

Inspection of a good school: Ferndown Middle School

Peter Grant Way, Ferndown, Dorset BH22 9UP

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 June 2023

Outcome

Ferndown Middle School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Ferndown Middle School enjoy learning. Leaders have improved the curriculum since the pandemic. Pupils engage positively with their learning and talk enthusiastically about work they have done. Teachers make sure that all pupils learn well. Pupils describe how teachers explain content clearly and give them extra help when they need it.

Leaders introduced a new behaviour policy after listening to pupils' concerns about behaviour. Pupils know that their teachers have high expectations for them. As a result, behaviour in lessons is good, and there is very little low-level disruption. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and learn from their mistakes. Leaders take bullying seriously and teach pupils how to be kind and respect difference.

Pupils take part in a wide range of enrichment opportunities. Music is particularly popular. All pupils benefit from this, including those who are disadvantaged. Pupils develop interests and talents through numerous sports clubs and an increasing number of trips and visits.

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

Pupils study a broad curriculum. It is well planned, supporting pupils to make progress through the curriculum over time. Leaders have carefully ordered the content that pupils learn. This means that pupils make connections between prior and current learning. They also understand why they are learning a particular topic or skill. Leaders have thought carefully about the essential content of each subject. This means that pupils learn about topical issues. They can see how the curriculum links to their lives and lives in the past. Their social and cultural development is considered and planned for. Pupils talk knowledgeably about issues such as climate change.

Leaders have focused on aspects of the curriculum that need the most work. Pupils are benefitting from this. For example, pupils' writing has improved. Teachers are skilful at picking up on mistakes and misconceptions. This means that pupils are quickly corrected

when needed. Much of the curriculum is very new. As such, assessment does not yet provide an accurate picture of what pupils have remembered and can do.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified and supported appropriately. Teachers know the pupils in their classes well, and they know how to adapt the curriculum and their teaching to support pupils with SEND. Leaders work effectively with teachers and parents to ensure that pupils' needs are met.

There is a strong culture of reading at the school. Pupils who have fallen behind receive extra help from well-qualified staff. Leaders make sure that this does not mean they miss out on learning in other subjects. Teachers ensure that all pupils read widely. There is dedicated time in the school day to ensure this happens.

Pupils are well cared for. Leaders ensure that bullying is not tolerated. Leaders work with the student council to ensure that pupils feel safe and happy. A small number of parents and pupils have expressed some concerns about behaviour. However, staff are vigilant, and unkind behaviour is challenged.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain through the curriculum for personal, social and health education. They remember important messages about online safety, relationships and how to stay physically and mentally healthy. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 learn about careers and the labour market. Pupils are given the chance to meet with a wide range of employers. Careers education and experiences of the workplace are a strength of the school.

Leaders work effectively with the trust and value the support provided. The trust ensures that the school is fully staffed with subject experts. Staff feel well supported, including with managing behaviour. Governors provide both challenge and support and have a good understanding of the school's areas for development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained in the safeguarding of pupils. Staff know how to report and respond to concerns. There are well-organised systems in place. Pupils know who to talk to if they feel worried or have a problem. Leaders work proactively and steadfastly with external agencies. They provide appropriate support to the most vulnerable pupils.

The school's curriculum supports the safeguarding of pupils. When things happen in the school and wider community, leaders respond appropriately, ensuring that pupils learn about risks and how to look after themselves.

Leaders complete suitable checks on adults who apply to work at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The use of assessment is not yet consistent within and between subjects. It does not always align with what pupils have learned. As a result, the information from assessment does not always inform next steps or help pupils recall the most important knowledge. Leaders should ensure that teachers are supported to use assessment effectively so they can fully understand what pupils have learned, what they need to revisit and whether the curriculum needs to be adapted to support their learning further.
- The school is struggling to positively engage parts of its community. As a result, some negative views of the school are persisting. Leaders, including governors, must work to engage all stakeholders and share the work they are doing to improve the school.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Ferndown Middle School, the school to be good in January 2018.

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	148163
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10268543
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	589
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Grigsby
Headteacher	Gillian Allen
Website	www.fernmid.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Ferndown Middle School is a middle-deemed secondary school, with pupils aged nine to 13.
- The school joined Castleman Academy Trust in January 2021.
- 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.
- The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- On the first day of the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met

with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work and held discussions with teachers and pupils.

- Inspectors also spent time in the playground and met with pupil groups, both formally and informally, throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors analysed responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the responses to online pupil and staff surveys.
- The lead inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator and reviewed plans for the support of pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed documentation related to safeguarding and referrals to the local authority. They also spoke to staff about how they keep pupils safe.
- The lead inspector met with leaders who oversee behaviour, personal development and the curriculum.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local School Standards Board and the chair and chief executive officer of Castleman Academy Trust.

Inspection team

Victoria Griffin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

John Weeds

Ofsted Inspector

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