

Preston School Academy

Monks Dale, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 3JD

Inspection dates

6–7 June 2017

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not yet ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment that pupils experience is consistently high enough. As a result, pupils do not make good progress in all their subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils made poor progress in 2016. Although this is now improving, these pupils still do not do well.
- Teachers do not have consistently high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Too often, learning fails to engage pupils and they switch off and are content to quietly coast along. When expectation is higher, pupils respond enthusiastically and make good progress.
- Teachers do not always explain clearly enough to pupils how to improve their work. This slows pupils' progress.
- Pupils do not currently make good progress in science. However, the quality of teaching is improving and pupils are beginning to respond well.
- Middle leaders do not hold teachers consistently to account with the necessary rigour to ensure teaching is good. As a result, there is significant variability in the quality of teaching across the school.
- Teachers do not insist on high enough standards of literacy. Spelling, punctuation and grammar errors are frequent and pupils do not learn from their mistakes. This is holding them back.

The school has the following strengths

- The governors, principal and senior staff are showing strong leadership in addressing deep-seated issues of low expectations with great determination. There has been significant improvement in the last two years. Leaders are well placed to make further progress.
- Pupils are well behaved. They treat each other with respect and act maturely around the school site. Instances of disruption in lessons are rare.
- There are numerous examples of effective teaching and learning throughout the school that result in pupils making strong progress.
- Leaders have ensured that the quality of careers education and independent advice and guidance pupils receive is good. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management further by ensuring that all middle leaders are as effective as the best in insisting that the quality of teaching across their departments is high and consequently pupils make good progress.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment and thus increase pupil progress by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - pupils know how to improve their work.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in science so that it consistently leads to all pupils making the progress of which they are capable.
- Raise standards of literacy across the school by ensuring that teachers focus on correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken to improve this aspect of leadership and management.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal has set high expectations for staff and pupils since his arrival in 2015. He is well supported by his senior team, and together they are showing drive and determination in improving the school. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They have made significant improvements and they understand the next steps to take.
- Governors, leaders and teachers are all committed to maintaining the inclusive nature of the school, which welcomes pupils of all abilities and backgrounds. They are keen to meet the needs of every pupil. For example, the school hosts a unit for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Pupils from the unit are integrated into mainstream school life very effectively.
- Leaders work hard with teachers to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve and they are successfully improving the quality of teaching as a result.
- Senior leaders are now holding middle leaders to account with greater rigour than they have in the past. They are currently re-organising the leadership structure to ensure this is maintained and developed.
- The principal has managed the performance of staff well. He has ensured that objectives for staff are focused on the progress that pupils make and on specific areas of teaching, for example improving the quality of teachers' questions. This is combined with an effective package of training for teachers. Staff value these training opportunities and many are improving the quality of their teaching as a result.
- Not all middle leaders hold teachers in their departments to account with sufficient rigour to raise standards across their departments. As a result, the quality of teaching that pupils experience varies considerably. However, leaders have been particularly successful in rapidly improving teaching, learning and assessment in languages and in history and geography.
- Leaders have recently reviewed the effectiveness of the pupil premium grant and adapted their plans. Disadvantaged pupils are making progress more in line with their peers than in previous years. Leaders have made good use of the additional funding they receive for pupils who need to catch up when they first arrive at secondary school. These pupils are making good progress and are now more able to experience success in mainstream lessons.
- Leaders have recently changed the key stage 4 curriculum to better reflect the new national examination structure and to ensure it meets the needs of all pupils. In the past, a quarter of pupils each year did not take the English Baccalaureate combination of GCSEs that ensures a broad academic curriculum and that supports university entrance. This had the result of significantly depressing the school's published examination results. Leaders have now revised the curriculum and made sure that it is well balanced and gives appropriate opportunities for pupils of all abilities.
- The school's assessment policy focuses on ensuring that pupils know how to improve their work. However, it is not applied consistently by all teachers. As a result, pupils do not always know how to correct their answers and develop their work to the next level.

Furthermore, teachers do not consistently apply the school's policy in correcting spelling and grammatical mistakes.

- The curriculum provides good opportunities for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Pupils value the opportunities they are given to discuss and debate issues relevant in modern Britain and the values that underpin British society.
- Pupils begin their GCSE courses in Year 9. Leaders believe that giving pupils three years to complete a GCSE gives teachers more time to enliven the course with additional opportunities and trips out of school. Pupils value these opportunities to learn in new contexts. Pupils are also keen to take part in the clubs and societies which are an important part of school life. For example, many pupils wear their choir and music badges with pride.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well catered for. Teachers and teaching assistants know these pupils well and ensure that their needs are met. They are increasingly getting the support they need to be successful learners. The additional funds the school receives to support pupils who have education, health and care plans are used effectively to address the individual needs of each pupil.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school well. They are proud of the welcoming ethos of the school and are keen to make sure it meets the needs of all its pupils.
- Governors question the principal and senior leaders closely and hold them to account well. They also work with middle leaders and teachers to ensure they have a deep understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Governors have reviewed their own performance and they have recruited new governors wisely. They have ensured that there is a broad set of skills and experiences across the governing body that can address all the educational, financial and other issues the school faces.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe right across the school. All staff are trained appropriately and understand their responsibilities. Pupils say they feel safe in school.
- All the appropriate safeguarding systems are in place and appropriate checks are made on those who will work with children.
- School leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils who face substantial personal challenges in their lives are given the support they need to be successful. School staff work well with parents and with the local authority to protect those in need of care and support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good for all pupils. Too often, teaching does not challenge pupils to stretch themselves. Leaders are keenly aware of this inconsistency and are making progress in addressing it. Nonetheless, currently, pupils' progress overall is not yet good.
- Teachers in history, geography and languages typically set pupils challenging work. They set tasks which encourage pupils to think deeply, to discuss their ideas and to give extended answers. Pupils enjoy these challenges and respond enthusiastically. They make good progress in these subjects as a result.
- Where teaching is weaker, it is typically because pupils are given work which does not challenge them. They are set tasks which they can do without much thought and so they coast along. There are pockets of low expectation in most subjects, particularly in science.
- The support that teachers provide to disadvantaged pupils to help them make as much progress as other pupils is improving. Teachers now understand the barriers disadvantaged pupils face and are beginning to provide additional support to help them overcome these barriers. Because of this, these pupils are now making better progress. However, these improvements are not embedded across the school.
- Teachers' expectations of the most able pupils are inconsistent. There are times when pupils are given opportunities to really extend themselves by discussing ideas and solving complicated, real life, problems. However, this does not happen often enough, and at times they are given tasks which fail to stimulate them.
- Pupils do not do as well in English as they could because of inconsistencies between teachers. The majority of teaching stimulates pupils and expects them to think hard about their work and so they make good progress. However, some teaching is not yet setting appropriate expectations and consequently pupils do less well.
- Pupils make progress in mathematics which is broadly in line with that of pupils in other schools. This is the result of being given tasks which are appropriate and allow pupils to build a firm foundation of mathematical skills. Mathematics teaching is at its best when pupils are given challenges and problems to solve which help them understand the skills they have just been taught.
- The school's use of a system of 'diagnostic feedback sheets' for parents is ineffective. It is not always well used by teachers, it is not valued by pupils and the sheets often remain unsigned by parents.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are keen to tell visitors that they enjoy coming to school. They are proud of themselves and take pride in their school. They enjoy their lessons and they enjoy the clubs and societies which enrich school life.

- Pupils are known as individuals by staff and are well cared for. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Pupils feel confident that they can approach staff with a problem when they need to.
- Bullying is infrequent and when it does occur it is dealt with well by school staff. Pupils are confident that if they report bullying it will be taken seriously by teachers and addressed. Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe online and know what to do if they have a concern.
- Vulnerable pupils and those who are facing additional challenges in their lives are given the additional support they need to succeed as members of the school community. Pupils are greatly appreciative of the support they receive.
- Pupils benefit from a comprehensive and well-designed careers education programme which extends across all year groups. Pupils speak highly of the programme which prepares them for post-16 education. As a result of the programme, more pupils than the national average are successful in securing appropriate post-16 education or training.
- Pupils' appetites for learning are inconsistent and dependent on the quality of teaching they receive. When teaching engages and challenges them, they are enthusiastic and resilient learners. However, when the tasks they are given fail to challenge them, they switch off.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave with respect and decency around the school site. They are generally good humoured and treat each other with courtesy. They socialise well with their friends. The school culture is one of tolerance and respect for diversity.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. Since his arrival, the principal has raised expectations of behaviour and pupils have responded well. Pupils report that their lessons are only rarely affected by low-level disruption and that teachers deal with any poor behaviour well.
- Levels of attendance are higher than the national average. School leaders make sure that pupils' absences are followed up and they take every opportunity to remind pupils of the importance of regular attendance. Disadvantaged pupils have a higher absence rate than their peers but this is improving as a result of the effort staff are making to encourage attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils across the school are not making good progress overall. This is the result of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not making good progress. However, their progress is improving as a result of the greater emphasis that leaders and teachers are putting on understanding their needs and providing additional support. Progress has also improved because of better attendance.

- Pupils do not make good progress in English. In previous years, pupils made significantly less progress in English than in other schools. This is improving and pupils are achieving more, but they have not yet caught up. Pupils make better progress in mathematics, where pupils in both key stage 3 and key stage 4 are making progress in line with that of pupils in other schools.
- There is a considerable variation in the standards pupils achieve in different subjects. In history, geography and languages, pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve good standards as a result of the high expectations of teachers. In these subjects, pupils know how to improve their work and respond well to the challenges teachers set. In science, although some pupils do well, too many are allowed to drift and so do not make the progress that they are capable of.
- The progress of the most able pupils varies from subject to subject. In stronger subjects, they achieve standards at least as good as in other schools nationally, but in others not enough is expected of them and so too few achieve the highest grades.
- In 2016 the school's published examination results were poor. This was partially, but not entirely, because school leaders had not previously adapted the key stage 4 curriculum to address the new national system of measuring pupil progress. The new leadership team has reacted to this and has changed the curriculum.
- The proportion of pupils achieving at least grade C or above both English and mathematics in 2016 was seven out of 10 compared with a national average of just over six out of 10. This is in line with expectations because the school cohort had more higher-ability pupils than the national average.
- Standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are low and this is holding pupils back from achieving success across a range of subjects. Even the most able pupils are routinely making, and repeating, grammatical errors in their writing.

School details

Unique reference number	136894
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10025103

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	983
Appropriate authority	The academy board
Chair	Marta Baker
Principal	Gregg Morrison
Telephone number	01935 471131
Website	http://www.prestonschool.co.uk/
Email address	GMorrison1@educ.somerset.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2013

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and the number supported by an education, health and care plan is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is below average.
- Nine out of 10 pupils are of White British heritage. There are few from minority ethnic groups and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The school hosts a local authority run unit for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Pupils in the unit are on the school roll.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a wide 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.
- An inspector visited the autism spectrum disorder unit.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including minutes of governors' 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 governors, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and groups of pupils.
- An inspector listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of 96 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and a letter. They also took into account the 73 responses to the staff questionnaire and 110 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Andrew Lovett, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gill Hickling	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Thompson	Ofsted Inspector
Colin Logan	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Wilson	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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Manchester
M1 2WD

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