

Inspection of Fairlands Middle School

Masons Way, Cheddar, Somerset BS27 3PG

Inspection dates: 15–16 January 2020

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Fairlands Middle School is a welcoming and friendly school. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Staff know their pupils very well. Pupils and staff get along and treat each other with respect.

Pupils listen to their teachers, complete their work, and can remember things their teachers taught earlier. They can talk confidently about their work and what they have learned. The school's curriculum helps pupils to form well-thought-out opinions and to be considerate when sharing their views.

Bullying is rare. One pupil's comment reflected the views of many when he said, 'It is simple – we are just nice to each other.' Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They know whom they can go to if they are worried about anything. They are sure that staff will deal quickly with any problems.

The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop their character and become well-rounded young people. Pupils are keen to help each other. For example, older pupils enjoy acting as reading buddies for younger pupils. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about being digital leaders, librarians and choreographers. They told us that the school 'provides loads of opportunities and helps us to be whatever we want to be'.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have designed a curriculum that prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. In most subjects, leaders have thought carefully about what pupils should learn and when. In mathematics and history, pupils have the building blocks to move on to more complex work. In some key stage 2 subjects, however, the curriculum is not as well sequenced. For example, sometimes pupils read texts in English without teachers giving them knowledge that could help them to understand better.

Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan appropriate activities. These help pupils to remember their learning and understand new content. In history, pupils can make complex connections between Medieval England and the French Revolution. In Year 8, pupils use their knowledge about refugees from the citizenship curriculum to make sense of the issues they read about in their English novel. However, in languages at key stage 2, the content and activities do not help pupils to remember basic phrases. Pupils say that they find language teaching too repetitive.

Staff use assessment well in most subjects. In mathematics and history, teachers use it to help pupils to embed their knowledge. In English, teachers do not always use the information they have about what pupils can do in order to plan effective teaching in Year 5.

The leader for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is making great strides to strengthen the school's provision. Pupils, parents and carers, and staff work together to identify pupils' additional needs and put in place appropriate support. Most teachers ensure that pupils with SEND know and remember more over time.

There is a calm and safe environment in the school. Pupils behave well most of the time. Occasionally, some pupils do not follow the activities in class. This is usually when teachers have not planned for those pupils' needs carefully enough.

Most pupils attend school regularly. If a pupil is absent, they quickly catch up when they return to school. The school knows families well and works with them to improve attendance.

Leaders have developed a strong programme for pupils' personal development. It is well planned and implemented. It helps pupils to become knowledgeable and tolerant citizens. Pupils talk confidently about how to manage their own physical and mental well-being. Many pupils take part in sport and creative clubs. However, leaders are uncertain about the level of participation of disadvantaged pupils. This means they cannot be sure if those pupils fully benefit from the wider curriculum.

The headteacher is supported well by his senior team, school staff and governors. They share his ambition for Fairlands Middle School to be an inspirational, inclusive and tolerant place to learn. The impact of their leadership is evident in the improvements made in mathematics and provision for pupils with SEND.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online. They know the safeguarding team and say that there is always someone to talk to if they need help.

School leaders, governors and staff receive regular, comprehensive training in how to keep pupils safe. Staff know pupils well and this helps them to act quickly and effectively to support pupils.

The school supports vulnerable pupils well and works with external agencies to secure the right support for those pupils and families.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not planned the curriculum precisely enough in key stage 2 in some subjects, such as English and languages. This means that some pupils do not get off to as strong a start as they could when they join the school. Leaders need to

carefully consider what pupils are capable of, and ensure that the curriculum is more precisely sequenced.

- Leaders do not make consistently good use of the key information the school holds. They have been slow to identify some patterns in behaviour, attendance and participation in the wider curriculum. This can prevent them from being proactive in spotting areas for development. A strategic approach will enable the school to have a more coherent plan to support pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	123888
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10086870
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	483
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Adrian Warman
Headteacher	Stefan McHale
Website	www.somerset.org.uk/sites/fairlands
Date of previous inspection	22 September 2015 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Fairlands Middle School is a member of the Mendip Edge Federation.
- The school does not make alternative provision for any pupils.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with members of the governing board, the headteacher, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, history, mathematics and modern foreign languages. We visited lessons, met with staff, looked at pupils' work, talked with pupils, interviewed curriculum leaders and examined documentation.
- We met with the designated safeguarding lead. The inspection team talked with a range of staff about safeguarding training. We examined documentation and school records.

- We spoke with pupils to discuss their views about the school. We considered 29 responses to the staff survey and 130 responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Tracey Reynolds, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Steve Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

Stuart Wilson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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