

Oldfields Hall Middle School

Stone Road, Uttoxeter ST14 7PL

Inspection dates	14–15 June 2016
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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Strong leadership from the headteacher, supported by senior leaders and governors, has led to rapid improvements in teaching and achievement since the previous inspection.
- Middle leaders and other staff form a strong and united team whose members are committed to providing the best education they can for their pupils.
- Leaders and teachers know how each pupil is progressing. They help pupils who fall behind with their work to catch up.
- The quality of teaching has improved and is now consistently good across most subjects. This means that an increasing proportion of pupils are making good or better progress.
- Teachers know their pupils very well. They plan lessons that take into account what pupils already understand, know and can do. Pupils like and trust their teachers.
- Reading is taught and promoted very well and pupils are making strong progress as a result. Pupils read widely because they enjoy it.
- Teachers give consistent, high-quality feedback that helps pupils to improve their work.
- Staff give good support to any pupil who is having difficulties or who needs extra help to succeed.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are confident, articulate, courteous and polite.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is well above the national average. Pupils feel safe in school.
- Governors are very committed. They know the school well and they effectively support and challenge the headteacher and other leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some groups of pupils in some subjects and years make less progress than others.
- Pupils do not practise extended writing or arithmetic enough in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- There remains too much variability in the quality of teaching, especially in questioning and expectations of pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability, make consistently good progress in all subjects and year groups by ensuring that:
 - all teachers ask pupils questions that make them think, so deepening their understanding of their work
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve in a lesson, particularly of the quantity and quality of work they produce
 - pupils have more opportunities to practise arithmetic skills and extended writing in subjects other than mathematics and English.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The school has improved rapidly since the headteacher took up his post in September 2014. His clear and meticulous leadership has urgently and successfully focused the whole school community on those areas most in need of improvement. Consequently, teaching is now consistently good across most of the school and pupils are making good progress. Many improvements have taken place relatively recently and leaders recognise the need to embed these over the coming months.
- Leaders and governors have quickly established an ethos of ambition and high expectations of all pupils. Pupils, staff and parents understand and embrace this vision. An overwhelming majority of staff and parents who responded to the online questionnaires said that the school is well led and managed. Almost all parents said that they would recommend the school to another parent. One parent wrote, 'This is a wonderful school. The staff are incredibly hard working, passionate about their work and very caring towards the children'.
- Middle leaders, including subject and pastoral leaders, form a strong team as they successfully focus on the academic progress and personal development of pupils. Having been trained and supported by senior leaders, they are becoming increasingly autonomous and are taking the lead in improving their areas of the school.
- Senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers use assessment information well. Assessments are collected each half term and the information is used swiftly to identify individuals and groups of pupils who are falling behind with their work. Teachers and leaders then give extra support to all pupils who need it and this helps them to catch up.
- Leaders and governors know the school well, including its strengths and weaknesses. They have put in place detailed plans to address weaknesses, and these are helping to ensure continuing improvement. For example, teaching has improved because leaders regularly check its quality and take action when weaknesses are apparent. Support and training are well focused on those areas and individuals where they are needed and where they will have most impact.
- Leaders have planned an appropriate curriculum that provides pupils with a wide range of subjects and experiences. Weekly personal, social, health and citizenship (PSHC) education and 'core skills' lessons help pupils to understand current world issues, as well as preparing them for life beyond Oldfields Hall. For example, in Year 8, core skills lessons focus on developing independent learning skills that will help pupils make the transition to high school.
- The school's work to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, liberty, respect and tolerance is effective. Pupils who spoke with inspectors explained their understanding of the European Union referendum. They also maturely told inspectors about different world religions, and the importance of respecting the views of others.
- The formal, taught curriculum is supplemented by a wide variety of extra-curricular clubs, visits and activities. These encompass sport, music, dance and opportunities to develop leadership skills, such as the school council and becoming peer mentors. Staff are quick to offer additional activities when they perceive a need. For example, when staff realised that some pupils were not taking part in extra-curricular activities, they organised a camping weekend expressly for these pupils and their parents.
- Leaders spend the pupil premium wisely. Leadership of this area is astute and tenacious and has ensured that all staff are aware of the need to raise standards for disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils, whose achievement was a cause of concern, are now making better progress, and gaps between their attainment and that of others are closing.
- The primary sports funding has also been spent well. It is used on a wide variety of activities that would not otherwise have taken place, and its use has seen a steady increase in the number of pupils involved in sport. For example, the proportion of pupils in Years 5 and 6 involved in at least one extra-curricular sporting club has doubled over the last year to 64%.
- The Uttoxeter pyramid of schools, which comprises one high school, three middle schools and 13 first schools, is becoming an increasingly important and helpful network for the school. For example, schools in the pyramid have developed a common assessment system that they all use. They have also jointly planned their curricula to support pupils' transition from one school to another. Coordinated training for staff in their second year of teaching is proving effective in developing these teachers' skills.

- The local authority has provided effective assistance to the school through a local leader of education, who has supported the development of senior and middle leaders. Staffordshire has recently categorised the school as needing less support, in recognition of the strong leadership that has now been established in the school.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are committed to the school and share a common purpose with its leaders. They know the school well, and each links with at least one aspect of school life. They visit the school regularly to check on their link areas.
 - In response to the previous inspection, governors set up a data committee that has developed considerable expertise in analysing and interpreting assessment information. They use this expertise well to challenge leaders about the progress that pupils are making.
 - Governors discharge their statutory duties with care and diligence. They carefully monitor the spending and impact of the pupil and sports premiums. They ensure that the school's arrangements for managing teachers' performance are well focused on improving teaching and raising standards.
 - Because their focus has, rightly, been on improving teaching and pupils' progress, governors have paid less attention to other areas, such as the school's duty to promote fundamental British values, and this has been left to school leaders.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are knowledgeable and vigilant to potential dangers because they receive regular training and updates. They are confident to pass on any concerns they might have, knowing that they will be taken seriously and that appropriate action will be taken. Procedures to recruit staff safely are in place and used well. All parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire agreed that their child feels safe at the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now consistently good across most subjects. Teachers use their subject expertise and detailed knowledge of what pupils already understand, know and can do, to plan interesting activities that are well matched to their pupils' ability. Teachers then regularly check pupils' understanding and step in if a pupil needs more help.
- Relationships in classrooms are strong. Teachers know their pupils well and pupils, in turn, trust their teachers. Pupils support each other in lessons and they are keen and eager to do well. Consequently, classrooms provide a safe environment where pupils are able to learn.
- Teachers consistently apply the school's marking policy. They give regular, high-quality feedback that helps pupils to improve their work. As a result, pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers now routinely provide greater challenge for the most able pupils in lessons. For example, in English, teachers now use more complex texts, such as gothic horror novels, and these help to develop pupils' vocabulary. In mathematics, teachers set increasingly difficult problems that make pupils think, rather than relying on repetitive practice of a particular skill.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and fluent readers because of the school's work to encourage reading across all subjects. Pupils read each day in tutor time, but they also read and apply their skills widely across the curriculum. Inspectors observed pupils using correct grammatical and linguistic terminology in several subjects. Improving reading is one important reason that pupils' progress is accelerating in most subjects.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who have special educational needs or disability, both in class and at other times. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- Many teachers use questions skilfully to make pupils think about their work and so deepen their understanding of the concepts being taught. However, this practice is not consistent across the school. Some teachers' questioning of pupils invites only brief, superficial answers. When this is the case, teachers do not spot and correct pupils' misconceptions and pupils learn less than they might as a result.
- Most teachers have high expectations of their pupils. Classroom routines are well established and pupils know that they must behave well, work hard and do their best. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers' expectations are not as high. Pupils are slow to settle, they do not work hard and the work they produce is of poor quality.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- In their time at Oldfields Hall, pupils develop into confident, articulate and mature young people. They enthusiastically take advantage of the rich array of opportunities for personal development that the school provides. For example, several Year 8 pupils are 'peer counsellors', distinctive in their red jumpers, who help other pupils when they are experiencing difficulties.
- The school's curriculum is carefully planned to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe from a range of potential dangers. Pupils are well aware of dangers posed when using the internet, including risks that can arise from people with radical views. Teachers thoughtfully teach pupils what these risks might involve for a young person growing up in Uttoxeter, and as a result, pupils know how to stay safe.
- Bullying is rare in the school and any that does occur is dealt with well. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and that they trust teachers and other adults to help them with any problems they experience, including bullying.
- An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire confirmed that their child is well looked after by the school. One parent wrote, 'This school has changed my daughter's life for the better. Oldfields gave her extra support. They even took us camping to help build her confidence. She is now happy, healthy and confident. I couldn't be more grateful'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in almost all lessons, at break- and lunchtime and as they move around the school. They are friendly, polite and courteous to each other and to adults. The school is calm and orderly throughout the school day, even during a wet lunchtime. Pupils, staff and parents agree that behaviour in the school is good and well managed.
- Leaders use fixed-term exclusion rarely and as a sanction of last resort. Very few pupils have been temporarily excluded this year and none has been excluded more than once. This is because pupils learn from their mistakes and do not generally repeat poor behaviour.
- Attendance is consistently well above the national average for secondary schools. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability, which had been low, has improved considerably this year following concerted action by school leaders. The gap between these pupils' attendance and that of others has now closed significantly.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are usually excellent. They are eager to learn and they work hard. In a small minority of lessons, when teachers' expectations are not high enough, pupils become distracted, and misbehave and produce work of a poor standard as a result.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Outcomes have improved considerably since the previous inspection and current pupils are making good progress in all years and across most subjects, including English and mathematics. Progress is a little slower in some subjects, including science, music and French, as confirmed by the school's own assessment information. However, even in these areas progress is improving because leaders use assessment information about individuals and groups of pupils effectively to intervene when progress is slower.
- The school's key stage 2 test results for 2015 showed a sharp improvement on previous years' results. Attainment in reading and writing was significantly above the national average, and attainment in mathematics was a little above the national average for the first time. Pupils' progress in mathematics, although slow, showed a steadily increasing trend that has accelerated for current pupils.
- Published test data for 2015 showed disadvantaged pupils making strong progress in reading, but less progress than their peers in writing and mathematics. These gaps are now closing and have, in many cases, closed. In most subjects, disadvantaged pupils are now making similar or better progress than others, although they still lag behind in physical education and music.

- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress. Teachers plan lessons that help them to learn, and teaching assistants are skilled at giving them just the right amount of support. Teachers quickly identify pupils who are falling behind and give them extra help, outside lessons, that helps them to catch up. Leaders are aware that these pupils make slower progress in French than in other subjects.
- The progress that the most able pupils make has improved considerably in the last two years and is now good. The proportions making and exceeding expected levels of progress in reading, writing and mathematics improved in 2015 to around the national average.
- The school's recent work to promote and improve reading has been very successful. Regularly collected reading-age data confirms that pupils in all year groups are making considerable gains in their reading. Inspectors heard pupils read fluently and with understanding. Pupils were keen to tell inspectors about the books they were reading and about the genres they enjoyed and why.
- Pupils' writing has also improved, but at a slower rate than reading. Pupils write accurately and at length in English lessons and occasionally in other subjects. However, in some subjects, including science and design technology, an over-reliance on worksheets does not allow pupils to practise the extended writing skills that they learn in English.
- Some pupils' arithmetic skills lag some way behind their reading skills. Inspectors observed pupils who could read fluently, but who struggled with basic addition and subtraction. Although better mathematics teaching is leading to improving achievement, pupils' basic arithmetic skills are not reinforced well in other subjects.

School details

Unique reference number	124429
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10009272

This inspection 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	527
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Moore
Headteacher	Carl Gliddon
Telephone number	01889 562 770
Website	www.oldfields.org.uk
Email address	office@oldfields.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 March 2014

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized middle school.
- Most of the pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium. This provides additional funding for children looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- All pupils are educated on the school site.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2014.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons; some of these visits to lessons 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 break- and lunchtimes and as pupils moved around the school.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including information relating to attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' progress and the checks made on the quality of teaching.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and other leaders, and a representative from the local authority.
- Discussions were held with a group of six governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with three separate groups of pupils.
- Inspectors evaluated 90 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors considered two letters from parents and the lead inspector had a telephone conversation with one parent.
- Inspectors took account of 32 responses received to a staff inspection questionnaire and seven responses to a pupil inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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