

Dulverton Middle and Community School

Barns Close West, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9EE

Inspection dates 3–4 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils make good progress and their attainment by the end of Year 8 is higher than expected for their age.
- Strong support for all groups, particularly those who have difficulty learning, ensures consistency of progress and the achievement of all groups is good.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are mature and generally very sensible. Relationships are very positive and pupils correctly report that bullying is most unusual and quickly dealt with on the rare occasions that it occurs.
- Teaching is good. Lessons have varied and interesting activities, classrooms are calm and the atmosphere is purposeful.
- Marking of pupils' work is excellent and provides crystal clear advice about how to improve.
- The wide range of activities related to the local area encapsulated in 'the Exmoor Curriculum' provided excellent opportunities for pupils' personal growth and their moral, social and cultural development.
- The executive headteacher has raised expectations for the school and built the strength of the federation. The impact of changes is now evident in better teaching and higher achievement across the school.
- The governing body is well informed about the school and challenges it effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all lessons are planned in enough depth and this means that, at times, some pupils are not always fully challenged with work that is at the right level of difficulty.
- Teachers do not always use opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills by linking their teaching to the wide range of practical activities that pupils do.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited nine lessons taught by seven teachers and undertook two joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspector held discussions with pupils, teachers, the headteacher, senior managers, representatives of the governing body and a local authority officer.
- The inspector examined numerous school documents including policies, assessment information, planning documents and records of all kinds.
- The views of 10 parents were analysed through the Parent View website.

Inspection team

John Carnaghan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average middle school. It is part of a federation that also includes two first schools. All three schools are led by an executive headteacher and have the same governing body.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for looked-after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families) is below the national average.
- Most pupils are White British. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching, and so raise pupils' achievement, through:
 - making sure that lesson planning is of a consistently high standard
 - ensuring all lessons provide the right level of challenge and support to keep all pupils working at full stretch.
- Develop the planning of subjects and activities so that the wide range of practical experiences pupils have are more fully used to promote their literacy and numeracy skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils enter the school with attainment that is a little below the expected level for their age. Good teaching promotes good progress across the school; the proportion of good or better lessons is increasing and this is leading to pupils making more rapid progress. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 8 is above expected levels in both English and mathematics. This represents good achievement for all groups of pupils.
- The school uses assessment information thoughtfully to ensure that it offers equality of opportunity for all of its pupils and that there is no discrimination. Regular checks and meetings between relevant staff ensure that pupils in danger of falling behind are quickly given the right type of support.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs benefit from the school's considered approach and so make similar progress to their peers. A well staffed and run 'nurture group' gives assistance to pupils facing emotional and behavioural difficulties so that they can cope with school life and achieve well.
- Progress in lessons is good because teachers promote learning well by introducing varied and interesting activities. Pupils enjoy learning and are very responsive to teachers' instructions, listening carefully. The precise and relevant advice they are given, especially in marking, helps pupils to understand their next steps and to achieve well.
- A good Year 7 mathematics lesson observed during the inspection exemplified the quality of learning. It was enlivened by a game that changed the number value of the symbols in algebraic formulae, so making the problems to be solved more unpredictable. Pupils enjoyed the random nature of this exercise, concentrating hard and quickly showing mastery of the methods required.
- The gap in English and mathematics progress made by those eligible for pupil premium funding and all others in the school widened in 2012. Reacting to this smartly, the school has used its assessment information to focus expenditure more directly to meet individual needs. As a result, this group of pupils is now making much better progress and the gap in attainment has narrowed this year. By the end of Year 6, these pupils are approximately six months behind their classmates in mathematics and less than six months behind in English.
- Most pupils are competent and confident readers, partly because the school provides numerous opportunities for them to read independently, such as at the start of English lessons when they are settling down. Those who find reading difficult benefit from sympathetic, well-planned small group and individual support that helps them overcome their problems and often promotes excellent progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- The work the school has done to promote good classroom practice has improved the consistency and quality of teaching. Teachers are courteous and caring towards pupils, always ready to listen and help. All staff foster positive relationships. Pupils reciprocate; they get on very well with adults, listen carefully to instructions and always appear keen to learn. The atmosphere in classrooms is calm and purposeful.
- Typically, lessons have a number of strengths. Interesting activities that are undertaken at a good pace maintain pupils' interest. A good history lesson on the emancipation of black people in the United States was enlivened by a wide range of historical photographs that pupils enthusiastically analysed and discussed. The teacher's and pupils' sensitivity to this issue was notable and cultural understanding was promoted well as pupils related the changing status of minority ethnic groups in the United States to the present position in the United Kingdom.
- Teachers have good subject understanding that makes them confident practitioners. They use their knowledge to formulate perceptive questions that encourage pupils to think in depth;

teachers' techniques in using probing questioning are notable, not necessarily accepting the first answer offered and encouraging pupils to take more enquiring approaches to their studies.

- Teaching assistants have benefited from relevant training that enables them to offer expert assistance to pupils in danger of falling behind, especially in basic skills like reading, writing and mathematics. Assessment data are used carefully to establish where best to direct intensive help and to check the success of such interventions.
- The nurture group offers a safe haven for pupils who find school life hard to cope with. For example, at the start of the day a small group comes to the nurture room for breakfast, to discuss recent events in their lives and to prepare for the day ahead. This sets most of them up to participate in normal school routines.
- Teachers mark pupils' work with great care. Their comments offer warm encouragement and clear advice on how to improve. Time is regularly found in lessons for pupils to check teachers' comments and act on them. Targets are clear and regularly updated.
- Lesson planning is variable in quality. Often it is detailed, leading to well-organised and planned sessions. However, on the few occasions when pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable, planning is too vague, work is not always set at the right level of difficulty and there is not enough challenge for the more able pupils. In addition, too little time is given for closing sessions of lessons to review and reinforce learning and explain what is coming next.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Pupils display maturity and independence in lessons and around the school. Good behaviour is the norm and pupils routinely repay teachers' trust in them. The numerous opportunities 'the Exmoor Curriculum' provides for pupils to work outdoors with light supervision are of significant benefit to pupils' personal development.
- Behaviour in lessons is invariably good or better. Pupils are calm and responsive, listening carefully to their teachers and one another. They collaborate well in groups on tasks, often showing intense concentration on the job in hand. Parents agree with their children's views that behaviour is good.
- Movements around the building are orderly and pupils play in harmony together at break and lunchtimes. They know about bullying and the various forms it can take, including through the internet and mobile phones, and correctly report that it is very rare at the school, a view also expressed by parents. Pupils are confident that behaviour issues are thoroughly sorted out by their teachers.
- The school has worked very hard to promote good attendance and figures are close to the national average. This is commendable in this far-flung upland rural community where travel in bad weather can be very difficult.
- The school plans carefully to ensure that pupils understand how to stay safe. Personal, social and health education lessons enable pupils to develop a balanced view of risk in their everyday lives. They are thoroughly briefed about potential hazards when taking part in school events on the moor, such as sailing, and when travelling on the narrow country roads.

The leadership and management

are good

- There is growing evidence of the positive impact of the federation on pupils' achievement. The headteacher, in his role as executive headteacher for all three schools, has pursued his vision of excellence through the greater integration of practice across the group. For example, more consistent assessment of pupils' attainment in both of the first schools means that pupils' starting points at Dulverton are now well understood and form a good basis for planning of teaching and individual help as required.
- The developing strength of the federation has increased the expertise available to the school and improved the capabilities of leaders, managers and the governing body to promote school

improvement. The school has capacity to build on current successes and continue to improve. The local authority provides good support to help overcome potential problems of isolation and help the school progress.

- Leaders and managers run systematic checks on the quality of the school's work. Assessment information is carefully recorded and analysed. It is used to hold teachers to account and to indicate where further staff training may be required. Assessment data also trigger additional support for individual pupils. This is well judged because pupils' needs are so well known and such support invariably boosts progress.
- Checks on the quality of teaching have enabled the school to identify and act on weaknesses. Good practice has been identified and is shared across the school so lessons show a greater emphasis on learning and a stronger consistency of practice.
- The mixture of subjects planned in 'the Exmoor Curriculum' is unique. It engenders in pupils a strong sense of local identity and love and respect for the countryside that is such a large part of their lives. Many pupils recognise this work as both exciting and challenging. The wide range of work done such as conservation, participation in local arts events and outdoor activities like sailing helps to build pupils' confidence and independence. Numerous close partnerships, for example with the Exmoor National Park, maintain strong community links. English and mathematics are well planned but the development of pupils' skills in these areas is not regularly linked to their work on 'the Exmoor Curriculum' and so opportunities are sometimes missed to promote more rapid progress.
- The wide range of activities available and the personal, social and health education programme contribute very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy opportunities to take on responsibilities, for example through the eco group that keeps a sharp eye on environmental waste. They care for one another, the older ones showing round Year 4 pupils as part of their preparations to move up to the middle school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have good routines to check the quality of teaching and are well aware of the way that performance management relates teachers' performance to their pay progression.
 - The governing body has shown good judgement in requesting that pupils' performance data are presented to them in an accessible format. This has been done and governors now understand how well pupils are doing and the way that their standards and progress relate to national averages.
 - Governors have sought additional training to fill any skills gaps they have identified, for example in the analysis of Key Stage 2 assessment results presented in national published data and how they compare with national figures.
 - Pupil premium expenditure is regularly considered by governors, who approve the school's priorities. Members also understand how this money has impacted on pupils, especially their progress, so know that it provides good value for money.
 - Governors challenge the school well. They carefully check that the school is a safe place and help the school fully meet its safeguarding responsibilities.

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

Unique reference number	123871
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	406199

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	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie Smith
Headteacher	Jeremy Weedon
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 May 2011
Telephone number	01398 323223
Fax number	01398 324071
Email address	sch.487@educ.somerset.gov.uk

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