

Danesfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Community Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123895
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	380761
Inspection dates	13–14 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI

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	360
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Rowe
Headteacher	Ian Bradbury
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 23 lessons and saw parts of other lessons and activities involving 24 teachers. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, a member of the governing body and representative groups of pupils. The inspectors looked at the school's evaluation of its work and improvement planning documents, external evaluations of the school's work, policy documents, minutes of the governing body meetings, the work of pupils in exercise books and assessment data of selected year groups. They also scrutinised 167 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, as well as questionnaires completed by staff and a sample of pupils from each year group.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of teaching and provision on pupils' learning, particularly middle ability girls, the more able pupils and those eligible for free school meals.
- How well assessment information is used when planning lessons.
- The role of middle leaders in school evaluation and action planning.
- The factors making the difference to pupils' attainment in Years 7 and 8.

Information about the school

Danesfield School is an average-sized middle school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion that has special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above average. Few pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most of these pupils have communication and/or behavioural and emotional difficulties. A few have hearing and visual impairments. Very nearly all pupils are of White British backgrounds. Since the last inspection, the children's centre has joined the two main partner first schools, St Peter's and Old Cleave, in partnership with Danesfield Middle School. In September 2010, the headteacher of Danesfield Middle School was appointed executive headteacher of the three schools. The school was accredited with the Healthy Schools Plus award in 2011. The school was designated a specialist science school in June 2009.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Danesfield Middle School provides a good standard of education. The school is a welcoming and positive community, where pupils behave well, feel extremely safe and enjoy coming to school. There is real energy around all that has been achieved and a clear vision for the future that drives improvement. An outstanding governing body has helped secure highly effective partnership working with outside agencies and the feeder schools, resulting in outstanding care, guidance and support.

Attainment has continued to rise year on year since the last inspection and is now in line with national averages at the end of Year 6 and meeting national expectations of pupils at the end of Year 8. From below average starting points, achievement is good. The vast majority of pupils who enter the school below average make good progress to close the gap on their peers and a few make exceptional progress. A significant contribution to the improved achievement comes from outstanding intervention work by a highly skilled team of assistants that is organised extremely well. The satisfactory teaching and learning in lessons, combined with high quality small-group teaching, ensure all pupils make good progress. The attainment and personal needs of all pupils are carefully monitored and the provision is adjusted successfully. The good curriculum has some outstanding features that enrich pupils' personal development and contribute to an atmosphere of inclusion. All of the outcomes that relate to pupils' broader personal development are at least good.

The best lessons move at a good pace and the purpose of the learning is always clear, but this is not always the case. The use of assessment information to plan precisely for each pupil's needs in lessons is variable. Pupils' knowledge of exactly what they need to do to improve, and the guidance they get in the lesson through questions and well-matched learning objectives, are not yet consistently strong features of all lessons.

Under the determined leadership of the executive headteacher and associate headteacher, a culture has been established where each individual is valued, self-determination is embedded and aspirations are high for everyone. Staff recognise this is a place where they are 'keen to come in to work' and their morale is high. Weak elements of learning are tackled robustly through a well-embedded culture of staff development. The school has good capacity to continue its upward trajectory, due to the strong partnerships forged with the community. School self-evaluation is accurate, based on first-hand experience of the senior leaders, and complemented by

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the views of all stakeholders. The members of the restructured middle leadership are at an early stage in developing their roles in action planning, and there is variability in how effectively they are monitoring and evaluating the impact of their actions.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good teaching to 85%, as well as increasing the proportion that are outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information consistently well when planning lessons so that work is more closely aligned to pupils' individual needs and academic targets
 - extending the use of dialogue and probing questions in lessons to give pupils more opportunities to participate actively, develop their ideas fully, deepen their thinking and drive learning forward.
- Improve the strategic involvement of middle leaders in raising achievement and improving learning by:
 - increasing the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems to drive improvements more evenly and consistently across the curriculum
 - ensuring that action planning includes clear timescales for when monitoring and evaluation are to be carried out, the methodology to be employed and the success criteria by which effectiveness is judged.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

For the last four years, National Curriculum test results have improved steadily, with boys often outperforming girls in English. The proportions reaching the higher Level 5 at Year 6 and Level 7 at Year 8 increased rapidly last year. In mathematics, a much higher proportion of pupils reach these levels than would be expected from their starting points because of challenging activities in lessons and emphasis on applying mathematical skills. This is increasingly the case in writing, through providing greater opportunity to write for a range of purposes across the subjects and using challenging texts to motivate more able pupils. The weaker communication skills of a small minority of pupils are being tackled very effectively and these pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. The success of strategies in this area, such as the tutor group time, drama, poetry, public speaking, mathematics talk and talk for writing, have been effective for these pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at risk of falling behind are supported exceptionally well.

The school's own reliable and accurate analysis shows that the majority of pupils of all abilities across the school are meeting aspirational targets and patterns of achievement across the groups of pupils are more consistent. Subject teachers work closely with pupil managers to ensure that small-group support in or out of lessons is carefully tailored to blend both the academic needs and social needs of these pupils.

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However, good teaching is not yet sufficiently, or consistently, present in all lessons to allow the school to reduce the amount of intensive intervention and move to more sustainable good quality learning in lessons for all pupils.

Pupils apply themselves well in lessons and enjoy learning with each other. Because the pupils are clear about what is expected of them, they engage positively with the teaching and show ambition. Behaviour around the school is good and in almost all lessons seen. Although pupils admit that there are a few of their peers who occasionally distract lessons with inappropriate behaviour, they consider that the best teachers deal with this swiftly and effectively. Pupils are unanimous that bullying, where it occurs, is dealt with effectively. Pastoral support has such a high priority that they all say how safe they feel. Pupils value the environment, and move around the narrow corridors and stairs safely. Pupils respect others, and a good proportion are involved on a daily basis in helping others manage their relationships towards each other. Pupils embrace others from different backgrounds and cultures. They acquire a good knowledge of other cultures and traditions through the curriculum and the strong links with other countries but cultural diversity is not so well represented in displays around the school. Regular assemblies reinforce the spiritual character of the school. But even in some of the best lessons, teachers do not give time for all pupils to reflect more deeply on their ideas.

There are numerous opportunities, which pupils readily take on, to share responsibilities and contribute to their community. Their work in fund raising is extensive and pupils show respect and understanding of those less fortunate. Pupils make a very significant contribution to the school and local community through their role as pupil leaders. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the need to keep healthy and participation rates in sport, drama and after-hours clubs are very high.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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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contribute to their future economic well-being	
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

There is some extremely effective teaching, particularly when it is informed by acute understanding of pupils' individual needs. For example, in one good mathematics lesson, Year 8 pupils made good progress because the activity was engaging, relevant, and entailed plenty of personalised challenge. The teacher used high-quality dialogue and probing questions to encourage pupils to participate and drive learning forward. Teachers generally possess strong subject knowledge, but this is not always used to best effect in lessons to enthuse or challenge pupils to make good or better progress. There are too few opportunities for teachers to listen to pupils, observe or question them during lessons in order to reshape tasks and develop their thinking. Consequently, activities are not always adapted enough to challenge pupils of all abilities, and over-long explanations by the teacher sometimes inhibit opportunities for pupils to think for themselves and to develop and explain their ideas.

There are some examples of effective marking, and pupils told inspectors that when they receive feedback of this quality they feel well supported and make good use of comments to refine their learning. However, this practice is not consistent across subjects. In too many cases, guidance is of limited value, and is provided too late to help pupils to respond to and/or reshape their learning.

The curriculum has been strengthened to provide more experiences to match the diverse range of pupils' needs. This is reflected in some excellent individualised programmes for gifted and talented pupils, young carers and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, a small group of pupils who find mathematics challenging have specifically designed learning programmes, built around their interests in horticulture or bicycles. Those who find they need more time communicating their ideas have the benefit of regular focused role play. The provision for the more able has developed since the last inspection, with an opportunity for these pupils to take the lead in teaching science and technology to younger pupils. The opportunities to develop enterprise skills are many and accessed by all pupils. A highly valued range of clubs receive a good take up and the introduction of dance and drama has increased pupils' enjoyment and personal confidence. The curriculum partnership between the English, humanities and science departments has resulted in subject-wide delivery of basic literacy skills.

Communication between the pastoral team and other agencies involved in supporting pupils and families is extremely tight, and acted upon and regularly evaluated. Support staff are particularly effective in helping pupils who experience emotional or

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behavioural difficulties to succeed and to improve their self-esteem. Very well-organised transition arrangements ensure that pupils are well supported. Attendance procedures have been tightened since a dip in levels last year, and the vast majority of pupils are keen to be in school on time and attend well.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and his senior leadership team have been successful in creating a caring ethos in the school in which all pupils are valued and respected. The unwavering belief that everyone can achieve the highest possible goals is woven into the outstanding support from senior leaders for focused professional development and training. The blend of expert training, with judicious use made of expertise within the school team, has resulted in a workforce capable of sustaining the good rate of improvement and improving teaching and learning further.

The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is demonstrated by the improvements it has brought to attainment and achievement overall, and in personalising the curriculum. These improvements have ensured the gap with the national average has been closing quickly and underachievement, as shown by cohorts in the past, is being eradicated. The excellent personal education plans for those pupils on the special educational needs register are becoming an established part of lesson planning. This is helping iron out inconsistencies in the demands made on these pupils in lessons.

The impact on pupils' outcomes is secured because of continuous monitoring by senior leaders of what is and is not working. The analysis of the performance of different groups of pupils is extremely robust and helps all leaders identify where to provide additional support and where new teaching strategies need to be developed. When practice is not as good as it should be, action is taken quickly to bring about improvement. For example, less effective learning in Year 5 was tackled when the curriculum was tuned more precisely to attainment information on the in-coming cohorts. The school is developing its monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that more responsibility is shared for school improvement among middle leaders. This is at a relatively early stage for some subjects and here the effectiveness of leadership is uneven. Actions taken by middle leaders sometimes lack clarity and precision with regard to timescales and how the impact is to be evaluated. Lessons

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are frequently observed but report inconsistently on the quality of learning.

The school is outward-looking and no more so than in the work it does to promote the safety and welfare of pupils in the community through working with multi-agency partnerships. The special educational needs leader and welfare managers maintain exemplary records and the open access to a range of therapies ensure that high-quality safeguarding practices complement the outstanding care, guidance and support. Members of the governing body are active partners in developing very productive links with the children’s centre and the school engages well with the local and international community through its partnerships.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a better than average response from parents and carers to the Ofsted questionnaire. Parents and carers were generally positive, although not overwhelmingly so. Some positive endorsement by way of additional comments was received and the comment that ‘the staff offer my child lots of help and support even after school’ was typical of the sentiments expressed. A few parents and carers wrote to the inspectors to explain their concerns about bullying and how it was dealt with. Inspectors gathered evidence about bullying incidents in the school and found these have decreased rapidly. Pupils themselves said that bullying, where it occurred, was always dealt with effectively. Procedures to protect and safeguard some of the more vulnerable pupils are extremely thorough and the pupils are known well. There were also a few letters about how well the school deals with concerns or suggestions. The governors have agreed to look into this aspect of the parent partnership. Where parents and carers wrote to inspectors about individual matters, these were raised

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with the headteacher.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Danesfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Community 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 167 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 360 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	37	86	51	12	7	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	59	35	93	56	5	3	4	2
The school informs me about my child’s progress	47	28	81	49	23	14	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	25	83	50	25	15	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	41	25	102	61	6	4	4	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	35	21	89	53	22	13	6	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	19	102	61	16	10	6	4
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)	52	31	85	51	12	7	4	2
The school meets my child’s particular needs	42	25	90	54	21	13	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	24	75	45	29	17	6	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	17	77	46	31	19	8	5
The school is led and managed effectively	43	26	96	57	13	8	5	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	47	28	90	54	18	11	4	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 September 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Danesfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled
Community Middle School, Williton TA4 4SW**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to inspectors when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and were impressed by how well you expressed your views. Here are our main inspection findings.

- Your school provides a good standard of education.
- Behaviour is good because of the respect and consideration you show each other.
- You feel extremely safe and adults in the school ensure that you receive outstanding care and personal support.
- You make a particularly strong contribution to your school and wider community through taking on positions of responsibility and through your dedication to supporting more vulnerable members of your community.
- You make good progress and achieve well. The standards you attain are improving rapidly.

School leaders, staff and governors are all determined that you should have the best opportunity to succeed. So we have asked Mr Bradbury and his team to concentrate on two things in particular.

- Improve teaching so that more of it is consistently good or better and accelerates your progress in all lessons.
- Ensure that subject leaders take greater responsibility for helping to improve the school so it can become outstanding.

You can certainly help your teachers by continuing to work hard at your reading, and continuing to respond enthusiastically in all lessons.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk
Her Majesty's Inspector

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