

Churnet View Middle School

Churnet View, Leek, Staffordshire ST13 6PU

Inspection dates

12–13 February 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders and governors are passionate and ambitious for the school and its pupils. Together with other staff, they form a dedicated and committed team. In recent years, the school has improved considerably in many areas, including behaviour, attendance and pupils' progress.
- Leaders at all levels use assessment information well. They identify pupils who need extra support and then provide help to ensure they do not fall behind with their work.
- The curriculum contributes well to improving pupils' basic skills and to their personal development. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for high school when they leave at the end of Year 8.
- A very strong culture of care and support for pupils exists across the school, with all staff playing their part. Consequently, pupils feel safe, happy and well cared for in school.
- Support provided by the Talentum Learning Trust has not supported inexperienced senior leaders and governors as well as it should. Consequently, some leaders' evaluations of the school have been over-generous. Some improvement plans are unclear and some training has not been as well targeted as it could have been.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge well to explain ideas and concepts. Pupils value their teachers' expertise.
- Positive, respectful relationships in classrooms mean that pupils trust their teachers. Pupils are happy to ask questions and try tasks, secure in the knowledge of their teachers' support.
- Although teaching is good, some aspects are weaker. Some teachers do not use questions well to check on what pupils know or to deepen their understanding. At times, teachers do not ensure that tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities and/or needs.
- Pupils make good progress over the four years they spend in the school. This is the case in most subjects, including English and mathematics. Attainment has improved considerably over recent years.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Good teaching and well-focused extra support have led to the differences in attainment between these pupils and other pupils nationally closing considerably.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons. They enjoy their learning and are keen to do well. However, at times, when tasks are not well matched to their abilities or needs, some pupils become distracted. Teachers do not always deal with this low-level disruption well.
- The school is calm and orderly throughout the day. Pupils behave well at breaktime and lunchtime. Most are mature, courteous and polite.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils make strong progress in all subjects, by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - plan activities that challenge the most able pupils and provide sufficient support for low-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
 - use questioning well to check on and deepen pupils' understanding of their work
 - use the school's behaviour systems to address low-level disruption in lessons.
- Improve the impact of leadership, by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching are evidence based and accurate
 - training to further improve teaching is well targeted to areas and individuals where it is most needed
 - all improvement plans are clear and well focused.
- The trust should ensure that new and inexperienced leaders and governors are provided with sufficient support, guidance and professional development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- After the previous inspection, the school's performance had declined. Since the headteacher took up post, the school has improved considerably in many areas, including behaviour, teaching, attendance and pupils' progress. The school now provides a good standard of education for its pupils. Senior leaders form a committed and able, but inexperienced, team. Their determination to provide a good standard of education is valued and appreciated by pupils, parents and carers, and staff. Almost all parents who completed Parent View and staff who responded to the Ofsted online survey agreed that the school is well led and managed.
- The headteacher and senior leaders provide a compelling vision for an inclusive school where pupils feel safe, behave well and therefore achieve their potential. Their vision is shared by staff who are equally committed to pupils' best interests. Leaders are clear about most areas that they would like to see further improve, for example outcomes and behaviour. However, their written improvement plans vary somewhat in quality. For example, leaders' plans to improve provision for disadvantaged pupils are detailed, precise and specific. In contrast, the school development plan lacks detail and clarity.
- Leaders at all levels make good use of assessment information. Internal and external moderation ensures that assessment is reliable. Leaders analyse assessment information carefully to spot pupils, or groups of pupils, who are beginning to fall behind. They then provide extra help for these pupils and finally check that the additional support has had the desired impact.
- The curriculum supports pupils' academic progress effectively. Leaders have recently reorganised the curriculum in key stage 2 so that pupils are taught most subjects by their class teacher. This is having a positive impact on improving pupils' basic skills and, specifically, in ensuring that all subjects are developing pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils in key stage 2 benefit from specialist teaching in several subjects, including design technology and physical education (PE). In key stage 3, pupils study a broad range of subjects taught by specialist teachers. This prepares them well for the move to high school.
- Several features of the curriculum contribute particularly well to pupils' personal development. A well-planned personal, social, health and economic education programme is taught through weekly 'Respect' lessons. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities and leadership opportunities for pupils. The school's farm provides pupils with opportunities to care for its sheep, goats and chickens. Off-site visits serve to broaden pupils' horizons, particularly learning about people of different faiths and/or ethnicities. Together, the school's ethos, its curriculum and its broader opportunities contribute very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Middle leaders form an effective team. Those who are subject leaders provide good support for teachers. For example, after observing members of their departments teach, they provide helpful written feedback that teachers value. Pastoral middle leaders have been instrumental in improving pupils' behaviour and attendance in recent years.

- Leaders make good use of additional funding. The pupil premium funds a variety of effective strategies to help disadvantaged pupils overcome any barriers to learning they face. Consequently, these pupils' attendance has risen; their behaviour has improved and they are now making good academic progress. Similarly, leaders use the PE and sport premium well to promote pupils' participation in sport and physical activity. Many pupils named PE as one of their favourite subjects when speaking with inspectors.
- Relatively new leadership of provision for pupils with SEND is proving effective in improving provision for these pupils. Leaders now provide staff with detailed information about these pupils, including strategies to meet their needs when planning lessons. Teachers are using this information with increasing confidence, although there is some way to go until its use is consistently strong.
- Leaders have worked very hard to improve parents' engagement with the school and their efforts have been successful. For example, the number of parents attending parent consultations has increased considerably, and parents now hold the school in high regard. Increasing numbers are choosing to send their children to the school. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View said they would recommend the school to another parent.
- Links between the school, local first schools and the trust's two high schools are strong. The headteacher has been instrumental in setting up a local inclusion panel that includes many of these partners. It works proactively to provide support for vulnerable pupils in these schools. For example, the panel has secured funding to provide additional support for pupils who need help with their mental health.
- The inexperience of some senior leaders is evident in their over-generous evaluation of some aspects of the school's performance, most notably the quality of teaching. They have mistakenly equated improvement with excellence. At the start of the inspection, senior leaders evaluated the quality of teaching as outstanding. It is not. Despite having regularly checked on the quality of teaching jointly with middle leaders, senior leaders had not used this information to inform their overall view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Consequently, although leaders provide teachers with regular training that they value, not all training is well targeted. It has not always been focused effectively on those aspects of teaching or the individuals where improvement is most needed. This means that, in some respects, teaching has not improved as much as it might have done. Despite this, the overall quality of teaching across the school has improved over recent years and is now good.
- The Talentum Learning Trust has not provided effective support for the school's inexperienced senior leaders and newly established local governing body (LGB). It has failed to ensure that senior leaders' evaluations are based on evidence rather than opinion. It has failed to ensure that the LGB is able to challenge leaders about some aspects of the school, including the quality of teaching and the content of some improvement plans.

Governance of the school

- Members of the LGB possess an appropriate range of expertise. They are committed to the school, its ethos and its vision. They are very supportive of the school's leaders and, in many areas, they also provide effective challenge to leaders. For example, they

scrutinise pupil premium spending plans, checking that spending is having the desired impact on disadvantaged pupils' attendance, behaviour and progress. Similarly, their scrutiny has played its part in the improved provision for pupils with SEND. They regularly question subject leaders about standards within their departments. However, at the time of the inspection, they shared senior leaders' over-generous evaluation of some aspects of the school's effectiveness, including the quality of teaching. This is because some governors have accepted evaluations that were based on leaders' opinions rather than insisting that they should be based on concrete evidence.

- The LGB has been in existence for less than 18 months and, as such, is an inexperienced body. The trust has failed to ensure that members of the LGB are properly able to hold leaders to account for all areas of the school that the trust's scheme of delegation suggests they should be.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose.
- This area is well led. Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained to spot the signs that pupils might need additional support. Staff readily pass on any concerns they have to leaders. Leaders deal with concerns speedily, involving outside agencies appropriately to ensure that pupils get the help they need.
- All staff understand that keeping pupils safe is their top priority. A strong culture of care and support is evident throughout the school. All staff who completed Ofsted's survey said that pupils are safe in school, as did almost all parents who responded to Parent View.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Relationships between pupils and teachers are strong. Because pupils like and trust their teachers, they are not afraid to tackle demanding activities. They are happy to offer answers to questions and contribute to discussions.
- Teachers know their subjects well. They explain new concepts clearly. During lessons, teachers regularly check on individual pupils' learning, providing extra help when it is needed. They provide pupils with immediate feedback about their work, with clear guidance about how to improve it.
- Many teachers use questioning well to gauge how well pupils understand their work. They also use questions to deepen pupils' understanding by insisting they develop and refine the answers they provide. However, this practice is inconsistent across the school. Some teachers use questioning less skilfully and so are unaware when pupils have not grasped an idea. They are also too ready to accept brief responses from pupils, rather than drawing out pupils' knowledge about a topic.
- Much of teachers' planning is effective, with tasks well matched to pupils' abilities and building well on what they already know. Leaders' efforts to ensure that teachers provide a greater level of challenge are proving successful. Tasks that teachers set now usually provide a good level of challenge for pupils, including the most able. However, this is not always the case and at times some work, particularly for the most able, is

too easy and pupils complete it quickly without having to think deeply.

- There is a more inconsistent picture in teachers' planning of activities for low-attaining pupils. Although there is much effective practice in school, inspectors observed several examples where low-attaining pupils were unable to attempt tasks because the tasks were too difficult or not well enough structured. Often, this was because of teachers' over-ambitious intention to stretch and challenge these pupils.
- Teachers' promotion of the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic is effective in several subjects. Teaching is strongest in English and mathematics and this supports the development of these skills particularly well. Pupils who join the school with weak basic skills make good progress in improving them.
- The effectiveness of teaching pupils with SEND is mixed. Teaching assistants and teachers provide some highly effective support in class and at other times, especially when pupils are falling behind with their work. Leaders provide teachers with helpful information about pupils with SEND in the form of 'pupil passports'. These include suggested strategies for teachers to use to meet these pupils' needs. Many teachers use this information well, but some do not. Consequently, teachers' planning sometimes fails to take pupils' specific needs into account. This tends to be mostly the case for lower attaining pupils with SEND.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders make pupils' personal development a high priority. The school's Respect lessons provide a well-planned, weekly programme that covers a wide range of topics, including citizenship, internet safety, drugs and alcohol, and healthy choices. It includes off-site visits, for example to a mosque. 'Breakout days' provide pupils with extended periods of time to learn about future careers and to try new experiences. On one such day recently, pupils played the team sport kabaddi and tried Bollywood dancing. As a result of careful planning, pupils develop a good understanding of British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect for, and tolerance of, those with different faiths.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for in school. They told inspectors that bullying is rare in school and that any that does happen is dealt with well by staff. All pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they trust staff to help them with any problems they are facing.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe from a wide range of potential dangers. For example, Respect lessons and assemblies teach pupils about road safety, how to protect themselves online and what to do if they experience bullying.
- Many pupils take advantage of the leadership opportunities that the school provides. For example, inspectors observed a school council meeting, run and chaired by pupils. During the meeting, representatives discussed their classmates' views about several issues, including how the school might further promote British values.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons. They are attentive, hard-working and keen to do well. However, on occasions, and most usually when work is not well matched to their abilities, a minority of pupils do not behave as well. They become distracted and chat or simply disengage. A few teachers do not address this low-level disruption as well as they ought. They do not always use the school's behaviour management procedures.
- At breaktime, lunchtime and between lessons, pupils generally behave well. Almost all are mature and sensible. They show respect for each other, for adults and for the school buildings. The school is usually calm and orderly throughout the day.
- Attendance, which has historically been a little lower than the national average, has improved over the last two years. It is now a little higher than the national average for secondary schools. The number of pupils who fail to attend regularly has fallen. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved considerably.
- The school regularly admits pupils who have been unsuccessful at other schools because of poor behaviour. Staff work hard to support these pupils and most settle well and are successful.
- In the past, the school's use of permanent exclusion was much higher than that seen nationally. As behaviour has improved, the number of permanent exclusions has fallen considerably and is now below average. Leaders use fixed-term exclusions appropriately, as a sanction of last resort. However, the school's use of exclusion is a little higher than in similar schools nationally. Leaders are aware of this fact and are seeking to reduce the need to exclude pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress during their four years in the school has improved considerably in recent years. Pupils now make good progress in almost all subjects, including English, mathematics, history, geography and PE. Their progress remains a little weaker in a very small number of subjects, including science.
- Published data about pupils' progress does not represent an accurate picture of how pupils achieve in this school. This is because pupils take national tests in Year 6, after they have spent just five terms in the school. Pupils' attainment in these national tests, which had been low, has improved markedly over the last two years. In 2018, pupils attained standards just a little below the national average in reading and mathematics. Their attainment in writing, and grammar, spelling and punctuation was at the national average.
- In common with other pupils, disadvantaged pupils now make good progress. They benefit from effective teaching and well-targeted extra help when they need it.
- Most high- and middle-attaining pupils make good progress. Teachers usually provide work that is challenging and that helps to develop a good understanding of the material being studied. However, the most able pupils are not always challenged enough to achieve what they are capable of.

- Low-attaining pupils make weaker progress in some subjects. This is because teachers sometimes provide tasks that are too hard in relation to what these pupils already know, understand and can do.
- Pupils with SEND who are low attaining make slightly weaker progress than they could. Teachers do not always take their individual needs into account when planning lessons. However, when teaching assistants are present, they help these pupils to attempt the work set. Middle- and high-attaining pupils with SEND make good progress.

School details

Unique reference number	142696
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10058527

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	437
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Cliff Mitchell
Headteacher	Steve Fryer
Telephone number	01538 384939
Website	https://cvm.ttl.org.uk/
Email address	cvm.office@ttl.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 April 2013

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized middle school.
- The school converted to an academy in April 2016 as part of the Talentum Learning Trust. The Talentum Learning Trust is a multi-academy trust that also includes Leek High School and Westwood College.
- The trust board of directors is responsible for ensuring that the trust is solvent and well-run, and for checking that the school is delivering the standards it requires. It is responsible for setting the school budgets and appointing the LGB.
- The LGB's responsibilities include day-to-day operational management, pupil welfare, the curriculum, staffing, academic standards and budget monitoring. The LGB was established in September 2017. Prior to that date, the three schools in the trust shared a single governing body.
- The headteacher and the members of the senior leadership team took up their posts in September 2015. Several middle leaders have joined the school more recently.

- Almost all the school's pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is broadly average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons; some of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors talked to many pupils about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. Inspectors observed pupils at breaktimes, lunchtimes and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors visited an assembly and several registration periods.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including information relating to governance, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' progress and the checks made on the quality of teaching.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers. A meeting was held with three members of the LGB, including its chair and vice-chair. The lead inspector met with the chief operating officer of the Talentum Learning Trust.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views by considering the 40 responses to Parent View, including the 32 free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the 23 responses from staff to Ofsted's survey.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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