

Danesfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Community Middle School

North Road, Williton, Taunton, Somerset TA4 4SW

Inspection dates

10–11 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The progress and attainment of pupils at key stage 2 have been below national averages for the last two years.
- Over time, monitoring by middle leaders has not secured good teaching, learning and assessment. Despite recent changes made by the newly appointed headteacher, it is too soon for these to have had sufficient impact on pupils' progress.
- Training for middle and senior leaders has not yet had the desired impact on improving the outcomes for pupils in the school.
- Strategies to improve teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently applied.
- Pupils do not make sufficient progress in mathematics and writing as they move through the school.
- In the past, governance at the school has not been sufficiently rigorous in holding the school leaders to account.
- Although attendance is improving, there remains a small gap between the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and other pupils.
- Not all pupils display positive attitudes in lessons.
- Pupils are not prepared sufficiently for life in modern Britain.

The school has the following strengths

- Staff, parents and pupils share the vision of the newly appointed headteacher. A culture of raised ambition and expectation is now evident in much of the school's work.
- The headteacher has brought stability to the leadership of the school. Systems and plans with the potential to bring about more rapid improvement are now in place.
- Most pupils appreciate the support they are given to help them with their work and are pleased with the changes introduced by the new headteacher.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the impact of leadership and management across the school by ensuring that middle and senior leaders take an active part in monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' learning, and take swift action to bring about the necessary improvements.
- Strengthen teaching, learning and assessment across the school so that pupils make at least good progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information to plan challenging work for pupils so that they can achieve to the best of their ability
 - making sure that teachers clarify to pupils what it is they need to do to improve their learning, especially in writing and mathematics
 - ensuring that all pupils are focused on and engaged in their learning.
- Improve attendance to ensure that all groups of pupils sustain attendance at least in line with national expectations.
- Improve pupils' understanding and knowledge of fundamental British values.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- In the past, leaders' evaluations of the school's strengths and weaknesses have not had the desired impact on raising pupils' standards or the quality of teaching. Actions and leaders' efforts to raise standards were not focused well enough.
- Previously, leaders at the school have not always checked on the school's performance and the quality of teaching rigorously enough. As a result, pupils have not made sufficient progress over time.
- Strategies for improving teaching and learning are not yet being consistently applied across the school. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' learning remains too variable across different age groups and subjects.
- School leaders are aware of the need to invest in staff training and development. All staff are provided with a growing range of training opportunities, for example those provided for middle leaders. However, training has not yet had sufficient impact on improving the progress of pupils.
- The leaders of the school have introduced new systems for monitoring behaviour and attendance. While these have had a positive impact on attendance for some key groups of pupils, the attitudes to learning for others are not yet good.
- The school does not prepare pupils for life in modern Britain well enough. The leadership of the school recognises the need to address pupils' awareness of these important concepts, and work with other schools and communities is planned. While some pupils are able to talk about what life in modern Britain means to them and explain democracy and British values in simple terms, their deeper knowledge and understanding of tolerance, the rule of law or democratic processes are currently lacking.
- Pupil premium funding is not used sufficiently well enough to support disadvantaged pupils in mathematics and English. The school recognises the need to develop this further across all subjects so that the attainment and progress of this group improve rapidly. Plans to reach this goal are yet to be fully implemented.
- Where catch-up funding is used to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, it is effective. Intervention programmes are in now place and additional staff deployed. However, the impact of these recent changes has not yet been fully realised.
- The headteacher has developed the curriculum using various initiatives to enhance pupils' experiences and to develop their aspirations. For example, pupils' enthusiasm is sparked through trips to places of interest as well as arranging for members of the community to come in and work with children through organisations such as Rotary.
- Equality of opportunity is now a positively developing feature of the school, as is the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural guidance.

- The new headteacher and leadership team have a planned, coordinated approach to move the school forward. While the changes implemented have begun to affect positively on the progress of pupils at key stage 3, pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching are not yet good.
- External support from the West Somerset Academies Trust is proving effective. The appointment of the headteacher has strengthened the leadership of the school and brought much needed stability. Improvements to a new system of tracking and monitoring pupils' progress are now having a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and are helping to ensure that pupils' misconceptions are addressed. This is reflected in the progress pupils have made since September 2016.
- The newly appointed senior and middle leaders share the headteacher's ambitions for the school. There is a developing culture of high aspirations for all pupils. The extensive professional development programme and rigorous performance management system are raising staff expectations of what can be achieved. The school is working hard to eradicate weak teaching. Pupils and staff recognise and respond positively to the improvements being made.
- Sport funding is being used effectively to support pupils' physical development and participation in healthy activities. For example, leaders ensure that all pupils who leave Year 6 are capable of swimming at least 25 metres. A growing number take part in competitive fixtures against other schools.
- Parents are appreciative of the presence of the new headteacher and are pleased that the school is improving under his leadership.
- The school works closely with other schools in the area and is increasing the leadership capacity by formally joining a multi-academy trust.

Governance of the school

- Over time, the governance of the school has not been robust enough in holding leaders at the school to account for the progress of pupils. A period of turbulence at the school has resulted in lack of leadership, insufficient pupils' progress and a culture of underachievement. Governors have actively sought solutions to improve the situation and have not shied away from tackling difficult issues such as dealing with underperforming staff and reducing the budget deficit.
- Strong strategic decisions are now being made to secure future improvements at the school, such as joining a new multi-academy trust. However, some governors still do not fully understand their role in the strategic monitoring of the school, including that of safeguarding pupils or checking what difference additional funding is making.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Since April 2016, leaders have worked extremely hard to improve the effectiveness of safeguarding at the school. A detailed action plan ensures that all requirements are met, including through the rigorous monitoring of the single central record.

- Safeguarding record-keeping is accurate and training of staff is up to date, ensuring that all actions are followed up in a timely manner and staff understand what to do when issues arise. The school is beginning to work more closely with pupils to ensure that they are safe and well supported. Pupils feel safe and know whom to go to if they have a concern or a worry. Volunteers receive training relating to safeguarding issues. Staff follow up on behaviour incidents to make sure that they are dealt with effectively.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, over time, throughout the school, requires improvement. The quality of teaching through the school is too inconsistent. Teachers do not provide activities for pupils that challenge them effectively in their learning.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. This means that work is sometimes too easy for pupils, or pupils spend too long going over content they already know. Where teachers have high expectations of pupils, pupils make good progress. For example, in key stage 3 in mathematics, pupils are challenged to stretch their understanding when solving different algebraic equations.
- Teachers follow the marking policy of the school. However, feedback from teachers does not help pupils to progress in their learning. Pupils are not able to say with confidence what they need to do to improve in their learning further.
- The school has taken steps to tackle poor assessment of pupils' work. Assessment information is now provided to staff and parents to help support and challenge pupils. However, this approach remains inconsistent. Pupils make the best progress when assessment is used to inform teachers' planning. For example, the most able pupils are identified and challenged in some cases. However, where activities planned do not take sufficient account of the prior ability of pupils, their learning falters.
- Teachers do not check closely enough how well pupils make progress, nor address misconceptions so that pupils' progress can improve. The introduction of specialist staff to address this issue is helping, but the impact is not yet evident in pupils' progress over time.
- Some teaching over time in the school is good. In such instances, teachers have high expectations, secure understanding of pupils' needs and good subject knowledge. They are consistent in their approach to teaching and learning. They know the pupils well and use assessment to support their planning. In science, for example, teachers effectively support pupils in their learning and development because of their clear understanding of their individual needs.
- Teachers in key stage 3 plan activities to promote pupils' use of literacy across all subjects. However, teaching is not securing pupils' good literacy skills in key stage 2. Spelling is not taught consistently across the curriculum.
- Additional adults who work alongside class teachers support pupils well. They are trained effectively and demonstrate this in their questioning of pupils to check their understanding and develop their learning.
- The atmosphere, culture and environment in the classrooms and around the school support most pupils' learning well.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Most pupils appreciate the support they are given to help them with their work. However, some pupils spoken to stated that there were some children at the school who needed to do more to improve their attitudes to learning during lessons. Pupils' behaviour over time is typified by episodes of off-task behaviour. Improvement to this aspect of pupils' attitudes is a key objective in the school development plan. Pupils already feel that improvements are being made.
- Pupils are generally proud and supportive of the school. They positively welcome the presence of the new headteacher and staff. The pupils are pleased with the changes that are being brought about at the school.
- Pupils are clear about what bullying is and the different forms it can take, including physical, racist and cyber-bullying. They are also clear about the difference between bullying and 'falling out'. Pupils told inspectors that any bullying that does occur is dealt with quickly by an adult. Pupils are aware of the need to stay safe and are informed by their teachers about, for example, the safe use of the internet.
- Pupils feel safe and secure in the school and state that the school is homely. For example, with the support of the local community and parents, the school has installed a prayer room where children can go to reflect at break- and lunchtime. The facility is respected and well used.
- The pupils show a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities within school as a result of effective support in tutorials and dedicated lesson time.
- Pupils are typically polite to one another, other adults and visitors to the school. They are very welcoming of visitors in lessons and around the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Some pupils do not self-regulate their behaviour or routinely display a positive attitude to their learning.
- Behaviour logs indicate that the number of recorded incidents of disruptive behaviour is now reducing as a result of the effective actions taken to tackle this issue by school leaders.
- The school is working hard to improve the attendance of all groups. Current information shows that the attendance of most groups is now in line with national averages. However, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils are still not attending as well as other groups.
- Most pupils conduct themselves in a calm and orderly manner at breaks and lunchtimes.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Attainment in the key stage 2 tests over the last two years has been below national averages for writing, reading and mathematics. Pupils have not made sufficient progress over time during Years 5 and 6, especially in writing and mathematics.
- The attainment and progress of those pupils currently at the school are projected to improve in 2017 but they are not yet good, especially at key stage 2. Not enough pupils are yet on track to achieve the age-related expectations in mathematics. Detailed plans are in place to address historical shortcomings in mathematics. Newly appointed staff are targeting pupils' misconceptions carefully. A revised scheme of learning is focusing more closely on equipping pupils with the skills, knowledge and understanding required to progress.
- The progress of the most able pupils varies throughout the school. Where teachers set challenging goals, pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding through carefully planned activities. Conversely, where teachers' subject knowledge is weaker, activities planned lack sufficient challenge and fail to stretch the most able.
- Historically, girls have not done as well as boys. This situation is improving as their needs are being better identified and increasingly met. The progress of girls at key stage 3 is now better than that of boys in writing and reading.
- Those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities currently in school make variable progress. Where high levels of support are provided for pupils who have had their needs accurately identified, pupils are exceeding expectations.
- Progress of pupils at key stage 3 is strong, especially in English, as a result of high expectations and careful use of assessment information for planning.
- Most pupils read well and are able to talk about their reading and learning. Reading is a strength. The library provides a good resource for additional learning opportunities. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' reading and promote reading through tutorial time and displays around the school. Pupils read aloud in lessons and staff support weaker readers through an established programme of intervention.

School details

Unique reference number	140631
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10024965

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.

Type of school	Middle
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Cerys Randell
Headteacher	Mr Adam Evans
Telephone number	01984 632581
Website	www.danesfieldcofemiddleschool.co.uk
Email address	office@danefield.somerset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish on their website.
- Danesfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Community Middle School is smaller than the average-sized school.
- The headteacher has been in post since April 2016.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and most pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is above the national average. The school deprivation indicator is slightly above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils receiving support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion who have a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- In 2016, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning across a range of subjects at both key stages 2 and 3. Some observations of learning were conducted with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, pupils, staff and two groups of governors.
- A wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour logs, was scrutinised during the inspection, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, surveys of staff and pupil views, the school development plan and data relating to pupils' achievement and progress.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils in lessons, at lunchtime and breaktime to seek their views about the school. The inspectors listened to pupils read.
- An inspector met with the chief executive officer of the Quantock Academy Trust.
- The inspectors considered the 23 responses by parents to Parent View.

Inspection team

Matthew Shanks, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Hummerstone	Ofsted Inspector
Svetlana Bajic Raymond	Ofsted Inspector

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