

Bilbrook CofE (VC) Middle School

Bilbrook Road, Codsall, Wolverhampton, WV8 1EU

Inspection dates 13–14 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Until this year, pupils' progress was disrupted by staffing changes and had not been fast enough, particularly in mathematics.
- Standards in English and mathematics have now improved in Key Stage 2 and are rising in Key Stage 3, but these improvements are not yet secure.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics still varies too much to support good progress or high expectations.
- In some mathematics lessons pupils do not know what they have to do, because their work has not been properly explained.
- Teachers' marking in books does not always give pupils clear guidance to help them improve their work.
- While grammar, punctuation and spelling standards are improving, pupils do not routinely make corrections or learn from their mistakes.

The school has the following strengths

- The school's leaders and governors have improved many aspects of teaching and learning since summer 2013. They have managed staff changes well, and much teaching is now good.
- The expertise of the deputy headteacher from the high school has been used well to improve achievement in mathematics.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and feel safe there.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through activities such as discussing world events and philosophical sayings that build their confidence.
- Attendance has improved and the school has reduced the number of exclusions significantly.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in 13 lessons, three of which were jointly observed with a member of the leadership team.
- The inspector heard a small group of pupils reading and observed a tutorial. The inspector also looked at pupils' books and their work around the school.
- Discussions were held with two groups of pupils, staff, members of the governing body, senior and subject leaders, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of 10 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's questionnaire for parents and carers, a letter from a child, and responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector looked at the school's data on pupils' recent and current progress, records relating to safeguarding and the management of teachers' performance, the school's own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and its plans for improvement.

Inspection team

Mary Myatt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bilbrook Middle School is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for pupils in the care of the local authority, known to be eligible for free school meals or from service families, is slightly above average.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, as are the numbers who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school does not educate any pupils away from the school site.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school is part of a 'hard' federation with Codsall Community High School and Perton Middle School, which means that an executive headteacher and a single governing body are responsible for all three schools.
- The executive headteacher also provides support to other schools in the local authority.
- Since the last inspection, there has been some turnover in staffing. A new English leader was appointed in summer 2013 and a teacher for mathematics is due to start in the summer term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently good or better, particularly mathematics, by:
 - making sure pupils are clear about what is expected of them, so that they make at least good progress in every lesson
 - using marking effectively so pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve their work
 - checking that pupils respond to written feedback
 - encouraging pupils to think deeper when responding to questions in lessons.
- Ensure that the recent improvement in pupils' attainment is matched across all year groups by:
 - providing further training for staff on marking effectively and improving pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills
 - spreading the effective teaching techniques seen in some mathematics lessons across the school
 - analysing the strengths of the best lessons to support consistently good teaching across all year groups.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The school responded well to disappointing results and standards in 2013, particularly in mathematics in Key Stage 2. However, the significant improvements for most groups of pupils this year are not yet secure, and pupils have not yet fully made up for lost ground.
- The school's assessments indicate that pupils join in Year 5 with lower attainment than that expected for their age. At the end of Year 6 in 2013, their attainment in mathematics was significantly below the national average and they had not made enough progress. In English it was broadly average, reflecting good progress.
- In Key Stage 3, pupils have not always made the expected progress in English and mathematics in the past. However, pupils in Year 8 have made faster progress in mathematics this year and, as a result, are now reaching the levels expected nationally. More-able pupils are now making good progress.
- The pupils supported through pupil premium funding have made better progress since 2013, when those in Year 6 were approximately a year behind other pupils in English and mathematics. As a result, they are now catching up with other pupils in English and mathematics across the school, and making similar progress.
- Year 7 'catch up' funding is used well to help pupils who have the weakest skills in English and mathematics, and they are making good progress.
- The school has focused successfully on improving standards in reading. A recent 'readathon' session was aimed at promoting sustained reading, and pupils said it had encouraged them to read more. There is a wide range of books for pupils to read and they are well supported by additional staff and students from the high school. As a result most pupils are making better progress in English.
- In 2013 disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs did not achieve well. However, they are now making good progress in both English and mathematics, and catching up with their classmates.
- Additional support is helping to improve pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills. The school recently had a focus session on punctuation and this is being referred to in lessons. However, pupils' books still contain too many spelling mistakes. Some go uncorrected, but even where they have been corrected, pupils have not been expected to show that they can now spell correctly.
- Literacy is promoted across the curriculum and pupils have plenty of opportunities for extended writing. A good example was seen during the inspection when pupils were writing imaginatively about the life cycle of a sunflower seed in science. They had been given helpful guidelines to develop their ideas.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is improving quickly but in too many lessons, particularly in mathematics, pupils are not clear about what they are expected to do. This is because the tasks have not been explained and pupils' understanding of the work has not been checked. Sometimes pupils are praised for

completing the work without showing that they have understood it or completed it correctly. As a result, many pupils are unclear about how to improve their work.

- In a number of mathematics lessons observed during the inspection, all pupils were given the same tasks, regardless of their ability levels. There was not enough support for those who needed it, and no additional, more challenging work for pupils who had completed the task quickly. They make faster progress in mathematics when the teaching consolidates their learning and they are clear about the next steps.
- In some lessons, pupils' first answers are accepted too readily. Pupils are not encouraged to explain their thinking. This means that they do not make as much progress as they could.
- Pupils' work is usually marked regularly but the feedback pupils receive does not always make clear what they should do to reach their personal targets. Pupils are often not expected to make improvements based on the teacher's comments. This means that pupils do not spend enough time improving their work.
- In many lessons teaching is good. For example, in some mathematics lessons expectations are high and pupils have the chance to consolidate their learning, are clear about what they need to do to improve their work and are very well supported. As a result, pupils in these lessons achieve well and make good progress.
- Good teaching was seen in French where pupils were helped to address their mistakes and were supported to learn about more complex sentences. The high expectations conveyed by the teacher meant that all pupils were engaged and were keen to improve.
- In a drama lesson pupils practised saying longer sentences which gave more information about the characters they were studying. They were well supported by the teacher who helped them to see the links between what they were doing in the lesson and the focus on grammar which had taken place earlier in the week.
- Teaching assistants provide good support in lessons for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. For example, in an English lesson the teaching assistant carefully explained and made sure pupils were clear about what they were learning. As a result they made good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They get on well together and are polite and courteous. The tutor groups contain pupils from each year group. They work together well and one group said, 'It helps us to bond together.' They arrive punctually at lessons, bring the right equipment and have the correct school uniform.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. In lessons they listen carefully to the teacher and to each other. In several English lessons, pupils listened carefully to one another's presentations, made notes about the questions they wanted to ask and gave positive responses during discussions. In some other lessons, however, a small number of pupils were not clear about what they had to do and, as a result, did not pay enough attention.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe at the school. They say there is little bullying in school, and if it occurs it is dealt with swiftly. They are well informed about cyber-bullying. Pupils are very appreciative of the high quality support they

receive and one child wrote to the inspector praising the staff and the wide range of opportunities she has at the school. Parents and carers agree that the school provides very good support for their children.

- Attendance and punctuality have improved considerably in the last year. Attendance is now above average and punctuality is good. There have been considerable improvements in attendance of pupils supported through the pupil premium and of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. The number of exclusions has also reduced considerably, thanks to good use of the specialist resources at the high school.

The leadership and management are good

- The leadership team has secured considerable improvements since summer 2013. The problems of recruiting specialist staff have now been solved and support from the high school, particularly in mathematics, has resulted in pupils now making expected progress. Slower progress in English in some year groups, a legacy of temporary staff, has been tackled effectively.
- Senior leaders have improved the quality of teaching through giving staff appropriate training such as working with colleagues in other schools in the federation, marking work together and observing good practice. These approaches have had a positive impact on standards, but have not yet led to sustained improvement in areas such as grammar, punctuation and spelling, or consistency in quality between subjects and age groups.
- Leaders have an accurate awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and the school development plan identifies suitable areas for improvement. The reasons for the decline in attainment in 2013 have been correctly identified and work to address these is made clear in the plan.
- Pupil premium funding is used wisely and as a result there has been considerable improvement in the achievement of eligible pupils. The school has achieved this through the use of higher-level teaching assistants and a mathematics mentor.
- Pupils from all backgrounds have equal opportunities to succeed. As a result the gap between the achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other pupils has closed.
- The primary sports funding has been used well to provide additional activities such as badminton, netball and football, which have a very high take-up. It has also funded a specialist coach to work with pupils in the middle schools across the federation.
- The school has benefited from the additional facilities and support available through the federation. Staff collaborate well across the federation to share training opportunities. There are good links with the feeder first schools, and the school is working closely with them to raise attainment on entry.
- The curriculum includes regular themed days to reinforce the links between subjects. These help pupils to develop the knowledge and skills to prepare them to live in a diverse society. The STEM programme (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and the 'F1 in Schools' challenge are valued by pupils as they help them to make links with future career opportunities.
- Pupils have very good opportunities for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through wide-ranging assemblies, to which they contribute, and opportunities for volunteering. There are very good links with the local church.

- The local authority has provided only limited support for the school as it considered that there was sufficient capacity among the school's leaders to bring about improvement.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is good. The governing body of the federated schools has considerable expertise and is well informed about standards, the quality of teaching, the way in which staff performance is managed and how teachers, including the executive headteacher, are rewarded. They do not award pay increases unless there is an improvement in results. They ask challenging questions about what the school needs to do to improve its performance further. Finances are well managed and the spending of extra funds, such as the pupil premium and the primary sports funding, are carefully monitored. The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are met, including those for keeping pupils safe. Staff are suitably trained and the procedures for child protection and risk assessment are good.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	124453
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	427186

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	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Trefor Williams
Headteacher	Marjorie Tunnicliffe (Executive Headeacher)
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2012
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