

# West Moors Middle School

Heathfield Way, Ferndown, Dorset, BH22 0DA

**Inspection dates** 22–23 May 2013

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory                | 3        |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Good                        | 2        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough pupils at the school currently achieve well, especially, but not exclusively, in mathematics. Opportunities to develop pupils' mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding are not planned for in different subjects. This contributes to some pupils' fragile grasp of key ideas in this subject.
- Teaching is not effective enough in promoting good progress for the majority of pupils, including in mathematics. Some teachers tend to talk for too long rather than enabling pupils to be actively involved in their learning.
- Teachers do not always use the information they have about pupils' progress well enough to plan lessons which challenge them to do as well as they can.
- The plans produced by school leaders to move the school forward are not always precise enough. In evaluating the quality of lessons, too much emphasis is placed on the process of teaching itself, rather than its impact upon learning.
- The governing body does not have a detailed enough knowledge of the specific areas in which the school needs to improve. Consequently, it does not hold school leaders to account with sufficient rigour and with enough precision.
- The role played by those teachers who are in charge of subjects is not well developed. As a result, they make only a limited contribution to raising standards in their areas of responsibility.

### The school has the following strengths

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have ensured that that information about how well pupils are progressing is accurate and is updated regularly.
- The attainment of Year 6 pupils in English was above the national average in 2012. Rates of progress are beginning to increase in most subjects as a result of recent improvements in some aspects of teaching.
- Pupils typically behave well in lessons and around the school. Most have positive attitudes to learning and cooperate well with their classmates and with staff.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is generally well promoted.
- The school has taken effective steps to strengthen its partnership with parents and carers since the previous inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, 20 part-lessons were observed. Meetings were held with: senior leaders, including the headteacher; middle leaders; members of the governing body, including the Chair; an officer from the local authority; and two groups of pupils, one from each of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.
- Inspectors looked at: planning and self-evaluation documentation; assessment information and examples of pupils' work; and a range of policy documents.
- There were 34 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire. In addition, the school's analysis of the views of parents and carers, and pupils, from surveys undertaken in October 2012 were considered.

## Inspection team

Ken Bush, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Una Maria Stevens

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- West Moors Middle School is smaller than most similar types of school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for specific groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority) is close to the national average; this represents about one quarter of pupils in the school. There is a very small proportion of pupils from service families currently on the school roll.
- About one in four Year 7 pupils failed to reach the expected attainment level by the end of Key Stage 2 in 2012. Those who are not already supported through pupil premium receive additional funding.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and all pupils currently on roll speak English as their first language.
- The school does not offer any alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has fallen significantly. This has meant that there has also been a reduction in the number of staff, including those with leadership responsibilities. Moreover, there have been a number of rapid changes of personnel in key roles, including that of the subject leader for mathematics.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and achievement so both are typically at least good by making sure that:
  - information about how pupils are progressing is used more effectively to plan lessons which challenge and enthuse pupils of all ability levels
  - there is a better balance between how much teachers talk in lessons and how much time is provided for pupils to be actively involved in their learning
  - teachers become more proficient in checking on how well pupils are learning in lessons so that they adapt their teaching more quickly and frequently when the need arises
  - the quality of marking is more consistently of the same high standard in all subjects and year groups
  - .
- Improve teaching and achievement in mathematics specifically, by ensuring that:
  - all mathematics teachers use their subject expertise more effectively to accelerate pupils' progress and strengthen pupils' grasp of key concepts
  - more opportunities are planned for in a range of subjects for pupils to practise their mathematical skills and apply their knowledge in different ways.
- Increase the impact of leaders and managers, including the governing body, on raising standards by:
  - making plans to secure improvement more precise so that progress can be more easily measured

- ensuring that leaders evaluate the impact of teaching upon learning more analytically
- strengthening the role of teachers responsible for subjects so that they play a greater role in raising standards
- ensuring that the governing body has a more detailed understanding of precisely how the school needs to improve so that it holds leaders to account more robustly.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved

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## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils at the school currently achieve well or make good progress in all subjects.
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics in Year 6 improved in 2012. However, rates of progress in this subject were significantly slower than those expected nationally in both 2011 and 2012. Inspection evidence indicates that, although there is an improvement in pupils' progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2 over time, the gap with how well pupils achieve in English is not narrowing quickly enough.
- Pupils' mathematical skills are not consistently well developed and understanding of key concepts is often fragile. Many pupils are unable to apply their understanding to unfamiliar situations with confidence.
- Pupils' attainment in English rose in 2012 and was just above the national average. Progress in Key Stage 2 in both reading and writing is beginning to increase as a result of some better teaching and more effective intervention when pupils are at risk of underperformance. Pupils' reading ability is carefully monitored and the value of regular daily reading effectively promoted by staff. Weaker readers make rapid gains in their skills and levels of confidence as a result of the successful catch-up programme. This includes those Year 7 pupils who attract additional funding.
- Typically, pupils achieve better in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6 in both English and mathematics. However, the majority of pupils who attend the school for all four years do not typically make good progress because they are making up for some ground lost in Key Stage 2.
- Disabled pupils and all groups with special educational needs progress at a comparable rate with other pupils, with some minor variability over time in different subjects and year groups. The same is true of those pupils who benefit from the pupil premium. In 2012, the gap in attainment between pupils from this group who were in Year 6 and others in this year group was the equivalent of about two-and-a-half terms' progress in both English and mathematics. This is broadly similar to the gaps found nationally.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, although there are no deep-rooted weaknesses, it is not consistently of sufficiently high quality to ensure that the majority of pupils make at least good progress.
- Planning in general has improved since the previous inspection. Most teachers routinely plan lessons which take into account pupils' different abilities. However, this is sometimes too broad-brush and planning is not always finely tuned enough to take account of what different pupils are capable of learning. When this occurs, pupils frequently undertake tasks which are either too easy or too hard for them, rather than consistently having a suitable level of challenge.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils are not always high enough. This was reflected in the significant proportion of lessons seen during the inspection where teachers talked for too long, rather than allowing pupils to work independently and actively. In such lessons, pupils were not enthused and occasionally became distracted.
- An exception to this was a very successful Year 5 English lesson in which pupils were given succinct, but clear, guidance and then allowed to write explanatory leaflets for the new Year 5 cohort when they joined the school. Pupils demonstrated the ability to produce work of good quality, showing a high level of understanding of different features of language use.
- In a Year 6 physical education lesson in which good teaching was also seen, there was also a suitable balance between teacher instruction and pupil activity. Although the objective was the same for all pupils (to learn the correct technique for the high jump), the teacher skilfully

adjusted the demands according to ability so that all pupils succeeded at an appropriate level and were fully involved.

- Another key weakness seen in lessons was teachers not checking carefully enough through, for example, skilful and regular questioning, how well pupils had grasped the learning points and how engaged they were by what they had been asked to do. Only rarely were teachers seen amending their plans to take account of pupils' responses to the task.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise are typically sound, including in most cases, when they are required to teach outside of their main specialism. In mathematics, teachers' ability to make effective use of their expertise is more variable, which contributes to some pupils' slow progress in this subject.
- Teaching assistants are an extremely valuable asset to the school and make a strong contribution to most lessons in which they provide support. Consequently, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, along with pupils whose circumstances render them vulnerable, are effectively supported and gain in both confidence and competence as learners.
- Marking has improved and in the best examples seen, such as in some English classes, is of a high standard and gives pupils clear pointers on how to improve their work. This quality is less evident in other subjects and is variable across the school.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils generally behave well in lessons and around the school site. Most have positive attitudes to learning and want to do well at school. On the few occasions when pupils are not fully engaged, this usually manifests itself as inattentiveness rather than disruption and tends to occur when teaching fails to interest pupils sufficiently or they are not actively involved in their learning.
- Year 8 pupils spoken to by the inspectors felt that behaviour had improved during their time at the school and that teachers were now more consistent in how well they dealt with the occasional instance of poor behaviour.
- Relationships within the school are cordial and pupils routinely cooperate well with staff and with one another. They are welcoming to visitors, including the French students and staff who were working in the school on the first day of the inspection. Pupils were entirely accommodating and unfazed by the changes to the normal routine.
- Inspection evidence indicates that the good behaviour seen first-hand during the inspection is typical. Rates of exclusion, which were high at the time of the previous inspection, have reduced significantly, as have recorded instances of misdemeanours. The school has considerable success in managing pupils with known behaviour difficulties. Parents and carers affirm also that they are confident that the school manages behaviour well.
- Pupils report that bullying occurs only rarely and is followed up promptly by staff and always taken seriously. They are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe both in and beyond school, including with regard to cyber-bullying and internet safety. The vast majority believe that the school is a safe community in which all pupils are valued equally.
- Most pupils attend regularly, although a small minority are persistently absent, despite the school's best efforts. School procedures for monitoring and following-up absence are robust.

### **The leadership and management require improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because neither teaching nor achievement is good.
- The headteacher has had to manage the significant challenges of a declining roll and the consequent reduction in the school budget. This has meant that, with fewer staff, including in leadership roles, and a high turnover of staff generally, there has been instability in both

teaching and in leadership. Some of the pupils who were spoken to by inspectors had noted the many staff changes and had found them 'unsettling'. The headteacher has looked for creative solutions to these difficulties, such as making good use of links with a local school recently judged by Ofsted to be outstanding to provide some temporary support in the leadership of mathematics.

- Notwithstanding these practical constraints, the school has demonstrated its capacity to improve further through the rising attainment in English at Key Stage 2, the improvement in behaviour and the strengthening engagement with parents and carers since the previous inspection. The use of pupil premium funding has been well managed and the impact carefully monitored.
- Leaders have a clear commitment to improve teaching which is shared by the staff spoken to by inspectors. Performance management procedures are well led and are regarded by staff as an important tool for improvement. Training opportunities are closely aligned with what teachers require to become more proficient in the classroom.
- Self-evaluation is broadly accurate, although the school's assessment of the quality of teaching puts too much emphasis on the process of teaching itself, rather than its impact upon learning, which is not analysed in enough depth.
- The improvement plans produced by school leaders do not define the specific steps needed to move the school forward sharply enough, especially with regard to improving teaching. It is not always clear enough either how the successful completion of actions will be evaluated, or what impact these actions will have directly on pupils' achievement. Consequently, leaders and governors are not easily able to monitor in detail how the school is progressing.
- The role played by those teachers who are in charge of subjects is not well developed in all cases. As a result, most make only a limited contribution to raising standards in their areas of responsibility.
- The curriculum is largely fit for purpose and provides a broad range of opportunities and experiences for pupils; Year 8 pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education. Skills development across subjects is relatively weak. A useful initiative to develop literacy skills across the curriculum is in its early stages and so, while some impact is evident, it is limited. Moreover, there are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to practise their numerical skills and apply their knowledge and understanding of mathematics in a range of different subjects. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is generally well promoted.
- The local authority provides useful support to the school, principally through the school evaluation partner. This has helped to bring additional expertise into the school and support the development of leadership capacity. However, the local authority's view of the school's overall effectiveness is more favourable than that of the inspection team.

■ **The governance of the school:**

The governing body has improved since the previous inspection. It has taken opportunities to develop greater educational expertise through its recruitment of new governors and undertaken training to build its capacity to become more knowledgeable about how well the school achieves compared with all schools nationally. It is also aware of the importance of ensuring that teachers' pay is linked to how well teachers perform in the classroom and how well pupils achieve. The governing body ensures that procedures to keep pupils safe meet current statutory requirements, and that the school provides equality of opportunity for all pupils and does not tolerate any discrimination. However, the governing body does not have a detailed enough understanding of how well pupils currently in the school are achieving, or of the specific areas in which the school needs to improve, particularly with regard to teaching. Consequently, it does not hold school leaders to account with sufficient rigour or with enough precision. This is exacerbated by the shortcomings in the school improvement plan.

## What inspection judgements mean

| School  |                      |  |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| Grade   | Judgement            | Description  |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding          | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.   |
| Grade 2 | Good                 | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.   |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.   |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate           | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |



## School details

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 113861 |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Dorset |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 404486 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

|  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Middle deemed secondary           |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community                         |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 9–13                              |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                             |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 189                               |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Pauline Whale                     |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Alison Bunting                    |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 8–9 June 2011                     |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01202 872474                      |
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