

# Minehead Middle School

Ponsford Road, Minehead, Somerset, TA24 5RH

## Inspection dates

4–5 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- All groups of pupils achieve well. They make especially good progress in English and science. They read widely and can discuss complex issues with common sense and maturity. Written work is generally of very high quality.
- Pupils also achieve well in subjects that include history, geography, creative subjects and physical education, where they display a healthy competitiveness.
- Teaching is good because teachers have good subject knowledge and in the main plan challenging work. The high quality of their marking and feedback to pupils is a particular strength.
- Teachers know which pupils need extra help and ensure that they receive it. Teaching assistants are highly effective in this aspect of the school's work.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well both in and out of lessons. They are smart, sensible and polite. They are enthusiastic about learning and often explain their new knowledge with spontaneity and excitement.
- Pupils say there is little bullying and the school's records confirm this. They are well aware of the dangers of, for example, the misuse of electronic media. They care for each other, and the school's actions to ensure their safety are highly effective.
- Leaders and managers have identified potential weaknesses and have been very successful in improving teaching, subject leadership and hence pupils' achievement, notably in English and science. Governors know the school well and are highly effective in challenging senior leaders to make improvements.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Some pupils, notably in Year 6, do not make enough progress in mathematics because they spend too long practising basic skills rather than learning how to apply them to solve problems.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in French because they are confused by the tasks they are asked to do.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the teaching of 23 teachers in 26 lessons. Seven of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. In addition, briefer visits were made to a number of lessons, in the company of senior leaders, in order to pursue a theme, for example, the quality of support for pupils with special educational needs and pupils' achievement in mathematics in Year 6.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' written work in order to analyse their achievement over a period of time, and the quality of teachers' marking.
- Inspectors reviewed school documents, including those relating to pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour and safeguarding. They also reviewed reports from external consultants.
- Meetings were held with staff, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and with a group of headteachers of first schools from which pupils transfer.
- The views of 31 parents and carers who submitted them on the Ofsted online Parent View questionnaire, and of staff who completed a questionnaire, were analysed and taken into account. A small number of letters and emails from parents and carers were also considered.

## Inspection team

Paul Sadler, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Wendy Delf

Additional Inspector

Anne Turner

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school but relatively large for a middle school. It serves the coastal town of Minehead and surrounding villages.
- The school converted to become an academy school on 1 June 2011. When its predecessor school, also called Minehead Middle School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- The school is a member of The Exmoor Coast Federation of Schools, which also includes six first schools from which pupils transfer.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who have a parent or carer in the armed services.
- A small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Most of these pupils speak Eastern European languages at home.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for its pupils.

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

- Speed up the progress in learning mathematics of pupils in Year 6 who are of average attainment. Once these pupils have mastered a basic skill, move on quickly to teach them how to use it to solve mathematical problems.
- Improve pupils' progress in learning French by making sure that they are always clear about what they have to do, and that they understand why they are doing it.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- When pupils start at the school in Year 5 and leave at the end of Year 8, there are no national tests or assessments against which to accurately measure their achievement. School leaders have undertaken a great deal of highly effective work in partnership with other schools in their federation, in order to establish the position.
- This evidence shows that on starting Year 5, pupils' attainment in English, especially writing, and in mathematics, is below average. Headteachers of first schools agree with this analysis. Pupils make very good progress, especially in English and science, so that by the end of Year 8 their attainment when compared with pupils nationally is at least average and in the case of the most-able pupils, is well above this.
- Pupils read widely and understand sophisticated texts. For example, pupils in Year 5 had read *Journey to Jo'burg* by Beverley Naidoo. They could explain apartheid and its impact on the people of South Africa at that time. This was a fine example of the school's excellent development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Pupils' written work is of very good quality. They show pride in their work. Books are neat, tidy and free from doodling. Work is completed to the best of the pupils' ability. Work in English, and also in subjects such as history and geography, is often lengthy, thoughtful and well written. This evidence confirms the school's analysis that pupils make very good progress over time in a range of subjects.
- In mathematics, pupils make good progress from Years 5 to 8; the most-able attain levels close to the highest grades of GCSE. However, pupils of average attainment in Year 6 make slower progress because they spend too long practising basic skills. As a result, the attainment of this group in national tests at the end of Year 6 has been lower than it should be. The school's analysis of the progress of current pupils shows that the position is now improving.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs make good progress due to the good support they receive. This was seen in science in Year 8 when pupils were studying factors affecting the size of a shadow, leading to outstanding progress.
- Pupils who attract the pupil premium also achieve well and gaps between their performance and that of other pupils are non-existent or small. The attainment and progress of these pupils are generally less than one term behind those of other pupils and in some cases, such as in writing for the current Year 7, they exceeds them.
- Pupils at an early stage of learning English quickly acquire the necessary language skills. Most make very rapid progress in a range of subjects from low starting points. An inspector spoke to a Year 7 pupil who had been learning English for two years, and was surprised to find she was not a native speaker because the quality of her spoken English was so good.
- Pupils enjoy competition. In design and technology, groups of pupils in Year 7 were enthusiastically designing model cars to be raced against those made by other groups. During the inspection, pupils regularly approached the headteacher, wanting to recite The Lord's Prayer from memory, which was a challenge he had issued.
- Pupils enjoy music, as seen when those in Year 5 sang songs by The Beatles with gusto and enthusiasm. They also enjoy physical education and the many opportunities for competitive sport, including in competition with other schools.
- Pupils make less progress in learning French. They are sometimes unclear about what they are meant to be doing. For example, some written work was examined which started well, but in some cases deteriorated into a meaningless mixture of French and English.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and of their pupils. They use the pupils' competitive spirit well. For example, lower-attaining Year 6 pupils were challenged to solve

mathematical problems in competition with each other, winning 10 points for solving a hard problem and five for an easier one. Their enthusiasm and workrate led to outstanding progress by all.

- The quality of marking and of feedback to pupils is excellent. Marking is frequent, detailed and helpful. The marking includes individual questions for pupils to help consolidate their learning, which they always answer. Senior leaders regularly monitor pupils' work and when this has happened it is recorded on the work.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and give them challenging tasks. For example, in a Year 6 science lesson, pupils designed a fair test of the effect of the type of surface on frictional forces. Careful planning for each pupil's needs enabled them all to make rapid progress. Over time, teachers have high expectations of the quality of pupils' written work, to which they all respond well. These are examples of the school's very successful promotion of equality of opportunity.
- Teachers are aware of which pupils have special educational needs and of those eligible for the pupil premium. Techniques such as support from able teaching assistants, one-to-one tuition and the teaching of small groups are used very well to ensure that each pupil continues to make rapid progress.
- Homework is used well to improve progress. The school has introduced an internet-based homework facility ('virtual learning environment') which pupils greatly enjoy using. Parents, carers and pupils are content with the amount and type of homework that pupils receive.
- Pupils are set appropriately challenging targets, and most have a good understanding of what they need to do to achieve them. However, in Years 7 and 8, pupils are not always given a clear idea of the GCSE grades they might realistically aspire to at the end of Year 11.
- In Year 6 mathematics, pupils, especially those of average attainment, sometimes spend too long practising a basic skill. For example, a class spent more than one lesson measuring angles between two intersecting lines, before moving on to applying this to solving problems. This slows their progress.
- In French, tasks are not always clear to pupils. For example, in a written task they may not be sure whether they should be writing in French or in English.

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

- All pupils have a great enthusiasm for learning. The routinely high quality of their written work and the pride they take in it are testimony to the way they set about doing so. They are keen to tell adults about what they have learned and about what excites them, such as in art or playing rugby.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils enjoy collaborating on projects, are very polite and respond quickly to adults' instructions. They look smart in their school uniforms and take pride in their own appearance and that of the school. These factors demonstrate the school's success in fostering good relationships.
- Pupils are confident and open when speaking to adults. They speak willingly about personal challenges they have faced and of how the school has helped them to overcome these, for example by providing them with high-quality counselling.
- Pupils say there is little bullying and that any that occurs is largely confined to some immature behaviour among the youngest pupils. The school's records confirm this. Exclusions have reduced year-on-year and there have been none in the current school year. This outstanding behaviour results from the high expectations of staff and the consistent application of well-known routines. Parents and carers rightly have confidence that their children are safe at school and that bullying is rare.
- Pupils express pleasure in having schoolmates with a range of abilities and from a variety of ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They say this increases their understanding of the world and its peoples, demonstrating the school's success in tackling intolerance and discrimination.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school meets all requirements to ensure the safety of pupils. They are taught about the dangers of risky behaviours for example concerning misuse of the internet, drugs and alcohol. The many outdoor and adventurous activities are carefully assessed for risk and are led by well-trained staff. Appropriate steps are taken to vet adults and to ensure that child protection arrangements are robust.
- Pupils' attendance is above average and few are away from school for long periods, except for well-documented medical reasons. Unexplained absence is followed up quickly. Pupils are punctual both to school and to their lessons. Enforced absence because of poor weather or transport problems causes disappointment as pupils want to be at school.

## **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The headteacher and governing body have a bold vision for the school. They want it to be a leader in ensuring that young people in the local area have an excellent educational experience from the ages of three to 18. They have worked well with other members of the educational community, especially the other schools in the federation, to ensure that there is a good understanding of pupils' achievement when they change schools and of how progress can be speeded up. Within the school, they have successfully created a climate in which very good teaching and excellent behaviour can flourish.
- School leaders are adept at identifying potential weaknesses through effective self-evaluation, and have resolved them successfully. Subject leadership, especially in English, mathematics and science, has been much strengthened. As a result, teaching has improved and pupils' progress is accelerating rapidly, most notably in English and science, but also now in mathematics. Senior leaders are able to provide high-quality evidence of these improvements through excellent use of assessment and highly effective analysis of data.
- Senior leaders have a very good understanding of teachers' performance, which is checked regularly and managed effectively. The results are used well to determine teachers' pay. Good quality professional development is focused on areas of greatest need, for example currently on mathematics teaching in Years 5 and 6. Newly qualified teachers get very good support and the school is a very effective training environment for student teachers.
- Aspects of the school's work, such as support for pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, are also managed very well, so that these pupils make very good progress. Parents and carers rightly speak extremely highly of this aspect of the school's work.
- The school uses additional resources, such as the pupil premium, to enable pupils in Year 7 to catch up, with a high degree of success. Because of the high quality of the additional support they receive, pupils in receipt of the pupil premium make progress that is equally good and is sometimes better than that of others, so that all pupils are equally well prepared to tackle the next stages of their education.
- The school is making good use of the government's primary school sports funding, having purchased gymnastic equipment and paid for coaching in archery, table tennis and dance.
- The excellent curriculum offers pupils a wide range of opportunities, including outside the school day, to learn a wide range of subjects and skills. The specialist skills of teachers and other adults are used very effectively, for example to introduce pupils to computer programming.
- Parents and carers generally are highly satisfied with the school's provision. Although responses to written communications are sometimes low, attendance at the many meetings to discuss pupils' progress and future opportunities is higher.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance and, in spite of the difficulties of obtaining comparative data, of how it relates to that of schools nationally. They challenge senior leaders, for example to reduce or eliminate exclusion, which has been successfully achieved. Governors have the required information to check on staff performance and responsibilities, and know how these should be rewarded. They also have an excellent

understanding of the use of additional resources such as the pupil premium, and of their impact on improving pupils' achievement.

- Governors are rightly taking an active role in debating proposed local changes to school provision. They are well trained and are effective in meeting their responsibilities such as to keep pupils safe.

## 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>	136774
<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	441118

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	549
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Martina Forster
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Rushforth
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01643 704191
<b>Fax number</b>	01643 705693
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:sch.496@educ.somerset.gov.uk">sch.496@educ.somerset.gov.uk</a>

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