

# Inspection of Walton Priory Middle School

Beacon Rise, Walton, Stone, Staffordshire ST15 0AL

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| Inspection dates:         | 18 and 19 March 2025 |
| The quality of education  | <b>Good</b>          |
| Behaviour and attitudes   | <b>Good</b>          |
| Personal development      | <b>Outstanding</b>   |
| Leadership and management | <b>Good</b>          |
| Previous inspection grade | Good                 |

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Walton Priory Middle School embodies a caring community. The school has high expectations for all pupils and they achieve well. Pupils demonstrate the 'Walton Way' in all aspects of school life. They are encouraged to work hard, respect each other and care for their environment. Pupils and staff work in harmony together. Older pupils keenly support younger peers during breakfast club sessions. Pupils feel safe. Bullying is rare. If it is reported, pupils are confident that staff will take any concerns seriously.

Pupils experience an ambitious curriculum. In lessons, teachers engage pupils with carefully chosen activities. Most pupils display positive behaviours in lessons. They also take pride in their written work.

Beyond the academic curriculum, there is an extensive range of activities for all pupils, including kickball, crochet and 'chillax' club. All pupils are encouraged to participate in at least one club and they do. There are residential in every year group, including visits abroad. Pupils are taught to stay safe and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. There is a thriving school council, which is entirely self-governed by pupils from all year groups. Pupils are proud to serve their school community.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school ensures pupils receive an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. Leaders have strengthened the curriculum since the last inspection. The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff identify any additional needs pupils have and know these pupils well. However, although the school is well attended, a small number of pupils with SEND and/or who are disadvantaged do not attend school as regularly as they could. As a result, some pupils with SEND and/or are disadvantaged do not achieve as highly as their peers.

Pupils are encouraged to display maturity in their learning. For example, in a key stage 2 mathematics lesson, pupils used the correct terminology to describe regular and irregular polygons and Year 7 pupils in history were confident in describing the lives of enslaved people in Mali.

Reading is prioritised at Walton Priory. Staff identify pupils who need extra support with reading. They provide teaching that helps pupils to catch up, for example, through a well-organised phonics programme. This ensures that these pupils learn to read accurately. This helps them to access the full curriculum. There is a well-frequented library at the heart of the school. Here pupils can select from a variety of non-fiction and fiction texts. Most pupils engage well with daily reading sessions in form time. These sessions also help them to strengthen their vocabulary for extended writing tasks.

Pupils display courteous behaviour around the school site. A small number of pupils find it more difficult to manage their own behaviour, however, these pupils are well supported by

adults in the classroom. Suspensions are used appropriately and the school encourages pupils to reflect on any negative behaviours.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe through a well-organised personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. The school also holds assemblies to proactively educate pupils about topical issues, such as exploitation and knife crime. The school is heavily involved in a number of careers and engagement projects with universities and local businesses. An exemplary careers and visiting speaker programme runs throughout all four year groups. Pupils are encouraged to attend a range of clubs and activities. They appreciate that staff go the extra mile for them. Pupils also work together extremely well, for example, in raising funds and making props for an upcoming school production.

The school is well led and managed. Staff liaise effectively with other schools to support pupils' transition before and after Walton Priory. Older pupils are excited about the next stage of their education, but also value their time at this school. Governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for future development. Staff are exceptionally proud to work at the school. They strongly value the efforts of leaders to manage their workload and well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The school's work to strengthen the attendance and attainment for some pupils who are disadvantaged and/or have SEND is not yet fully realised. A small number of these pupils do not attend school as regularly as they could and do not achieve as highly as their peers. The school should take further action to effect improvements in attendance and achievement so that these pupils reach their potential.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 124426   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Staffordshire  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10343887   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Middle deemed secondary  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 9 to 13  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 532  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair of governing body</b>             | Paul Gerrard   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Sara Houlton   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.waltonpriory.staffs.sch.uk">www.waltonpriory.staffs.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Dates of previous inspection</b>        | 25 and 26 February 2020 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005                  |

## Information about this school

- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- The headteacher was appointed in April 2024.
- The school's published admission number has increased since the previous inspection.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teaching and support staff during the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils about their learning and experiences at the school.
- The lead inspector spoke to two representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative from the alternative provision provider.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history and music. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and look at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in other subjects and looked at pupils’ work in these subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record and relevant documentation; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils’ interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about pupils’ behaviour, attendance, the school’s curriculum and improvement planning, the school’s own self-evaluation and minutes of governors’ meetings.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and the free-text responses. They also considered the responses to Ofsted’s online staff survey and pupils survey.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

## **Inspection team**

Michael Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

David Hermitt

Ofsted Inspector

Jane Epton

Ofsted Inspector

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