

Inspection of Blackminster Middle School

Station Road, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 8TG

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2024

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	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils are happy at Blackminster Middle School as the school's values of 'community, aspiration, respect and excellence' infuse much of the life of the school. This means pupils feel safe in school, and they know that any concerns they have will be taken seriously by staff. At social times, pupils play respectfully and in a calm way. They know that difference is tolerated and report that discrimination or bullying would be challenged should it occur.

Although the school has high expectations for pupils' achievement, these are not consistently realised. This means some pupils, especially those in Years 7 and 8, do not achieve as well as they should in some subjects. Some pupils disengage from the work given to them in class, which limits what they achieve.

Most pupils behave well and understand the school's expectations of them. They recognise the increasing consistency with which staff respond to inappropriate behaviour. There are too many pupils who do not attend regularly enough. This means they do not benefit from the learning in school.

Pupils especially appreciate the extra-curricular opportunities, clubs and trips which leaders organise for them. These especially focus on sport, but there are other opportunities too, including languages clubs, a dance club and multi-cultural celebrations.

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

The school has reviewed its curriculum but this has only had partial success thus far. Where the curriculum review has been more effective, for example in English, pupils learn well. In other subjects there is a lack of clarity around the key knowledge that pupils need to learn. This means that sometimes key knowledge is not covered, or there are differences within subjects concerning what key knowledge is taught. Over time, assessment has not been used effectively to identify and close gaps in some pupils' learning. As a consequence, these pupils find it challenging to learn the current curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs accurately identified. However, appropriate adaptations are not consistently used in class to support the pupils' learning. As a result, there is variety in how well they achieve. The school has worked to inspire pupils' love of reading and this has had some success. Leaders have yet to launch a phonics programme to support weaker readers in Years 7 and 8.

The school has renewed its expectations around behaviour. It has worked effectively with a number of pupils who found it especially challenging to meet the higher expectations, including using alternative provision where needed. However, leaders have yet to use the information they collect about behaviour to review the impact of their work with more vulnerable pupils. For the most part pupils concentrate in lessons, although there is a tendency for some pupils to disengage from the work when it becomes challenging. This is not systemically addressed. The school has

worked to improve attendance, with some impact, although the improvements have not been sustained. There remain too many pupils, especially the more vulnerable pupils, who do not attend school regularly enough. Leaders have yet to implement a systemic whole-school approach to attendance to secure the necessary further improvements.

The school's curriculum for pupils' personal development is comprehensive. The curriculum is coherent and includes effective coverage of the pupils' personal, social, health and economic education. Pupils speak about maintaining healthy relationships, and know how to look after themselves as they get older. Pupils benefit from the wider world curriculum with employment opportunities, different qualifications as well as an annual visit to a careers fair. The many extra-curricular opportunities and clubs are of benefit to the pupils, although the school does not yet track attendance at these to ensure that the most vulnerable benefit from them.

Leaders are committed to the school and the community it serves, and have had a number of challenges to overcome. Governors too are committed to the school but are over generous in their view of the school as leaders' review of their work is not sufficiently incisive or rigorous. This means that, too often, improvements in provision are too variable. Staff are positive about working at Blackminster Middle and appreciate that leaders are mindful of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils' absence rates remain too high, particularly those who are disadvantaged or those with SEND. These pupils miss too much school and learning. The school needs to work closely with parents and external agencies to instil the importance of regular attendance, especially for these more vulnerable pupils.
- The school has not ensured that assessment is used effectively to identify and close gaps in pupils' learning. As a result, there are too many pupils in Years 7 and 8 who have gaps in their understanding and they struggle to engage with the more complex work in the curriculum they are currently studying. The school should ensure that teachers use assessment effectively to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, and pupils are then supported to learn the core knowledge which will enable them to engage with the current curriculum.
- In some subjects, there remain inconsistencies in the design of the curriculum. This means that sometimes key knowledge is not taught, or there is variance in the key knowledge that is taught within the same subject. Leaders should ensure

that curricular design in all subjects covers the necessary key knowledge, and that all teachers are clear about what this means in practice.

- The school's monitoring has not been sufficiently rigorous or incisive. As a result, some aspects of the provision remain inconsistent. The school should ensure that the impact of improvement work at all levels is evaluated regularly to judge its effectiveness, and rapid actions follow to ensure increased consistency and improvements across the school.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	116960
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10294530
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	10 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	282
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Philip Jones
Executive Headteacher	Linda McQuone
Website	www.blackminster.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is in a federation with one other school. There is a shared governing body for both schools in the federation.
- The school uses three alternative providers, one of which is unregistered.
- 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- The inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- As a part of this inspection, the inspectors met with members of the local governing body, the chair of the governors, senior leaders, subject leaders, teaching staff as well as other employees in the school. They also scrutinised governor minutes as well as review documentation from the local authority. An inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority by telephone.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in: English, mathematics, design technology and modern foreign languages. They also looked at examples of pupils' work in other subjects. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors reviewed the school's extra-curricular activities, enrichment programme and their careers and personal development programmes with leaders and pupils.
- The inspectors reviewed the school's behaviour and attendance records with school leaders.
- The inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, at various points in the inspection. They took account of responses to a staff survey, Ofsted Parent View and the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Andrew Madden, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Clare Considine	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Field	Ofsted Inspector

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