

Cranborne Middle School

Cranborne, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 5RP

Inspection dates

11–12 June 2019

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have worked relentlessly to improve the issues identified in the previous inspection. Governors have made significant improvements to how well they fulfil their function.
- Teaching is typically good. Leaders have a clear philosophy which underpins the approach to learning. Teachers and pupils use this to good effect. However, some inconsistencies are evident.
- Teachers give regular guidance to pupils about how they can improve their work. They use questioning effectively to probe pupils' understanding. Pupils routinely respond to the advice they are given.
- Leaders have given careful consideration to the curriculum. While there is a strong focus on the development of English and mathematics, this is not to the detriment of pupils developing their skills in a broad range of subjects.
- The curriculum to develop pupils' personal, social, health and cultural understanding equips pupils to be thoughtful, caring and active citizens.
- Leaders have used the additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils wisely. Consequently, these pupils make strong progress.
- Middle leaders are passionate about their areas of responsibility. They are developing their skills to support senior leaders to sustain and continue improvement. However, not all middle leaders are precise enough in their use of the extensive assessment information they receive.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are known and cared for. However, their targets are not always aligned sharply enough to their academic progress, so their progress is variable.
- In some lessons, the most able pupils are not challenged strongly enough to demonstrate good achievement.
- Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, overseas visits, outdoor activities and residential experiences. Staff actively encourage pupils to take on leadership roles.
- The advice that pupils receive to support their next steps is thoughtful and well planned. Pupils say that they feel well prepared for the future. Pupils feel safe in school.
- Leaders have improved rates of attendance. This has been particularly successful in reducing the proportion of pupils who miss school regularly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - governors ensuring that leaders have the capacity to sustain and build on the improvements made
 - leaders continuing to embed expectations so that teachers' practice is consistently good across all classes
 - developing the skills of middle leaders, so that they can continue to contribute to the momentum of the school's improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable by:
 - teachers adapting their planning to stretch the most able pupils and to provide support for those pupils who need it, particularly pupils with SEND.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have worked with commitment and determination to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. They have emerged successfully from a period of considerable self-reflection, honest evaluation and staff turnover. They have accurately identified what they need to do and how they will achieve this. Their plans are well devised, systematic and considered.
- Leaders have researched what constitutes effective teaching and have incorporated this into a school-wide approach. This has provided a framework to ensure a consistency of approach and a shared understanding of expectations. This has developed pupils' resilience when they find things difficult. However, there are still variations in how well teachers apply these strategies. This is reflected both within and across departments.
- Leaders systematically monitor the standards of classroom practice. Senior leaders are outward-looking in their approach, and have invited external scrutiny to evaluate the quality of their work. The local authority has provided support, as well as an objective view of the standards that have been achieved. The combination of these approaches means that leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's many strengths and those areas that need to be better.
- Leaders have developed detailed and impressive systems to track pupils and determine how well they meet the standards expected for their ages. Teachers use standardised assessments and moderation with other schools to ensure the accuracy of this information. Together with the systematic monitoring of teaching, this provides a secure starting point for senior leaders to identify patterns in pupils' performance so that they can ask pertinent questions and subsequently take action.
- Subject leaders are equally dedicated and are developing their skills to improve standards within their areas of responsibility. They have considered the content of their curriculum so that it better prepares pupils for the next stages of their education.
- Senior leaders have modelled expectations to show middle leaders how to accurately evaluate the quality of classroom practice. Subject leaders are developing into a cohesive team whose members support and challenge each other. They regularly monitor the quality of teaching in their subjects but, in some cases, their understanding of how their role fits into whole-school improvement is underdeveloped.
- Middle leaders have a wealth of information available to track pupils' progress. However, they do not always use this astutely enough to identify the subject skills that pupils need to develop, or to identify those pupils who do not achieve well. The link between the collection of assessment information about pupils' progress and how this is used to inform teachers' planning is not yet strong enough.
- Phase leaders have an extensive overview of the pastoral well-being of pupils. They monitor patterns of behaviour and attendance, which means that they are able to successfully tackle any emerging issues.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has overhauled the provision for pupils with SEND. Staff ensure that the social and emotional needs of pupils are well

met. Pupils who access additional interventions are patient and cooperate with each other. The development of such social skills helps pupils to work alongside their peers in the classroom.

- Leaders have provided training for teachers and teaching assistants on how to support pupils more effectively. However, pupils' targets are not always aligned sharply enough to their academic needs. Therefore, the impact of the support on pupils' learning is not consistently evident. Some parents who responded to the parent survey, Parent View, which was issued at the time of the inspection, have concerns about the support their children receive.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is strong. The school's success and commitment in regard to improving the life chances of all pupils have been externally recognised. Leaders have identified the barriers to learning and have identified those pupils who are not performing as well as they should. There are examples of where interventions are improving the performance of pupils within this group.
- Leaders have identified pupils who arrive at the school having not made good progress. The additional funding for such pupils is used to provide timely interventions, which have brought about rapid progress for some pupils. However, these gains are not always built upon sufficiently in pupils' regular classes. Teachers sometimes do not highlight or remedy fundamental misconceptions in spelling, punctuation and mathematical calculation, which hampers the progress that pupils make.
- Leaders have made clear their commitment to ensuring that pupils develop their skills in a range of curriculum areas. There is a focus on the development of literacy and numeracy, but pupils also develop their knowledge of subject concepts and skills more widely. In technology, for example, pupils use their knowledge and apply their skills independently in their individual projects.
- Staff are overwhelmingly positive about working at the school. They are proud of the school and feel that leaders are approachable and supportive. Leaders provide effective support for newly qualified teachers so that their teaching careers begin from solid foundations.
- Pupils have extensive opportunities to take part in enrichment activities. For example, at the time of the inspection, pupils' work was being moderated for the Arts Award, pupils were organising their groups for the upcoming residential trip and others were representing the school in an athletics sports event for the area. Parents and pupils who responded to the surveys issued at the time of the inspection value these opportunities.

Governance of the school

- Governors have made substantial improvements to their systems and structures, which means that they fulfil their roles effectively. They are receptive to external advice and participate in training so that they can better interpret the detailed information that is provided regularly by school leaders. They take objective scrutiny in the spirit that this will help them to further develop their skills. They work positively with school leaders, asking exploratory questions so that leaders can explain the decisions made and the impact these have had. Their future plans are cognisant of both financial and educational imperatives, as well as the need to ensure that there is sufficient

leadership capacity to continue the momentum of improvement.

- Governors are considered in their approach, and carefully think through issues before they make a decision. They have assigned roles within the governing body and link with curriculum areas. Their meetings are planned to fit around key points in the year, and are closely aligned to the school's development plan. They visit the school regularly, joining senior leaders in their monitoring activities. This means that they have immediate evidence of the standards that the school achieves. The conclusions from these visits are shared more widely with all members of the governing body so that there is a shared understanding of the quality of education the school provides.
- Governors monitor the impact of the additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils. They are clear about the impact of actions and this informs how future spending is allocated. They are equally clear about the allocation of funds for the development of sport, but are less clear on how well this is leading to the development of pupils' skills.
- Governors have identified that some parents and carers are reticent about engaging in the work of the school, and that some have concerns about their children's experiences. While there are very few parents who express these concerns, governors have sought to improve communication and provide opportunities for parents to visit the school. For example, an information evening which focused on e-safety was well received by parents. Governors have taken steps to raise their profile and often include 'a word from the governors' in the school newsletter, so that parents better understand the governors' role. A governor has been assigned to lead the development of this work.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors and leaders fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff have received training, know what to be vigilant for and know how to report concerns. This training is supplemented with regular briefings which highlight 'pupils of concern'. Leaders are mindful of the school's rural context and have, therefore, ensured that staff are fully briefed on a wide range of safeguarding issues.
- Leaders use the recently implemented electronic system to organise pupils' files. However, record-keeping is not stringent enough in terms of the detail recorded and the timeliness with which essential information is transferred to this system. Leaders work with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.
- Pupils say that they are well supervised on the school site and feel safe. This sentiment is echoed by the majority of parents who responded to Parent View.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The development of teaching and learning has been a key priority over recent years. There is a clearly established expectation to develop pupils' resilience in their learning so that they can master their skills. Teachers have received effective training to support the development of this approach. Pupils understand these expectations and said that guidance from their teachers makes them 'really think about the answer'. This

is evident and has a demonstrable impact on the quality of their responses. There is no discernible difference in the quality of disadvantaged pupils' work and that of their peers.

- The classroom environment supports effective learning. Pupils are eager to make a contribution and work in a cooperative and collaborative way. They are open to advice from their peers and this consolidates their understanding. Pupils are engaged and interested in what they are being taught, and are eager to answer questions and think about the questions posed.
- Where teaching is strong, which is typically the case, pupils' work is very well presented and there is evidence of a constructive dialogue between teachers and pupils. Pupils are prompted, through effective questioning, to think more deeply and have clear assessment criteria to help them reflect on their work. They said, 'We do this so we know what to improve on next time.'
- Pupils are encouraged to read for enjoyment, as well as to develop their skills. Many pupils are adept at identifying inference and analysing a writer's intention. They can pick out aspects of language which either enhance descriptions or have a powerful effect on the reader. Their own choices of text are supported by a consideration of high-quality texts. Pupils are encouraged to define complex and archaic language and summarise what this is communicating to the reader.
- The most able pupils usually have opportunities to extend their learning and make links within their learning. In history, for example, pupils thoughtfully compared Stonehenge with the Egyptian pyramids, using their skills of historical enquiry. However, where pupils are not guided to appropriate starting points, they do not know how they can apply their knowledge. For example, in mathematics, pupils do not always complete the challenges that will allow them to use their reasoning skills to solve more complex problems.
- Teaching assistants work effectively with pupils with SEND. Pupils are therefore fully involved in classroom activities. In the best examples, teachers use well-chosen resources and additional adults provide encouragement for pupils to explain their thinking. This builds pupils' confidence and feeling of success. However, in other examples, teachers' planning is not always matched well to pupils' starting points. Where this is the case, pupils do not fully engage or complete enough of the task.
- Where teaching is less secure, pupils are sometimes unclear about what the task is asking of them. In other examples, the pitch of the lesson does not enable pupils, particularly lower prior-attaining pupils, to access the task at the appropriate level. In some instances, pupils have basic misconceptions about technical accuracy or the level of expectation is not high enough. This leads to poor presentation and fragmented learning. Where this is the case, it is not clear how pupils can build on what they have done before.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- The curriculum is well planned so that pupils can consider topics that are relevant to their well-being. The coordinator is passionate about this provision and its impact on pupils, so the content is frequently reviewed and is evolving. Pupils' timetabled lessons are complemented by activities in tutor time, assemblies and visiting speakers. There are, however, inconsistencies in the quality of the delivery of material expected to be covered by pupils in tutor time.
- Pupils know how to stay healthy and keep themselves safe, including when online or using social media. They have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships and are confident about their knowledge of staying safe from abuse and exploitation.
- The school has a well-planned provision to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Responses from pupils and analysis of pupils' work show that many have a well-developed understanding of a range of beliefs and moral issues. A Year 7 pupil's extended written response to the statement 'All suffering is caused by the actions of humans' was particularly thoughtful.
- Leaders have developed robust, tried-and-tested transition arrangements for pupils when they arrive in Year 5, and for Year 8 pupils when they leave. Pupils are clear about what to expect in their new setting. Year 8 pupils benefit from hearing the perspective of the school's alumni who come back to visit the school to share their experiences. There is a warmth in the relationships between such pupils and their former teachers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good, both in lessons and at social time, which is supported by the work of playground leaders. There is a culture of respect and tolerance in the school. Motivational quotations on the walls emphasise the school's values. Wall displays celebrate the work of pupils who have taken on leadership roles. Staff take pride in sharing work that pupils have completed. For example, in the reception area, there is a well-presented display of the project work that pupils have completed following their study of the Holocaust.
- Pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare, and this is also reflected in the infrequent use of racist or prejudicial language. The majority of pupils say that they have a trusted adult who they can speak with if they have a concern. They are confident that any issues will be dealt with.
- Leaders have introduced effective systems to manage behaviour, which are well understood by all members of the school community. The use of systems, together with the ability of parents to monitor behaviour online, has had a positive impact. Behaviour is generally good, and the school is an orderly environment. As a result, the use of fixed-term exclusion is low and recorded behaviour incidents are reducing in number.
- The actions taken by leaders have improved rates of attendance, so it is now in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who do not attend school regularly has also reduced significantly. Leaders continue to work with pupils and their families where these expectations are not met.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils arrive in Year 5 with attainment that is close to average. They then achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. At this point, many pupils attain at the higher standard in these subjects. Therefore, pupils make good progress by the end of key stage 2. Work in pupils' books and learning observed by inspectors, as well as the information provided by school leaders, show that this positive trajectory continues for current pupils in reading and mathematics, but is not as secure in writing.
- By the end of Year 8, standardised tests show that pupils continue to make good progress towards achieving their targets. Overall, the rate of progress increases as pupils move through the school because of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment they receive. This is particularly evident in the standard of writing.
- Within these overall figures, however, there are groups of pupils who do not make the progress that they are capable of. While pupils with education, health and care plans make strong progress from their starting points, pupils who receive special educational needs support do not make the progress they should by the end of Year 6. Where planning is not routinely tailored to such pupils' needs, this is reflected in the work of current pupils in all year groups.
- The most able pupils make gains in their learning, but do not achieve as strongly as they might by the end of Year 6. Pupils do achieve well by the end of Year 8. In the majority of lessons, the most able pupils are challenged well. There are cases, however, where some do not achieve as well as they should.
- The needs of disadvantaged pupils are carefully considered, and their progress is regularly monitored by leaders and by governors. The result is that the standards that these pupils reached and the progress that they made improved markedly in 2018.
- The proportion of pupils who demonstrate a secure understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar by the end of Year 6 has improved. However, where misconceptions are not rectified, pupils continue to make errors in their independent work. This hampers their ability to express their ideas clearly.
- Leaders track the standards that pupils reach in all subjects across the curriculum. This shows that, overall, pupils make good progress towards their targets. Leaders share this information with governors, who use it as a starting point for their curriculum visits.

School details

Unique reference number	113853
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10081350

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Sandi Malpas
Headteacher	Craig Watson
Telephone number	01725 517 348
Website	www.cranbornemid.dorset.sch.uk
Email address	office@cranbornemid.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 November 2016

Information about this school

- Cranborne Middle school is a middle deemed secondary school catering for pupils from Year 5 to Year 8. It is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with the national average. The number of pupils who are supported by an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a range of subjects and age groups, and scrutinised pupils' written work. Observations were conducted jointly with members of the leadership team. The lead inspector spoke to a representative from the local authority on the telephone.
- Meetings were held with members of the leadership team and representatives from the governing body. In addition, inspectors met with curriculum leaders, pastoral leaders and newly qualified teaching staff.
- Inspectors met with pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, both formally and informally, to discuss their views about their experiences of school.
- An inspector listened to a selection of pupils read.
- Inspectors looked at the school's documentation, including the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and priorities for future improvement. Inspectors reviewed progress, behaviour and attendance information relating to current pupils, and governors' records.
- School policies relating to safeguarding, pupils' behaviour, the curriculum and the use of additional funding, including the pupil premium, were scrutinised.
- Inspectors considered the 89 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and also 54 free-text responses, 63 responses to the pupil survey and 30 responses to the staff survey. The lead inspector spoke to a parent on the telephone.

Inspection team

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