

Bilbrook CofE (VC) Middle School

Bilbrook Road, Codsall, Staffordshire WV8 1EU

Inspection dates

24–25 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Some of the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection remain.
- Outcomes, particularly in mathematics, have not been consistently good since the last inspection.
- In 2015, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who made rapid progress in mathematics was lower than the national average. Very few most-able pupils achieved higher levels in mathematics when compared with reading and writing. Some of the most able pupils in the school made slower progress than that of which they were capable.
- Some pupils still have key gaps in their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts.
- The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs or disability and disadvantaged pupils has been inconsistent since the last inspection. Their progress reflects the overall patterns in the school.
- Pupils are given few opportunities to develop numeracy across the curriculum. They do not regularly apply the skills that they are now learning in mathematics in other subjects.
- Where teaching is weaker, pupils find it hard to persevere if they are expected to complete difficult tasks without the help of an adult.
- New systems to improve teaching and outcomes in the school are not yet embedded. Leaders have not yet evaluated them fully in order to refine them to make further improvements.

The school has the following strengths

- The school has improved considerably this year. It is well led and managed by the executive headteacher.
- The quality of teaching and pupil progress have improved since September 2015. By the time most pupils leave for high school they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Leadership, teaching and outcomes in English have been good since the last inspection.
- The school's assessment system, although still developing, is of a high quality.
- Safeguarding is effective and attendance is above the national average. Pupils feel safe and they are well cared for.
- Pupils are considerate, respectful and well mannered. Their behaviour is good and exclusions are extremely rare.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values are promoted well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the good practice in English and the recent improvements in the quality of teaching overall to ensure that:
 - there is consistently good or better teaching in all subjects
 - pupils in all year groups make rapid progress across the curriculum.
- Embed, evaluate and refine the systems and structures that are now in place in order to secure sustainable improvement across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The leadership of the school has been revitalised since the appointment of the executive headteacher in September 2015. He has been ably supported by the head of school, the two assistant heads, the deputy headteacher from the high school and the governing body to secure rapid improvements this academic year.
- As there is now a stronger focus on this school as an individual entity, rather than as a part of the federation, changes that were made after the last inspection have been built upon and the areas for improvement have been addressed. For example, effective action has been taken to increase the impact of feedback. In addition, pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar have improved and good practice is shared across the school.
- Leaders have high aspirations. They know where there are strengths and weaknesses and they have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching. Staff are more effectively deployed so the quality of teaching, learning and assessment currently in the school has improved. However, some of their actions have not embedded fully and leaders have not yet had the time to evaluate new systems and refine them as required.
- There is now a clear focus on improving progress in all subjects in all year groups in the school. This has had a positive impact but some inconsistencies remain.
- Leaders at all levels have high expectations of pupils and staff and they lead by example. The leadership of English has been strong since the last inspection and the new leader of mathematics is securing rapid improvements in this area.
- The management of teachers' performance is used well to reward high-quality teaching and secure improvement. Teachers are set targets linked to the impact that teaching has on outcomes, the teachers' standards, their responsibilities in the school and their professional development. Staff value the training and support that they receive in the federation and beyond. This has led to improvements in the quality of teaching.
- The school's system for recording, monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress is of a high quality. It gives a clear indication of the skills, knowledge and understanding pupils have achieved in each subject and is now used well to set targets for pupils so they know what they need to do to make good or better progress. This system gives leaders a secure understanding of the progress that pupils are making across the school and has helped to improve progress this year. Leaders are taking action to refine it further.
- The new national curriculum is firmly embedded. The curriculum is broad and balanced and all the programmes of study are covered effectively. Pupils of all ages benefit from specialist teaching of a number of subjects by teachers from the high school. Pupils' learning is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities such as drama, computing and a number of sports.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well and prejudiced behaviour is not tolerated. Pupils learn about a number of different cultures around the world and they are taught about all the major religions.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is actively encouraged and fundamental British values are promoted well. Pupils are tolerant and respectful, they understand democracy and the rule of law and they are willing to take individual responsibility. There are strong links with the local church.
- The primary school physical education and sport premium is used well to promote active lifestyles. Pupils participate in a wider range of sporting activities and they benefit from staff from the high school delivering physical education lessons. Pupils take part in competitive sports with pupils from the other schools in the federation and elsewhere. Healthy eating is also encouraged.
- Pupil premium funding is now being used effectively to narrow the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and all pupils nationally. This has not always been the case. The school identified that the gap widened in Year 6 in 2015 following a successful year in 2014. Additional support has been put in place to help disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points in all subjects in every year group. However, school leaders have primarily evaluated these actions by the impact that they have on outcomes in Year 6 so they do not have a complete picture of their effectiveness.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has had a positive impact since the last inspection. As a result of additional support, pupils make improved progress from their starting points during Year 7. Although some gaps in knowledge and understanding remain in mathematics, a high proportion of pupils have made accelerated progress.

- Parents are supportive of the work of the school. Most would recommend it to another parent and they believe that their children are well taught, that they make good progress and that they receive useful information from the school.
- The local authority has provided effective support to the school this year. School leaders value the regular contact and the targeted support that they have received. Leaders used the review conducted by local authority officers in February 2016 to help to inform their action plan, which is leading to further improvements in the school.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Federation governors have the experience, skills, knowledge and understanding to support and challenge leaders effectively. Their meetings cover all the appropriate areas, they receive high-quality information and they ask informed questions. They have attended relevant training and ensured that their statutory duties are met.
 - The establishment of a committee of the federation’s governing body which focuses specifically on matters related to Bilbrook CofE (VC) Middle School has improved the quality of governance further. This committee, which is extremely well led, is able to hold leaders firmly to account for the quality of teaching and outcomes in the school. Governors have a clear understanding of the school’s strengths and weaknesses and they have put together a well-informed plan to improve the school further.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Policies and procedures are in place but leaders are currently revising federation policies so that they are specific to the school. Staff have received up-to-date training and information. They know what to do if they have any concerns about a child’s well-being and prompt action is taken when required. Records are well kept and stored securely. Leaders work effectively with outside agencies when required.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has not been consistently good since the last inspection. Consequently, they have not led to good progress over time.
- Where teaching is less effective, planning does not take account of the different abilities of pupils so they all complete the same task regardless of their starting point. In some classes, the most able have not been sufficiently challenged, time has not been used effectively and feedback has not led to rapid progress.
- Leaders have recently taken decisive action to make improvements, so there is now more high-quality teaching in the school than previously. Staffing changes have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and the good practice that is evident in the school is shared.
- Currently, in the majority of classes, teachers plan to meet the needs of all groups of pupils effectively. The most able, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability are challenged to make at least good progress from their starting points. Clear success criteria are used effectively to allow pupils to fully understand what is expected of them and opportunities for pupils to reflect on what they have studied help to reinforce learning. Staff encourage pupils to think deeply when tackling activities or responding to questions.
- Teachers currently in the school have a secure subject knowledge; they use questions and resources well to make sure that pupils make faster progress. Teaching assistants also make a valuable contribution to the improved quality of learning in the school.
- Staff and pupils enjoy positive relationships in all classes and praise is used well to encourage pupils to make good progress. Pupils are usually interested and engaged in their learning and staff also take opportunities to promote equality of opportunity in their lessons.
- Pupils’ writing skills have been developed well in English and other subjects since the last inspection. Pupils have been given opportunities to write at length and there has been a successful focus on improving spelling, punctuation and grammar. English has been taught well over time.
- Pupils read a range of texts to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills. Many read for pleasure and weaker readers are able to use the sounds that letters represent (phonics) to sound out words.
- The teaching of mathematics has been weaker than that of English since the last inspection. As a result of strong subject leadership, teaching has improved considerably this academic year, particularly this term, but opportunities to develop numeracy across the curriculum are not yet being taken regularly enough.
- A range of subjects are now taught well throughout the school. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit from their

primary curriculum, which is delivered by primary specialists, being supplemented by subject teachers from the high school. Subjects such as art, design and technology and French are effectively taught to all pupils by specialist teachers.

- Pupils value the homework that they are given. Teachers set appropriate tasks which deepen pupils' understanding by giving them opportunities to consolidate their learning.
- Leaders acknowledge that the quality of marking has improved during this school year. Almost all staff are consistently following the school marking policy. They check that pupils respond to feedback and use the targets that they set to inform subsequent activities. This has contributed to the improved progress which is now evident in the school.
- The school's assessment system is most effective. Teachers are clear about what pupils can do and what they need to learn. This information is shared with parents and gives them a useful indication of how their children are doing in relation to the standards expected of them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are well cared for and their physical and emotional well-being is promoted effectively. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of each pupil. This is an inclusive, happy and caring school.
- Most pupils know how to be successful learners. They come to school prepared to learn, look after their books and equipment and usually take great care with their presentation. They are keen to improve the quality of work that they produce.
- Self-confidence and self-awareness are promoted through a range of subjects. Teachers look for opportunities to develop these qualities in lessons and in after-school clubs. However, some pupils lack the resilience to move on to challenging tasks without reassurance from the teacher.
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility in the school. For example, they are proud to be prefects, form captains, sports leaders, health educators and members of the school council. Older pupils also listen to Year 5 pupils read.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying but believe that it is extremely rare in the school. They are also confident that staff would resolve any issues linked to unkindness if they arose.
- Pupils are taught to stay safe. They know how to stay safe when using the internet and have a secure understanding of issues associated with safety that are appropriate to their age.
- School leaders give safety in school a high priority. Systems are in place to ensure that pupils are safe and well looked after in school and at enrichment activities. As a result, almost all parents, staff and pupils who made their views known to inspectors said that pupils were safe in the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are considerate, respectful and extremely polite. Pupils display good manners and hold doors open for staff, visitors and other pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour inside and outside of the classroom is good. There was no disruption to learning in any of the lessons visited during the inspection and pupils play sensibly together outside of the classroom.
- Behaviour observed by inspectors at break and lunchtime was considerate and positive but pupils and a few parents indicated that behaviour was not always of the highest standard.
- In lessons, pupils typically listen very carefully to staff and to each other and usually work productively, independently, in pairs, groups or as a whole class. Very occasionally, a few pupils find it hard to persevere if they are expected to complete difficult tasks without the help of an adult.
- Staff believe that behaviour is good and use the systems to manage behaviour consistently and effectively. Pupils believe that they are treated fairly.
- Exclusions are extremely rare. Incidents of poor behaviour are infrequent and there have been marked improvements for the very few pupils with particular behaviour needs.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now above the national average. The vast majority of pupils attend regularly and leaders have used successful strategies to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils so their attendance is now in line with other pupils in the school. A few pupils with special educational needs or disability have lower attendance than other pupils but this is largely for medical reasons.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes have not been consistently good since the last inspection. In 2014, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 was above the national average but progress for some pupils from their starting points was slow in mathematics. These pupils are currently in Year 8 and their progress has improved.
- In 2015, attainment in mathematics was well below the national average at the end of Year 6. This was the result of the slow progress made by a number of groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. However, as a result of improved teaching and leadership in mathematics, this group of pupils are now making accelerated progress in Year 7.
- Progress in mathematics has improved rapidly for most pupils this term but inconsistencies remain. Some pupils, predominantly those who have special educational needs or disability, have key gaps in their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts.
- In 2015, a smaller proportion than nationally reached high levels of attainment or made rapid progress in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 6. The most able pupils in the school made slower progress than the most able nationally. However, as a result of improved teaching, a greater proportion of pupils currently in the school are making rapid progress. More of the most able pupils, particularly by the time they are in Year 8, are reaching the standards of which they are capable.
- Outcomes in writing have been strong since the last inspection. All pupils made the progress expected of them by the end of Year 6 in 2014 and 2015 and a greater proportion than nationally made rapid progress. As a result of good teaching, English outcomes at the end of Year 8 are also strong.
- Progress in foundation subjects is not consistent. It is good in some subjects in some year groups and strongest in design and technology, French and drama. Leaders are aware of this and have taken effective action which has led to improved progress across a range of subjects this term.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make similar progress from their starting points to other pupils in the school. However, their progress is most rapid where the teaching is good. For example, they have made very strong progress in English in Year 8.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils has been inconsistent since the last inspection and reflects trends in the school. Disadvantaged pupils have made stronger progress in writing than in other subjects. They made good progress by the end of Year 6 in reading in 2014 and made slow progress in mathematics in 2015. Consequently, an attainment gap remains.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to other pupils in the school. Since the last inspection, outcomes have been good in English and progress is now improving in mathematics.
- The rate of progress pupils make increases as they move through the school and is most rapid in Year 8. As this is combined with good transition procedures to the high school, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

School details

Unique reference number	124453
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10009274

This inspection 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	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Burton
Headteacher	Alun Harding (executive headteacher)
Telephone number	01902 840910
Website	www.bilbrookmiddle.com
Email address	office@bilbrook.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than an average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average and very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average. A below-average proportion is supported with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school is part of the Codsall High Federation of Schools with Codsall Community High School and Perton Middle School. The federation is led by an executive headteacher and has one governing body. The executive headteacher has led the federation since September 2015.
- A committee of the federation's governing body is now responsible for most aspects of governance of Bilbrook CofE (VC) Middle School.
- The former assistant headteacher was appointed as head of school in April 2016.
- The school meets requirements for the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning was observed in six parts of lessons. All of these visits were with senior leaders from the federation.
- The lead inspector met with a group of pupils and spoke to some pupils informally. He looked at examples of pupils' work in their books.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the head of school, senior leaders and other members of staff.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of the federation's governing body and the chair of the committee responsible for the school. He also spoke by telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- The opinions of parents were considered through 21 responses and 16 free text comments on Parent View. Eight returns from the pupil questionnaire and 18 responses to the staff questionnaires were also analysed.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, information about managing teachers' performance and staff training records. Minutes of meetings of the governing body and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety were also analysed.

Inspection team

Simon Mosley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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