

Inspection of Minehead Middle School

Ponsford Road, Minehead, Somerset TA24 5RH

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 January 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Expectations of pupils are too low. A significant minority of pupils have negative attitudes to learning. Some pupils disrupt lessons or display unruly behaviour around the school. Too many pupils who attend the school say they are unhappy. Some are reluctant to report bullying incidents.

Pupils in key stage 2 have a better experience of school than pupils in key stage 3. The curriculum is appropriate, and they enjoy their learning more. Older pupils are frustrated by the amount of time lost in lessons due to poor behaviour. Many parents have concerns about the standard of behaviour in the school. Pupils and staff have seen some signs of improvement, but there is still too much inconsistency in the way that behaviour is managed.

Nevertheless, most pupils feel safe at school. They agree that there are supportive adults, who help them with any concerns or worries.

Pupils participate in a range of extra-curricular activities to develop their interests and talents. These include a popular girls' football club, drama and dodgeball. Pupils enjoy performing in the school musicals.

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

Around the school site, many pupils are polite and use social times sensibly. However, a significant minority do not manage themselves well. They sometimes behave in a disorderly and antisocial way towards others. Low-level disruption is a feature of many lessons, particularly in key stage 3. Leaders have introduced an approach to bring about improvements in behaviour. However, it is too early to see the impact.

Many pupils miss too much school. Leaders know this, but actions to improve attendance are very recent. They are not yet having the desired impact.

The trustees, who are responsible for governance, have not provided stable leadership of the school for several years. Progress to tackle weaknesses has been too slow. The interim headteacher has identified the correct priorities for improvement and is gaining the trust of staff, but concerns remain for the sustainability of improvements. Many staff feel their workload is unmanageable. They want more support with managing the poor behaviour of pupils.

Leaders have developed a broad curriculum, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have thought about what pupils need to know and the best order to teach it in. However, how well pupils learn varies considerably across key stages and subjects. Some pupils struggle to complete their work, or opt out of attempting it. Leaders have started to address this but it is too early to see the impact.

Pupils with SEND who have complex learning needs are adequately supported. However, leaders have not developed fully the expertise of staff. This means that teaching does not always meet the needs of other pupils with SEND as well. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not make sufficient progress through the curriculum. Many parents of pupils with SEND say that communication and support from the school is poor.

Leaders are starting to help pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read to catch up. These pupils follow a phonics-based programme. The library is popular and responsive to pupils' needs. For example, the library now stocks a collection of dyslexia-friendly books. Although there are opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure in school, not all pupils benefit. A strong reading culture has not been established. Leaders have not prioritised pupils' literacy skills sufficiently.

The curriculum to support pupils' wider development is suitable for each age group. Leaders include content that responds to the needs or concerns of pupils. Some pupils with SEND receive additional support to develop life skills. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and consent. Despite this, pupils' understanding of what is appropriate when interacting with others is not as strong as it could be.

Pupils' understanding of fundamental British values and protected characteristics are underdeveloped. While pupils learn about cultures and beliefs that are different to their own, their knowledge and understanding vary considerably. Leaders have not checked how well the provision is helping pupils to develop good character. There is an emerging careers programme.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. They report concerns about pupils' well-being confidently. Leaders keep accurate records of incidents and follow-up actions. They work effectively with external services as required. A thorough recruitment process ensures staff are suitable to work with pupils.

Leaders use the curriculum to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe in the light of different risks, for example pupils know how to be safe online.

Although pupils raise concerns about poor behaviour at the school, most agree that they feel safe and that they have a trusted adult they can talk to.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A lack of stable leadership over time has made it difficult for the school to secure necessary improvements. Staff do not always feel supported by leaders, including those at the multi-academy trust. They are concerned about workload and feel vulnerable when dealing with incidents of poor behaviour. Trustees should ensure there is clear and consistent leadership in the school.
- Behaviour is poor. Lessons are regularly disrupted. Some pupils behave in a disorderly way around the site. Therefore, many pupils find school life challenging, including some who are hesitant to report incidents of bullying. Leaders should raise the expectations of pupils' behaviour and ensure that staff manage behaviour fairly and consistently. This will help to reassure pupils.
- Attendance is consistently low and there is little sign of improvement. Too many pupils are persistently absent from school. Consequently, pupils are missing large amounts of learning time. Leaders should ensure there is a sharp focus on helping pupils to improve their attendance.
- Pupils with SEND do not always receive the support they need to learn the curriculum successfully. Some teachers do not adapt learning in response to pupils' needs. There is a lack of confidence among parents in the school's provision for pupils with SEND. Leaders should work with teachers and parents to ensure that all pupils with SEND receive the effective support they need.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	136774
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10268557
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	595
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Giles
Headteacher	Mark Walker
Website	www.mineheadmiddleschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Minehead Middle School is deemed a secondary school, with pupils aged 9 to 13.
- Since the previous inspection, the senior leadership of the school has changed significantly. There have also been several headteachers. The school currently has an interim headteacher, who has been in post since November 2022.
- The multi-academy trust changed its name in September 2022 from West Somerset Academies Trust to Beacon Education Mat Ltd. A new chair of the trust joined at this time.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, the chief executive officer, the director of education from the multi-academy trust and one trustee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, religious education and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to consider how well the school identifies pupils who are at risk and engages with external services. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff survey and responses to the survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Kelly Olive, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Victoria Griffin	His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah McGinnis	His Majesty's Inspector
Paul Williams	His Majesty's Inspector

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