

Inspection of Danesfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Community Middle School

North Road, Williton, Taunton, Somerset TA4 4SW

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are kind and friendly. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Leaders have revised the behaviour policy recently to make rules clearer. Despite this, learning is disrupted in some lessons. A small proportion of staff do not feel they get the support they need to deal with behaviour issues effectively.

Most pupils feel safe and say they have a trusted adult they can talk to. Leaders act quickly and decisively when pupils talk to adults about their worries. However, there is no anonymous system for pupils to report concerns. This means some pupils, especially older ones, do not share these.

Improvements to the quality of education are still at an early stage. Some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are not yet well supported to learn the curriculum and achieve well. Where the curriculum implementation is effective and behaviour is well managed, pupils are more engaged and learn more.

Pupils access a range of extra-curricular activities. They are proud of the opportunities to compete in sporting competitions and enjoy performing in school productions, such as 'Matilda'. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are active participants in these additional opportunities.

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

Leadership has focused on raising expectations of pupils' behaviour and developing the curriculum. The recently established academic improvement board offers effective challenge from the trust to leaders for the impact of their actions. However, a number of parents expressed their dissatisfaction with how leaders communicate with them and lack confidence that their concerns will be dealt with.

Most curriculum leaders have thought carefully about what knowledge is taught and when it is best to teach it within each subject. In some subjects, such as mathematics, knowledge is coherently sequenced from Year 5 to Year 8. As a result, pupils learn and remember more over time. However, this coherent curricular thinking is only embedded across some of the curriculum. For example, in religious education, pupils do not return to learning about Islam in key stage 3, despite learning about this in key stage 2. This means pupils do not have the chance to deepen their learning or remember their learning long term.

The support for pupils with SEND is not as strong as it could be. Leaders identify pupils' needs and inform staff of suitable strategies to support pupils with SEND. However, teachers are not confident to adapt their teaching and the curriculum for pupils' specific needs. This affects pupils' learning. Leaders have recently reviewed the provision for pupils with SEND and have started to seek external support in this area.

Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Pupils are positive about personal, social and health education. They learn relevant content that helps them to understand important topics, such as healthy relationships. Careers education is well organised and begins in key stage 2. Pupils have a range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills, including becoming prefects, reading mentors and school council members.

Parents and pupils are appreciative of the range of enrichment activities that are on offer, such as sports fixtures, gardening club and water sports. Leaders track attendance and make sure there are no barriers to partaking in these. This reflects leaders' commitment to the school's 'every child will...' statements.

Leaders have prioritised the development of reading. A clear focus on helping the weakest readers began last year using a structured phonics programme to teach early reading. Most pupils read in school every day. Key stage 2 pupils use reading time meaningfully. Plans are in place to improve the quality of reading time for pupils in key stage 3.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make the necessary employment checks on staff. Staff are well trained. They know the signs that may suggest a pupil is at risk of harm, and they know what to do if they are worried. When any issues arise, leaders act promptly to make sure the right support is in place for pupils, including by liaising with external agencies.

Leaders check on the welfare of pupils who are absent and those who attend alternative provision. Pupils can confidently explain what they need to do to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Subject plans and actions to improve the quality of education are at an early stage. This means pupils have not built up the detailed knowledge and skills across the curriculum that they need. Leaders should continue to develop the curriculum so that pupils are ready for the next stage of their education and have the knowledge and skills they need to achieve well.
- Pupils with SEND are not yet provided with the clear and detailed support they require. This means that not all pupils with SEND learn the curriculum and achieve well. Leaders must ensure that staff have appropriate training to meet the needs of all pupils. Leaders must also ensure they check the precise impacts of their actions and make modifications as required.
- Not all teachers apply the school's behaviour system consistently. As a result,

pupils' behaviour disrupts learning in some lessons. Leaders should support all staff to apply the school's behaviour system consistently and fairly.

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	140631
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10256712
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	363
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andy Giles
Headteacher	David McGrath
Website	www.danesfieldcofemiddleschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Danesfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Middle School is a voluntary controlled school in the Diocese of Bath and Wells with a Church of England religious character.
- The school is part of Beacon Education MAT Ltd.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative provisions for its pupils.
- 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 graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the third routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic

with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, physical education, science and religious education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, 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, the lead inspector scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and examined the school's safeguarding records. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and trust leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the vice-chair of trustees and reviewed documentation relating to governance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. Ofsted's online pupil survey was not shared with pupils.
- Inspectors observed and spoke with pupils in lessons, in small discussion groups and during social times to evaluate the standard of behaviour.

Inspection team

Frances Bywater, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Rachel Hesketh	His Majesty's Inspector
Richard Barnes	Ofsted Inspector

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