed the inspection questionnaire and parents who responded to Parent View agree that the school is now well led and managed.
- Leaders have transformed the school's reputation among parents and the local community in the last two years. The number of pupils joining the school in Year 5 is growing. At the time of the previous inspection, a little over 60% of parents who responded to Parent View said that they would recommend the school to another parent. At this inspection, this figure exceeded 90%.
- Teaching has improved and is now consistently good across the school. Senior and middle leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching. They address weaknesses quickly through extra support and training. Leaders set teachers targets that are well focused on improving teaching and pupils' progress. Better teaching is resulting in rapidly improving achievement for pupils. However, consistently good teaching has yet to have sufficient impact on key stage 2 test outcomes. Although improving rapidly, these still lag a little behind national averages.
- Senior leaders' efforts to develop middle leadership in the school have been very successful. Subject leaders and other middle leaders form a committed team who are leading improvement in their areas. For example, four middle leaders have trained the rest of the staff in aspects of teaching, including questioning and independent learning. Inspectors observed teaching where this training was being put into practice. Similarly, effective leadership in mathematics, historically the school's biggest weakness, is seeing standards rise speedily.
- The curriculum provides an appropriate range of subjects in key stages 2 and 3. Expert teaching in specialist facilities means that pupils in Years 5 and 6 make especially strong progress in several subjects including science, computing, design technology, art, music and physical education. Leaders' refusal to concentrate solely on English and mathematics in Year 6 was one contributory factor to pupils' comparatively weak performance in key stage 2 tests. In response, leaders have recently increased the time allocation for English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6. This has contributed to improvements in these subjects, but not to the detriment of the wider curriculum.

- Pupils enjoy a very wide range of extra-curricular activities including art, music, design and reading. The school has a particularly extensive range of sporting activities and opportunities for pupils. These are funded in part by the physical education and sport premium. Activities include traditional sports, tennis, gymnastics, table tennis, dance and Gaelic football. Links to external clubs are very strong and pupils are encouraged to pursue sport outside school. Many do. The school has many elite athletes, but equally encourages and values participation in sport by pupils of all abilities. For example, during the spring term of 2017, 84% of pupils were involved in some extra-curricular sport. Leaders therefore make very good use of the physical education and sport premium.
- The school successfully promotes British values, including respect, tolerance, democracy and the rule of law. Pupils learn about different religions in religious education. They engage in democracy in voting for prefects and school council members. They learn about the legal system in weekly citizenship lessons. Together, the school's ethos, the formal, taught curriculum and the wide range of enrichment contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders make effective use of pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. They have set up a 'PALS' project, where pupils are allocated a staff mentor who helps to identify any issues that might hinder their progress. Leaders then provide individualised support for the pupil or their family. Considerable impact is evident this year in improving attendance and better academic progress.
- Leaders make good use of the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium. They use it to provide extra help for pupils who have not reached the expected standard by the end of Year 6. These pupils catch up quickly as a result.
- Leaders have introduced a new system for teachers to assess pupils' attainment, following the removal of national curriculum levels. Teachers are assessing pupils with increasing confidence and leaders are using this information to target extra help to pupils who begin to fall behind with their work. However, some assessments are unreliable and over-generous. Consequently, leaders are unable to target extra help as precisely as they ought.
- Leaders' use of additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving. They provide highly effective support for pupils who have an education, health and care plan, often through the use of teaching assistants in lessons. Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, but who do not have an education, health and care plan, is currently less effective. This is because teachers do not routinely use information about pupils' special educational needs when planning lessons.
- The local authority has provided effective support which has contributed to the school's recent improvement. This has included mentoring for senior leaders, help in improving mathematics teaching and support in developing special educational needs provision.

Governance of the school

- Governance was identified as a weakness at the school's previous inspection. Governors quickly commissioned the recommended external review and acted upon its findings. As a result, governance has improved considerably and is now effective in its support and challenge for school leaders.
- Governors know the school well. The establishment of a 'Perton committee' of the federation governing body, with clear terms of reference and delegated powers, has contributed significantly to this.
- Governors visit the school regularly to gain first-hand information. For example, recent visits have focused on safeguarding, special educational needs and provision for the most able pupils. They use this first-hand knowledge to question and challenge leaders.
- Both the federation governing body and the Perton committee possess considerable expertise in a range of areas, including education. They also seek additional expertise to provide an external view on the school's effectiveness. For example, local authority advisers have recently carried out reviews of the school's assessment information and its use of pupil premium funding.
- Governors are committed to the school and its continued improvement. They seek training to improve their performance and they carry out their statutory duties with diligence. They are increasingly able to hold leaders to account for the school's performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All policies and procedures are fit for purpose and well understood by staff. Staff are well trained and vigilant for signs that a pupil may need extra help. Safeguarding records are thorough, well organised and stored securely. Procedures to recruit staff safely are understood and used well. The school's single central record is complete and compliant.
- Almost all parents who completed Parent View said that their child feels safe and well looked after in school. All staff who completed the staff questionnaire said that pupils are safe in school.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe. Several commented on an incident last year when the school was placed in 'lockdown' and how this had been frightening. However, they went on to say that a subsequent practice lockdown had reassured them and helped them to feel safer in school as a result.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now consistently good across years and subjects. Teachers follow a common approach to plan lessons that interest and enthuse pupils. Teachers endeavour to plan activities that are well matched to pupils' ability. For the most part, they are successful, especially in ensuring that the most able pupils are challenged.
- Relationships are strong across the school. Pupils trust and value their teachers. They are willing to 'have a go' at difficult work, secure in the knowledge of their teacher's and their classmates' support.
- English teaching is strong and practice is consistent across the department. Teachers question pupils skilfully to draw out more detailed responses and so deepen their understanding. Pupils write at length using complex sentences and accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use well to enthuse pupils. Consequently, teaching is strong in most subjects. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit particularly from effective subject-specialist teaching. For example, inspectors observed pupils in Year 5 skilfully using drills and planes in a design technology lesson. Similarly, inspectors observed pupils in Year 6 undertaking practical science experiments.
- Mathematics teaching is improving rapidly. Strong leadership and an effective team ethos have seen a more consistent approach develop over the past two years. Teachers now routinely expect pupils to think and explain their answers when solving problems. This is developing a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts in pupils. There is a clear focus on developing basic arithmetic skills in mathematics lessons and, although this is effective, pupils do not regularly use these skills in other subjects. This lack of reinforcement in other subjects slows pupils' otherwise good progress, especially in key stage 2 as these skills are becoming embedded.
- Leaders' focus on developing pupils' writing this year has been highly effective. Expert teaching in English lessons is supported well in other subjects. Pupils are expected to write accurately, and at length, in several subjects including history, geography and science. They do so readily, using the skills that have been developed in English lessons. However, this common approach is not evident in pupils' reading. Although pupils are fluent readers, they are not expected to apply their reading skills in subjects other than English. As a result, pupils' responses to reading, although improving, are not as well developed as they could be, especially in key stage 2.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in lessons, especially those who have an education, health and care plan. They encourage and help pupils, but are careful not to complete work for them. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities but who do not have an education, health and care plan is improving. However, teachers do not always use information about these pupils when planning lessons. Consequently, pupils who generally make good progress sometimes struggle with the work they are set.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and articulate. They have good attitudes to learning and are keen to do well in school. Inspectors spoke with several pupils who could clearly explain their current attainment and what they needed to do in order to improve further. They enthusiastically talked about their school and the fact that they are 'proud to be Perton'.
- The school's formal curriculum, its wide range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities, combined with a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education programme contribute strongly to pupils' personal development. They are very well prepared to move to high school academically and socially, and with well-developed learning habits.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Inspectors spoke with many pupils and all said that they feel safe. They told inspectors that bullying is rare and that any that does occur is dealt with well. The school's records of bullying and other incidents confirm that this is the case. All pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they trust the school's adults to deal with any bullying or other problems that might arise.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. The school's work on e-safety means that pupils know about the potential hazards of using the internet. They also understand how to keep themselves safe from such hazards.
- Adults provide high-quality pastoral care for pupils. Several parents who responded to Parent View commented on the extra help and support their children have received. The needs of pupils with medical conditions are met well. Leaders, with parents' help, plan support that enables these pupils to be fully involved in all aspects of school life, including extra-curricular activities and off-site visits.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils typically behave well in lessons. They are eager to do well. They work hard, listen attentively and are keen to discuss and offer answers when asked.
- The school is orderly throughout the day. At social times and between lessons, pupils behave sensibly. They are courteous and polite to each other, to teachers and other adults. Inspectors observed a wet lunchtime. Despite some cramped conditions, pupils behaved well and the school was calm.
- Pupils, parents and staff all agree that behaviour is good. Almost all staff who completed the inspection questionnaire said that behaviour is good, as did almost all pupils that inspectors spoke to.

- Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly and punctually. Attendance is consistently above the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils, which had declined in recent years, is now improving. Leaders provide effective support for any pupil, or the family of any pupil, who struggles to attend school regularly.
- Leaders use exclusion appropriately, as a sanction of last resort. They use it very rarely. It is also very rare for a pupil to be excluded more than once.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over recent years, the standards in English and mathematics reached by pupils at the end of key stage 2 have been too low. Unvalidated test results for 2017 show considerable improvement in mathematics, writing, and grammar, punctuation and spelling. There has been a particularly sharp improvement in outcomes for the most able pupils, especially in writing and mathematics. However, despite this rapid improvement, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics remains below the national average. This does not represent good progress in these subjects in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities currently make reasonable and improving progress across most subjects. However, teachers do not always take into account pupils' special educational needs when planning activities and this sometimes slows their otherwise good progress.
- Pupils make good progress in key stage 3 across all subjects, including English and mathematics. Much improved teaching and better assessment have accelerated pupils' progress in the last two years.
- Pupils make strong progress in key stage 2 in most subjects, including science, design technology, computing, French, music, art and physical education. Specialist teaching and good facilities mean that pupils quickly develop skills and understanding in these areas.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils, which has historically been weak, is improving rapidly. High-quality, individualised support, aimed at overcoming each pupil's difficulties, is proving highly effective. For example, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving highly in Year 6 mathematics tests rose sharply in 2017.
- Leaders' focus this year on improving outcomes for the most able pupils has been very successful. The proportions of pupils achieving highly in Year 6 tests in each of reading, writing and mathematics all increased this year. The improvements in writing and mathematics were considerable.

School details

Unique reference number	124437
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10035714

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 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	357
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Burton
Executive Headteacher	Alun Harding
Telephone number	01902 758244
Website	www.pertonmiddle.com
Email address	headteacher@perton-middle.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized middle deemed secondary school.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The school has a below-average proportion of disadvantaged pupils.
- The school does not make any use of alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school, based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- The school is part of the Codsall High Federation of Schools. It is formally federated with Codsall High School and Bilbrook Church of England Middle School.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, and some of these were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. They observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors observed morning tutor time.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about their reading.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work in many pupils' books in order to make judgements about the progress they were making.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including information relating to governance, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' progress and the checks made on the quality of teaching.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the head of school, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and four governors, including the chair of the federation governing body. The lead inspector spoke over the telephone with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered 45 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 27 free-text comments.
- Inspectors took account of 30 responses received to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nicola Walters	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Feldman	Ofsted Inspector

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