

Danesfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Community Middle School

North Road, Williton, Taunton, Somerset TA4 4SW

Inspection dates

21–22 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Standards have not improved significantly since the previous inspection. Too many pupils do not achieve the standards they are capable of.
- Leaders have not improved the quality of teaching rapidly enough. Plans are in place, but these have not had enough impact across the school. This is because leaders do not have the capacity to monitor the quality of teaching with sufficient robustness.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils are not consistently high. In some year groups and subjects, teachers set work that challenges pupils and encourages them to stretch themselves. However, too often, teachers set work that does not get the best out of pupils.
- Standards of literacy are not high enough. Pupils do not make good progress in developing their spelling and grammar. They often repeat the same mistakes.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors are rightly proud of the school's caring ethos. Pupils are known as individuals and staff make sure they get the support they need to prosper and grow.
- Pupils behave well around the school. They are polite and friendly and they treat each other well. Leaders ensure that there is little disruption in lessons. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally positive. Most want to answer questions in lessons and they take pride in their written work.
- Leaders make sure that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the support they need to help them succeed. As a result of their work, these pupils are thriving.
- Leaders are introducing a more challenging curriculum. In some subjects, such as mathematics, this is leading to higher standards.
- Leaders' efforts to improve attendance have resulted in pupils now attending at least as well as pupils in other schools. There has also been a significant reduction in the number who are regularly absent.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the leadership and management of teaching by:
 - ensuring that there is sufficient capacity to lead teaching
 - ensuring that the impact of teaching is monitored robustly
 - developing the role of middle leaders.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that all teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Improve standards of literacy so that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not succeeded in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment rapidly enough since the previous inspection. This is because they have focused on improving other areas of the school and have not created enough capacity to make the necessary changes in teaching. The result is that there is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching.
- Senior leaders are now acting to raise the expectations of teachers to a consistent level. Their plans are only partially in place and so the impact is limited. Leaders are providing training for teachers to help them implement the new ways of working. However, not all teachers are implementing the new approach consistently. This means that expectations of pupils vary between classes and subjects. Sometimes, teachers challenge them to think hard about their answers, but often they expect too little of them.
- Leaders are not monitoring the quality of teaching and learning effectively. Senior leaders regularly check that teachers carry out new procedures, but there is no rigour to the checks on the work pupils produce. Middle leaders are enthusiastic and skilled but are not given the time to monitor their areas of responsibility. The result is that leaders are unable to steer the necessary improvements to teaching with the clarity of purpose required.
- Leaders have not raised standards in literacy. There is no agreed whole-school approach to correcting spellings or setting expectations of writing. Consequently, in some subjects, such as history, expectations of pupils' writing are lower than in English lessons.
- Trust and school leaders use a range of assessments to measure pupils' progress. They also compare standards across the trust to check that their assessments are reliable. Together, these provide some useful information to help leaders check on pupils' progress. However, leaders have relied on these assessments too much and have given too little weight to the quality of work in pupils' books.
- Trustees, governors and leaders put a great emphasis on nurturing each pupil. Leaders ensure that pupils are known as individuals and are looked after by teachers and support staff. Pupils, parents and carers say that they feel the school cares for every child.
- Leaders have improved the behaviour of pupils in the school. They have set appropriate expectations and developed an effective range of rewards for pupils who behave well. As a result, the atmosphere in classrooms is calm and pupils are ready to learn. In only a few cases, where teaching was weaker, did inspectors observe any poor behaviour.
- Trust and school leaders have tackled poor attendance. They have put robust systems in place to check on any pupils who are absent. The trust has provided extra staff to support families who struggle to get their children to school regularly. This has had a significant impact. Attendance is now similar to that in other schools.
- Leaders have put a broad curriculum in place that meets the needs of every pupil, whatever their ability. There are good links with local schools to ensure that pupils can go on to study the GCSE options that are right for them.

- Senior leaders make sure that pupils are taught about themselves and their place in the world as they grow up. Pupils understand the values and beliefs that underpin life in modern Britain. Pupils also enjoy a broad range of sports activities and arts clubs. Pupils are proud of the school's rich tradition of success in several sports.
- Leaders and teachers are reviewing the curriculum in each subject in order to raise expectations. This has been successful in mathematics, where pupils are being asked to work on complicated topics and are responding well. In some other areas, the curriculum has been made more challenging, but teachers are inconsistent in how they expect pupils to respond. Sometimes they insist that pupils think more deeply and then explain their ideas, but at other times they accept superficial answers.
- Leaders make good use of the additional funds they receive to support disadvantaged pupils, those that have fallen behind and pupils with SEND. Leaders check the progress of these groups of pupils regularly and make sure that they get extra support when they need it. This is helping these pupils to make the progress they are capable of.

Governance of the school

- Leaders of the trust have worked effectively with school leaders to improve attendance and behaviour. They recognised the issues and provided resources to help solve the problem. The chief executive officer (CEO) and trustees monitor the effectiveness of the school. They recognise that improvements have been made since the previous inspection but that some inconsistency in the quality of teaching remains.
- The local governing body is committed to ensuring that the school meets the needs of its community. They are experienced, and some have a background in education. They have undertaken a review of their effectiveness and have responded to it positively. They have a good knowledge of the school, supplemented by regular visits and discussions with pupils about their work.
- Although governors now ask the headteacher about the progress pupils are making, they are not yet challenging enough to uncover the key issues in the quality of teaching that remain.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make sure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Teachers and other staff are well trained. They know what to do if they are worried about a pupil or a pupil makes a disclosure to them. Pupils feel safe. They are confident that they will be listened to if they approach a member of staff with a concern.
- Leaders and staff work well to make sure that pupils who face additional challenges in their lives are kept safe and are able to play a full part in the life of the school. Staff work with families to provide a link between home and school. School leaders liaise effectively with external agencies, such as the social care team, to provide a safety net for children at risk.
- The school's record-keeping systems are effective and up to date. Appropriate checks are made on those adults who work with pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Sometimes, teachers do not have high enough expectations of their pupils. They set work that does not challenge pupils to think deeply or to explain their ideas in detail. They accept answers that are simplistic.
- There are times when there is a significant difference in what is expected of the same pupil in different subjects. In some subjects, pupils are asked to develop their ideas and write structured passages explaining their thinking, but in others, pupils are allowed to give a one-line answer that is far below their capability.
- Leaders have introduced a school-wide framework for learning. However, teachers have not taken on the approach consistently. For example, the headteacher has asked that pupils are encouraged to regularly look again at their work and build on it. In places, this has worked well, and pupils are beginning to see how they can improve their work and set themselves higher standards. However, this is not effective in other classrooms, where teachers are not giving precise advice on how to improve. Consequently, pupils struggle to make progress.
- The teaching of writing is inconsistent. Pupils are not getting the support they need to develop as fluent and effective writers. There is no consistency to correcting spellings and grammar. Sometimes, pupils repeat the same mistake because it has not been pointed out to them. Often, pupils show that they know how to use the correct punctuation but then misuse it in the same passage. Expectations of writing vary between subjects. Pupils who can write well, using paragraphs and a range of punctuation in English, produce writing of a lower standard in other subjects.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers use good questions to ask pupils to think deeply and to explain their thinking. Teachers have set up systems to make sure that pupils of varying abilities are able to contribute at their level and make good progress.
- Leaders and teachers use regular assessments to identify when pupils are falling behind and to give them the extra support they need. In most cases, this is proving effective and these pupils catch up with their classmates.
- Leaders and teachers are now improving the curriculum in some subjects. This is giving teachers the chance to ask more of pupils. In some cases, teachers are making effective use of the opportunity to deepen pupils' understanding. In key stage 3 mathematics, for example, pupils are regularly asked to use their reasoning skills to solve complicated problems. In some subjects, however, teachers are not taking advantage of the new curriculum and they continue to accept simplistic answers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Most pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to answer questions and take part in activities. Most respond well when teachers give them good advice on how to improve their work.

- Leaders have introduced a rewards system that recognises positive attitudes and encourages pupils to get involved in lessons and in the life of the school. Only a small minority of pupils become disengaged when the quality of teaching slips. At these times, they usually just stop listening, although a few behave poorly.
- Pupils treat each other well. Relationships are good. They are friendly and courteous and respect those who hold different beliefs. They are respectful when talking to adults and keen to impress.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, in the real world and online.
- Pupils are very keen to get involved in the wide range of out-of-school clubs and activities. They enjoy the many sports clubs, music and arts activities and the gardening club.
- An experienced team of staff supports the pastoral care of pupils. Pupils feel that they are looked after well. Staff work to support vulnerable pupils and make sure that they can take a full part in the life of the school, whatever their personal circumstances or the challenges they face.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in the corridors and around the school site. They work and play together well. They respond quickly and without fuss to teachers' directions. Their behaviour in the daily assembly is first-rate.
- Leaders have made their expectations of behaviour in lessons clear, and pupils have responded positively. Pupils know what the classroom rules are, and they understand why they are there. There have been few temporary exclusions and there has not been a permanent exclusion for several years.
- In the past, poor attendance has been an issue, but the leadership team has addressed this effectively this year. Attendance is now at least as good as in most schools. Leaders have also been effective in reducing the number of pupils who are regularly away to a much more acceptable level.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils take the end of key stage 2 tests midway through their time at the school. In the last three years, results have fluctuated. In 2018, pupils made progress in reading, writing and mathematics that was broadly similar to that of pupils in other schools.
- In 2018, the standards in reading and mathematics achieved at key stage 2 were lower than the national average. They were in line with other schools for writing. Far fewer pupils reached higher standards in reading, writing or mathematics than the national average. Overall, only half of pupils achieved the expected standard in all three subjects.
- Pupils' standards by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 8 are not consistently good. In mathematics, pupils are reaching similar standards to other

schools. Their basic arithmetic is good and they can use their reasoning skills to solve some complicated problems. In English, most pupils can express themselves clearly and write their ideas in extended passages. However, they often choose to use a limited vocabulary. Many pupils' work, including that of the most able, contains inaccurate spelling and punctuation. This undermines the impact of their writing.

- Standards of literacy across the whole curriculum are not consistently good. Teachers regularly accept written answers in history, geography and other subjects that are of a lower quality than that in English lessons. This is preventing pupils, including the most able pupils, from reaching the standards they are capable of across the curriculum.
- The standard of pupils' work in other subjects, such as history and geography, is too often below that seen in other schools. In history for example, pupils' work on life in Victorian England is superficial. They do not analyse and explain their ideas in the depth that they should. This is because teachers do not tease out pupils' ideas and sometimes accept short and simplistic answers. In other subjects, such as science, pupils are encouraged to explore and think through their ideas to a greater extent.
- Pupils with SEND are making good progress from their starting points. This is because they are closely monitored and teachers make sure that they get the extra help they need. Disadvantaged pupils also benefit from a similar approach. This is helping them to keep up with their peers.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 140631 |
| Local authority | Somerset |
| Inspection number | 10088327 |

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

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| 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 | 322 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Andy Kingston-James |
| Headteacher | Dan Hartley |
| Telephone number | 01984632581 |
| Website | www.danesfieldcofemiddleschool.co.uk |
| Email address | office@danefield.somerset.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 10–11 January 2017 |

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than average middle school. It is part of the West Somerset Education Trust, a multi-academy trust.
- The school has a higher than national average proportion of disadvantaged pupils. It serves an area of high deprivation, which is supported by the West Somerset opportunity area project.
- The headteacher is new in post, starting in September 2018. He was transferred from another school in the trust.
- The school population is 98% White British ethnicity.
- The school has a lower than average number of pupils with SEND.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the range of subjects and age groups and scrutinised a wide range of pupils' written work. Some of the observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including minutes of local governing body meeting, development plans, analysis of pupils' progress, and attendance and behaviour data. They also considered safeguarding documents and the school's review of its own performance.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers and groups of pupils.
- An inspector spoke with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust and the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors took account of 20 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They considered the responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Andrew Lovett, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Non Davies | Ofsted Inspector |
| Benjamin Houghton | Ofsted Inspector |

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