

Ferndown Middle School

Peter Grant Way, Ferndown, Dorset, BH22 9UP

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- From their starting points all groups of students make good progress. Attainment by the end of Year 8 in reading, writing and mathematics is above average.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Students achieve well because teachers match learning activities to students' different abilities and interests.
- The strong focus on developing students' reading and writing skills helps them to make good progress in all other subjects.
- Students' attitudes to learning are excellent, and attendance and punctuality to lessons are very high. Students arrive at school well prepared and ready to learn.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well.
- All students are extremely polite and courteous. They respect the views of others and are always willing to help each other. Their behaviour around the school and in lessons is outstanding.
- The headteacher provides very strong leadership for the school. She is very well supported by the senior leadership team. Staff and governors share the headteacher's mission to provide a wealth of opportunities for all students to experience success.
- The governing body provides very good support to the school. Governors are knowledgeable and use their wide range of skills to keep the school's work under close review.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small minority of teaching does not consistently challenge students to do their best. This particularly affects those students receiving additional support funded by the pupil premium whose progress is not yet as high as other groups.
- Students' responses to their teachers' marking of both classwork and homework are sometimes insufficiently thorough, and at times do not relate to the subject matter covered.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 21 lessons, six of which were joint observations with senior leaders. They also conducted a series of short observations to look at aspects of learning for specific groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs. Inspectors also attended several tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors scrutinised the quality of students’ work in their exercise books from all subjects and looked in detail at the work of specific groups of students including the most able and those supported by the pupil premium.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including school data, the school’s self-evaluation, the school’s development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, records of lesson observations and safeguarding documentation.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle leaders and other staff. Discussions were also held with members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors held meetings with students in each year group, with students who have been in receipt of additional support for reading and writing, and with two students who had previously been excluded.
- Inspectors took account of the 96 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and of two letters from parents. Inspectors also received 46 questionnaires completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

Caroline Dearden, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patrick Hazlewood

Additional Inspector

Teresa Gilpin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ferndown Middle School admits students into Year 5 and they leave in Year 8. It is larger than the average-sized middle school.
- The majority of students are from White British backgrounds. Very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding provided to give extra support to those students known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Some students leave the school at the end of Year 6 to take up places in local grammar schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and increase the amount of outstanding teaching to ensure that:
 - all students supported by additional funding are consistently challenged to make excellent progress in their learning
 - students are taught how to use their teachers' marking to help them improve the quality and content of their work

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From standards of attainment on entry to Year 5 that are lower than those typical for middle schools, students make good progress. In 2013 they reached standards in the Year 6 national tests that were broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. In the current academic year many Year 6 students have progressed to take the higher-level Key Stage 2 tests (Level 6) in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Current school information shows that, from their starting points, by the end of Year 8 this good progress continues, with many making excellent progress overall.
- Standards in writing are improving rapidly as a consequence of the whole-school approach to developing students' literacy skills. At the start of Year 5 there are differences between the quality of boys' and girls' work. However, by the end of their time in the school boys and girls achieve similarly well.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress because their needs are clearly identified and the support provided is precisely matched to their needs. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively; they help students to learn well in lessons.
- The progress of the most able students is good. This is particularly evident in mathematics where teachers have strong subject knowledge and leadership of the department is excellent. This combines to ensure that students are consistently challenged to develop their reasoning and thinking skills well.
- In 2013, at the end of Key Stage 2, students supported by additional funding attained approximately one level lower than their peers in mathematics and half a level lower in reading and writing. These gaps are closing rapidly, and the proportion of these students making good progress is very similar to that of their peers, although the proportion of those making similarly excellent progress is slightly lower than that of their peers.
- Good use of the primary sports funding enables students to experience a range of sporting skills and to achieve well in physical education.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good with a strong core that is outstanding. Many teachers are subject specialists, including English, mathematics, science and French. Their good subject knowledge is used in a wide range of subjects to provide interesting activities and to build students' knowledge and skills successfully.
- Teachers ensure that learning activities are well matched to students' different abilities and interests. Students say that their teachers care about them and support them to achieve their best.
- There is a strong focus on students improving their literacy skills and on students using correct spelling and grammar across all subjects. The Year 7 catch-up fund has been used to provide appropriate support for students who need additional help. Work in students' books shows that, by the end of Year 7, they are able to write at length and in detail using sentences, paragraphs and chapters to appropriately structure their work.
- In mathematics most teaching is outstanding, and marking routinely provides opportunities for students to practise and develop their numeracy skills. Evidence in students' books shows that learning activities consistently challenge them to work as well as they can.
- Students are supported and prepared well for tests. They value the opportunities for revision classes and the additional support provided by teachers.
- Teachers regularly provide the chance for students to read in lessons. The school library is available to all students and is used to provide opportunities for them to read about the topics they learn in class. This helps students to achieve well in all their subjects.
- Students' work is marked regularly and thoroughly across all subjects and the requirement for

students to respond to their teachers' comments is well embedded. However, students do not always understand how to use their teachers' comments to help them improve their work and their responses are sometimes too brief or unrelated to the subject. This means that marking does not always help students to make the rapid progress intended.

- Homework does not always add value to students' learning. Its use is not consistent across the school. The content is sometimes unrelated to the topic being covered in lessons, and there are inconsistencies in how the homework policy is applied to support learning in different subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They arrive promptly to lessons, and are well prepared and ready to learn. Conduct in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Students are consistently mature and sensible. They willingly take on roles during lunchtime to keep the dining areas calm and clean.
- A high level of mutual respect characterises relationships between students and adults in all year groups. Students have a real sense of pride in the school. They are welcoming and readily discuss their work with visitors.
- Sanctions, such as lunchtime and break-time detentions, are fair and proportionate. They are well understood by students, and are effective in reducing lateness and ensuring that students do not forget their homework. Attendance and punctuality are consistently high.
- Bullying is very rare, and dealt with effectively. Students say that the very few students who have bullied others have behavioural issues which are recognised and addressed by school staff. They understand why some students behave as they do, and are tolerant but disapprove.
- Specific teaching in personal, social and health education, and coverage in tutor periods ensure that students have a good awareness of different forms of bullying. They know about the dangers of internet and social media misuse, and the harm that prejudice-based name-calling can cause. They do not accept derogatory language, are respectful of the views of others, and are very supportive of their individual needs and differences.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Leaders are vigilant and every care is taken to ensure that the school keeps students safe. Safeguarding policies, procedures and practice are applied thoroughly and conscientiously.
- Parents, staff and students are positive about the school and strongly support its work to promote good behaviour, care and well-being. As one Year 6 student said: 'The school does a great job of looking after you; they really do care.'

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides very strong leadership for the school. Her mission to provide a wealth of opportunities for all students to experience success underpins students' pride in and love of their school.
- She is extremely well supported by senior leaders and governors. Their high expectations of students' behaviour and attitudes for learning, together with good and improving teaching are instrumental in delivering good progress and learning.
- The procedures to manage teachers' performance are exceptionally strong, with subject leaders holding teachers to account for students' progress and achievement. The school's core group of outstanding practitioners provides readily available in-school expertise to help bring about further improvements in the overall quality of teaching. Where teaching needs to improve, appropriate and effective support is quickly implemented.
- The school council provides opportunities for students to be involved in the leadership of the school. Their views are well respected and they are excellent ambassadors for the school, greeting and welcoming visitors with self-assurance, confidence and obvious pride in the school.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and appropriate for the needs of students in both Key Stage 2

and Key Stage 3.

- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is strongly promoted across all aspects of the school's work. A rich programme of visits and other activities, including opportunities for students to link and share their experience of school with students in Sri Lanka and Martinique, help to develop students' cultural awareness.
- Rights, respect and responsibility are taught extremely well. Consequently, students have excellent attitudes to learning, and equality is strongly promoted. There is no evidence of any discrimination within the school. Students are friendly, caring and supportive of each other.
- Leaders take every opportunity to ensure that information about students' progress and achievement is accurate and reliable. Levels awarded following Year 5 testing are validated by the local authority. The tests taken by Year 8 students are common to seven other local middle schools and the results of these tests are standardised across all eight schools.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View feel that the school is well led and managed and would recommend it to others. A few parents have commented that homework is not always set or marked regularly enough. This issue has been recognised by the school's leaders, and incorporated in the school development plan as an area for improvement.
- The school's self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. The areas for development have been agreed with the local authority which provides light-touch support for the school.
- Leadership is not yet outstanding because the strategies identified to support all students supported by additional funding not yet fully embedded.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well led and organised, with a good range of skills, experience and expertise. Governors ask searching questions and have well-established practices to monitor the quality of teaching, for example through regular meetings with school leaders. They use the outcomes of performance management and information about students' progress and achievement to hold leaders to account. Governors ensure that decisions about teachers' salary progression are determined by students' progress. Governors are involved in decisions about how the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up money are spent. They are increasingly able to interpret data and have a good understanding of how students' test results are used to measure the rate of their progress. Governors ensure that there are rigorous procedures to safeguard students and ensure their health and safety. All statutory requirements are met.

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	113878
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	443813

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	555
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Herringshaw
Headteacher	Gillian Allen
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2010
Telephone number	01202 876556
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Email address	office@fernmid.dorset.sch.uk

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