

St Michael's Church of England Middle School, Colehill

Colehill Lane, Colehill, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 7AB

Inspection dates

31 January–1 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has led the school through a period of renewal with determination and persistence. Supported by his senior team, he has put the necessary foundations in place, and the school is well placed for further improvement.
- The multi-academy trust and its leaders challenge school leaders robustly. They monitor the school's effectiveness closely and intervene when necessary. They provide high-quality advice to leaders and teachers to support the school's improvement.
- Pupils make good progress overall from their arrival in Year 5 to their departure in Year 8. In the past, they have tended to make more progress in the later years. However, progress in Years 5 and 6 is now improving.
- The most able make good progress because they are challenged to think deeply about issues and problems. Teachers set high expectations and pupils respond to them.
- Teachers use regular assessments to uncover gaps in pupils' understanding and then address them. They are keen to ensure that pupils' understanding of key concepts is secure. As a result, pupils' learning is built on strong foundations.
- Pupils make good progress in English as a result of the quality of teaching they receive. Pupils are encouraged to write extended passages and they respond enthusiastically. Their spelling, punctuation and grammar are good.
- Pupils are well behaved. They are polite and respectful. They treat each other well and are tolerant of those with different beliefs or from different ethnicities. Their relationships with adults are very positive. In lessons, pupils are attentive and keen to learn.
- Some pockets of weaker teaching remain. School leaders are working to address this and ensure that all teaching allows pupils to make good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress than they have in the past. School leaders are monitoring their progress more closely than before, and this is having an impact. However, there is more to do to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils.
- Middle leaders are taking an increasing role in improving the quality of teaching in their areas. Some are highly effective, while others are less experienced.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by embedding recent improvements so that they are consistent across all teaching.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by developing middle leadership so that all middle leaders are as effective as the best.
- Improve outcomes by further developing the school's new approaches to addressing the underachievement of disadvantaged pupils so that they achieve as well as other pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The experienced headteacher has successfully steered the school through a difficult period of falling rolls, mediocre performance and reorganisation into joining a multi-academy trust. As a result of his careful and systematic approach, the school is well placed to build on recent improvements in its performance.
- The headteacher and his senior team have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are focusing on the areas that need improvement and putting well thought-out plans into action to address weaknesses. As a result of their work, the school has improved steadily over time.
- Leaders put a strong emphasis on continually improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. They have ensured that there is a good range of training opportunities for teachers. This is clearly having an impact. For example, leaders understand the importance of developing teachers' questioning skills if they are to really develop pupils' thinking. They focused some training on this aspect of teaching, and the quality of teachers' questioning is now generally of a high standard.
- Senior leaders are strongly committed to the middle school system. They understand the changing needs of pupils over this key period in their lives and organise the school and curriculum to meet those needs. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are well supported by a primary model of each pupil having the security of a main class teacher in the core and humanities curriculum while receiving more specialist teaching across other foundation subjects. In key stage 3, pupils gain the benefit of more specialist teaching across a broader range of subjects. This approach is successfully meeting the needs of all pupils.
- Leaders have developed a robust assessment structure across the school that allows them to track pupils' progress and intervene promptly when they fall behind. They have also ensured that there is time in the school day to work with those pupils to allow them to catch up.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a broad curriculum. The arts enjoy a high profile. For example, every pupil has weekly access to high-quality specialist music teaching. As a result, rates of participation in the choir and orchestra are high, and the quality of music provision is very good. Leaders also ensure that pupils have access to a broad range of sports activities and games.
- Middle leaders are increasingly effective in improving standards across their areas of responsibility. Those responsible for English and mathematics are working with the school improvement team from the trust. Their work together is resulting in significant improvement in the standards that pupils are achieving across all year groups. Some middle leaders are less secure in their roles. Consequently, there is more inconsistency in the areas they lead.
- Leaders make effective use of pupil premium funding. They have recently revised their approach to addressing the additional needs of disadvantaged pupils. A 'pupil premium

champion' is now focused on closely monitoring the progress that these pupils are making and ensuring that teachers provide them with the additional help they need. This is already beginning to have an impact because it is focused on the progress pupils are making in their learning rather than just supporting their pastoral needs. However, there is more to do if these pupils are to catch up and achieve as well as other pupils.

- Leaders make good use of the funding available to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Pupils make good progress because leaders assess their needs carefully and plan appropriate support.
- Leaders do not make appropriate use of the sports premium funding they receive. The school is not using the funding to secure sustainable improvements to sporting provision, for instance, by providing training for staff and enhancing their skills to teach physical education.
- The school is popular with parents and it is growing. Parents value the quality of care and the rich range of opportunities open to pupils. They recognise the good progress their children are making. Some parents would like to have clearer information about how well their child is progressing.

Governance of the school

- The trust board works effectively with the local academy committee to oversee the work of the school and hold school leaders to account. Trustees acknowledged the poor key stage 2 performance in 2015 and 2016. They reacted by working with academy committee members to monitor progress more closely. This intervention had a significant impact because it was well timed and rigorous.
- The trust chief executive officer works closely with the trustees and the headteacher to ensure that the rate of improvement remains good. She deploys trust school improvement staff appropriately to support improvements. The impact of the trust's support on the quality of teaching is clear, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Academy committee members know their school well and are committed to its success. They cherish the school's distinctiveness and the breadth of opportunities that are offered to pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and academy committee members ensure that there is a clear focus on keeping pupils safe. Staff are well trained and know what to do should they become concerned about a pupil. A team of staff support pupils who are vulnerable and need extra care. Leaders work well with the local authority to ensure that pupils who are in need are able to experience success in school.

- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in the real world and the virtual one. They feel safe and they feel confident that there is an adult in the school they can approach for support should they need to.
- All the necessary checks are made on staff and other adults before they are cleared to work with pupils. Records are comprehensive and up to date.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers make sure that they understand what pupils know, understand and can do and then set work that takes their learning forward. They regularly revisit work and check for gaps in pupils' understanding. They then address them. Consequently, pupils' knowledge and skills build up steadily from strong foundations.
- Teachers typically have high expectations of pupils. They expect pupils to think carefully about the problems and challenges they are given and to come up with answers. They are often asked to go beyond what the answer is, for instance to explain their reasoning that led to their answer. Teachers tease out pupils' thinking with well-directed and thoughtful questioning.
- The most able pupils are stretched and given opportunities to push themselves. For example, in art pupils are asked to study and respond to the work of challenging professional artists. The resulting work is of a high calibre.
- Teachers support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities well. They carefully match the task they give pupils to their individual needs. Teaching assistants are skilful and tailor their support for each pupil to allow them to make good progress from their starting points.
- The quality of teaching in English is consistently strong. Pupils make good progress because they are taught how to edit and reflect on their work and thus improve it. Pupils are keen to respond to the feedback they receive from teachers on how to develop their writing by improving vocabulary or correcting spelling and punctuation errors.
- Teaching in mathematics is good. Teachers have recently changed their approach and increased the focus on teaching pupils mathematical concepts rather than simply how to complete calculations. This is generally working well. Pupils are growing in confidence over time as their understanding develops. However, sometimes work is too easy, and so pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.
- Teachers create a positive climate for learning in their classrooms. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Pupils know they are expected to contribute their ideas, and most are confident and are keen to take part.
- Some of the improvements in teaching, learning and assessment are relatively recent. As a result, some techniques, for example questioning and assessing gaps in understanding, are not consistently strong in all areas of the school. Where they are not embedded, teaching is weaker and pupils make slower progress. Where teachers do not accurately diagnose gaps, or do not address them, pupils fall behind.

- In a few cases, teaching is not challenging or engaging pupils. Pupils' pride in their work is diminished, and presentation suffers.

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 typically positive. They enjoy coming to school and they enjoy their lessons. Most are keen to answer questions and take part in discussions. They respond with enthusiasm to teachers' advice on how to improve their work.
- Pupils are proud of their school. There are very high rates of participation in sports clubs and games. There are similarly large numbers of pupils taking part in music productions and other extra-curricular clubs. Disadvantaged pupils are equally well represented. Overall, about 90% of pupils are involved in some way.
- Leaders place great value on ensuring that pupils have a broad range of opportunities for personal reflection and growth. In art, for example, Year 8 pupils recently devised a moving piece of work as a response to world Holocaust day. In religious education lessons, pupils debate moral issues such as the death penalty and the morality of war.
- Pupils are respectful of each other's opinions and of those of different ethnic backgrounds. School staff and pupils are supporting pupils who have gender identity issues sensitively.
- Leaders have ensured that there is good support available from appropriately trained staff for pupils who have emotional and mental issues.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school site and between lessons. The atmosphere is calm and orderly throughout the school. Any occasional boisterousness is good humoured and is addressed quickly by staff. Pupils and parents reported that any bullying is dealt with well by teachers.
- Behaviour in lessons is good. In most lessons, pupils are very well behaved. When the quality of teaching is weaker, however, a minority of pupils lose concentration and disrupt learning.
- The vast majority of pupils have very high rates of attendance. Few are persistently absent. Until recently, however, too many disadvantaged pupils were absent on a regular basis. School leaders have worked hard with families to address this. This year has seen a significant reduction, and now this figure is broadly in line with the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress from their arrival in Year 5 to when they leave at the end of Year 8. The school makes good use of reliable assessment data to track pupils from when they arrive to when they move on. The progress pupils make in their English and mathematics is demonstrable. The data is supported by the quality of work that inspectors found in pupils' books and by talking to pupils.
- In previous years, pupils made better progress in the later years of their time in the school than they did in Years 5 and 6. However, school leaders have revised their approach to key stage 2, and pupils are now getting a better start. In 2015 and 2016, pupils achieved less well in the end of key stage assessments in reading, writing and mathematics, than in many primary schools. Key stage 2 results improved in 2017. Pupils achieved outcomes broadly in line with the national average.
- The most able pupils reach high standards in both key stage 2 and key stage 3. They are set challenging work and expected to reflect on complicated issues and problems across the curriculum. As a result, by Year 8, they are confident and enthusiastic learners.
- Lower prior attaining pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are making good progress. In previous years, these pupils did not achieve as well as they should, but this is now improving. Pupils are generally well supported. Teachers monitor their progress closely and provide additional support when necessary. This is usually effective and pupils respond well. However, sometimes the support is not targeted sufficiently precisely, and pupils are then unable to catch up.
- Pupils make good progress and reach high standards in English. They are encouraged to read challenging books that expand their vocabulary and are able to discuss their books confidently. They also make good progress in writing. By Year 8, they write extended passages with accurate punctuation and grammar. They understand how their choice of vocabulary can affect the mood and tone of their writing. Boys are enthused to write by their teachers who choose the subject matter carefully to motivate and inspire.
- Pupils make good progress and reach expected standards in mathematics. There is an appropriate emphasis on ensuring that pupils can calculate fluently. Pupils are also asked to think about how their mathematics can help them to solve problems. As a result, pupils are confident in talking about their mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not achieving as well as other pupils, but they are beginning to catch up. This is the result of improved attendance and the close monitoring and support that they receive from teachers and the pupil premium champion.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils are enthusiastic and inquisitive learners as a result of the rich curriculum and improvements to teaching, learning and assessment.

School details

Unique reference number	141829
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10042669

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

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	572
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	John Dickson
Headteacher	Ron Jenkinson
Telephone number	01202 883433
Website	www.stmichaelscolehill.dorset.sch.uk
Email address	office@stmichaelsmiddle.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is a middle school, deemed secondary.
- The school meets the key stage 2 floor targets set as the minimum standard for all schools. In 2016, the school was designated as 'coasting' by the Department for Education on the basis of its key stage 2 test results.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average.
- The school is part of the Wimborne Academy Trust. This is a multi-academy trust consisting of five first schools and three middle schools.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the curriculum.

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 academy committee and trust meetings, development plans, analysis of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour data, safeguarding documents and the school's review of its own performance.
- Meetings were held with trustees and members of the academy committee, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and groups of pupils.
- An inspector spoke to the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors took account of 164 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also took into account the responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Andrew Lovett, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Jeremy Law	Her Majesty's Inspector
Faye Bertham	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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