

# Church Hill Middle School

Wood Piece Lane, Church Hill, Redditch, Worcestershire B98 9LR

## Inspection dates

15–16 January 2019

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>Good</b> |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | <b>Good</b> |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | <b>Good</b> |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | <b>Good</b> |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | <b>Good</b> |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The executive headteacher, senior leaders and governors are determined to improve the school. They have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and are introducing effective improvement strategies. Some recently introduced initiatives still need to be fully embedded and evaluated to ensure that they are having the desired effect on pupils' outcomes.
- Improvements to the curriculum, teaching and the tracking of pupils' progress mean that current pupils are making stronger progress than pupils in the past.
- Published pupils' outcomes in the past have been weak. Current pupils at the school make stronger progress. This is because of improved teaching and a newly redesigned, balanced curriculum. Leaders track pupils' performance rigorously so that they can put effective interventions in place. Consequently, pupils achieve better.
- Despite significant underperformance in the past, current disadvantaged pupils are making stronger progress because of well-targeted teaching, high-quality pastoral support and effective use of pupil premium funding. However, differences still remain between the progress they make and that made by other pupils nationally.
- Leaders, governors and the trust have created a culture and ethos that is inclusive and focuses on strong pastoral care and high aspirations for all pupils.
- Behaviour in lessons and at social times is good. Pupils are polite, friendly and well-mannered. Consequently, the number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced sharply.
- Pupils feel safe and cared for at school and are very complimentary about the effective pastoral support that they receive.
- Parents, staff and pupils are supportive of leaders and say that the school has improved markedly since the executive headteacher joined.
- Although improving, the number of pupils who are persistently absent is too high. Engagement with the parents of these pupils is not yet as effective as it might be.
- Leaders' rigorous evaluation of the quality of teaching has identified that teaching in key stage 2 is not always as effective as it might be. Appropriate support and training are beginning to have a positive impact.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further leadership and management by ensuring that all leaders:
  - fully embed the recently introduced school improvement initiatives so that they have a sustained positive impact on pupils' outcomes
  - routinely evaluate improvement strategies for the impact these are having on enhancing outcomes for pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils.
- Ensure that pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils, make the progress they are capable of. Do this by improving the quality of teaching so that teachers, especially those in key stage 2, match work more closely to pupils' abilities.
- Improve communication and engagement with the parents of those pupils who are persistently absent from school to ensure that these pupils attend school more frequently.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- When taking up her role in 2016, the executive headteacher found a school that had undergone a period of significant decline. In a relatively short space of time, she has changed the school's ethos, raised aspirations and introduced highly effective systems and robust structures to address weak teaching and poor behaviour. The new senior leadership team is now effective in addressing key areas of previous weakness. Consequently, there have been significant improvements across the school. For instance, teaching and behaviour are now good and outcomes for all groups of pupils are improving notably.
- Leaders, governors and the Central RSA Academy Trust, which is part of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) family of schools, are unwavering in their drive for excellence. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses and work collaboratively to address any underperformance. For example, staffing turbulence has been an issue in the past. Consequently, leaders have addressed this with the help of the trust and, as a result, the school is now staffed with expert teachers in every learning area.
- Senior leaders review regularly their own performance and put in place well-focused plans for further improvements. This is now an inclusive school in which everyone is valued, cared for and makes progress. Staff have unanimously bought in to the shared common values of ensuring that pupils are well educated and supported by highly effective pastoral care.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is a clear strength. Senior leaders accurately evaluate and analyse teachers' performance. They act quickly to address any underperformance that they identify. For example, highly effective staff training is valued by teachers and has resulted in improved teaching across the school. Leaders have recently identified that at times teaching in key stage 2 is less effective. They have put support and bespoke training in place to address this. As a result, teaching in key stage 2 is now improving.
- Senior leaders use and evaluate effectively the impact of any additional funding they receive, including pupil premium and funding to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) funding. Additional adults provide highly effective one-to-one support in lessons. Leaders plan carefully targeted and timely interventions and review these for their impact on outcomes for pupils. As a result, pupils with SEND make good progress and the progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving.
- Leaders redesigned the school's curriculum and decided to offer two different curricula, in line with other schools across the RSA. The key stage 2 curriculum, which follows a theme-based approach, offers a balanced breadth of learning experiences that are tailored to pupils' individual needs and circumstances. Pupils in key stage 3 benefit from a subject-based curriculum with clear cross-curricular links within a wide range of subjects. Both curricula are successfully underpinned by the knowledge, attributes, skills and experience (KASE) principle. The new key stage 3 curriculum prepares pupils well for making decisions about their future education.

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is strong. They regularly benefit from a range of activities both within and outside of normal lessons in which they learn about current, topical and personal issues. Leaders have worked hard to ensure that pupils have high aspirations for themselves and to foster a culture in which success is celebrated. Inspectors observed two assemblies in which pupils celebrated each other's academic and personal achievements. Pupils were proud of each other and of themselves.
- Owing to the relatively new senior leadership of the school, many of the improvement strategies have recently been introduced and need time to fully embed. Leaders acknowledge that they do not yet routinely analyse all strategies for their full impact on pupils' outcomes.

### **Governance of the school**

- The school is a member of the Central RSA multi-academy trust. Governance for the school is provided by the school's local governing board. The board shares governance responsibilities for this school with the first school situated on the same school site. Both schools are members of the Central RSA multi-academy trust.
- The local governing body provides effective governance to the school. Members know the school well and have a clear view of its strengths and those areas that need to improve further. They bring a range of relevant experiences and expertise to their roles.
- Members of the local governing board are dedicated to the school and have high expectations of its performance. They strive for a school where pupils are happy, receive an excellent education and grow as well-rounded human beings.
- Governors provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge to senior leaders. They use information gathered through visits to school, as well as from reports provided by leaders and external improvement colleagues, to ask challenging questions in order to drive further improvements.
- Governors discharge their statutory duties with diligence. They monitor the school's budget carefully. They check that safeguarding arrangements are robust and ensure that systems to manage teachers' performance focus on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff work together to create a strong culture of safeguarding which permeates the school. It is underpinned by regular training and frequent updates on local, regional and national issues for every member of staff. All staff say that pupils' welfare and safety is their priority.
- The safeguarding and pastoral teams work highly effectively with relevant external agencies when required. Staff are relentless when they are concerned about a pupil's welfare, and they follow up concerns with these agencies as necessary. Leaders complete appropriate employment checks and keep accurate records.

- All pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in school. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe, for example they understand the risks surrounding online safety and social media.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching across the curriculum is effective and ensures that they have an accurate view of where teaching is strong and where it needs to improve. When any underperformance is identified, leaders provide effective support and targeted training to address the issue. As a result, teaching has improved and is now good. However, there remains some variability in the quality of teaching at key stage 2. Leaders have identified this and have recently introduced detailed plans to address this issue. Consequently, the quality of teaching in key stage 2 is beginning to improve.
- Teachers now have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve, and they foster respectful relationships. They have strong subject knowledge and plan lessons that incorporate a range of stimulating resources, which promote pupils' interest and curiosity. As a result, pupils enjoy learning, and many of them told inspectors that 'learning is fun'.
- Leaders regularly assess how well pupils are progressing and use this information to identify priorities for staff training and possible interventions. Teachers work closely with colleagues from other schools within the trust to share best practice, and they frequently moderate pupils' work together. This helps everyone to reach a common understanding about the expected standards of work. Staff are unanimous in their praise for the many training and professional development opportunities afforded to them.
- Teachers generally plan lessons that are well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. At times, when tasks are designed to support less-able pupils or stretch and challenge the most able, they can be too easy or too difficult. As a result, disadvantaged and most-able pupils in the past have underperformed. Although improving, current disadvantaged and most-able pupils continue to do less well than other groups of pupils. Leaders are aware of this and have put plans in place to address this issue. It is too soon to judge the impact of these actions.
- Pupils with SEND made weaker progress in the past. A new leader brought a renewed focus on targeted support and bespoke intervention that has resulted in pupils being able to access their learning more successfully. Additional adults in lessons provide highly effective support to pupils. They encourage pupils to attempt more challenging tasks and support others to stay focused on their learning. As a result, the progress of current pupils with SEND is improving.
- Leaders have introduced a robust and reliable system of collecting pupils' progress information. This allows leaders and teachers to spot easily any trends or patterns in the information that they collect and to put timely and effective interventions in place to help pupils catch up and close any gaps in their knowledge. Consequently, current pupils make better progress and continue to improve.

- Pupils have the capability and maturity to tackle higher and deeper thinking during challenging topics within a range of subjects. This aids their personal development and strengthens their understanding of current and topical issues. The school's KASE principle further supports pupils' understanding of the world around them. On rare occasions, when tasks are provided to keep pupils busy rather than to deepen their learning, pupils can become disengaged from their learning, although they do not misbehave.
- Teachers give ongoing verbal feedback to pupils. They check pupils' understanding effectively and provide support and intervention when pupils fall behind and need to catch up. Teachers use praise and encouragement very successfully to ensure that pupils develop resilience in learning. Pupils speak highly of the support they receive in lessons.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The pastoral support provided by the school is a clear strength. Pupils, parents and staff are unanimous in their praise for the help, support and guidance that pupils receive when they need it. Staff know their pupils and families very well. All pupils spoken to were highly complimentary about the staff.
- The school is proud of its inclusive ethos, where every pupil matters. Pupils say that bullying is rare. They have every confidence that when it does occur it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff. Pupils described their school to inspectors as a community. They wear their uniform with pride and look smart. Pupils are friendly, courteous and respectful to each other and staff. They are proud of their school and look after the school environment. As a result, the school's buildings are free from litter and graffiti.
- Leaders plan the curriculum to ensure that pupils have a good understanding of current and topical issues such as online safety, risks surrounding child sexual exploitation and the world's eco system. There is a clear focus on ensuring that pupils receive a well-rounded education that includes their pastoral care and development. For example, the 'chill and spill', enrichment area and school's library are all places where pupils can go and find help and support or a quiet place for reflection.
- Pupils benefit from regular celebration assemblies. During the inspection, the school ran a number of these assemblies in which pupils celebrated their own and each other's academic and pastoral achievements. As a result, pupils' aspirations and self-confidence are heightened. Pupils told inspectors that it is now 'cool to do well' in this school.
- Pupils have many opportunities to explore leadership positions through the school's pupil leadership scheme. For example, prefects are proud of their roles and how they get to shape aspects of school life. Leaders take pupils' views into consideration when making decisions.

- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision. Leaders ensure that these placements meet pupils' very specific medical needs. They regularly assure themselves of the well-being and academic progress of these pupils and keep in regular contact with their parents.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and learning time is rarely wasted. Behaviour during social times and in corridors at lesson change-over is calm and orderly. Nearly all the pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that behaviour around school and in lessons is good. Parents who responded to Parent View and staff who completed the staff survey agreed that behaviour has improved considerably since the appointment of the executive headteacher.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Staff supervision is high, while at the same time allowing pupils the opportunity to self-regulate their behaviour. Pupils observed during lunchtime, for example, behaved in a respectful and orderly manner. Inspectors saw no instances of poor behaviour.
- Fixed-term exclusions have historically been above the national average. This sanction and the relatively new behaviour policy have had a positive impact on managing pupils' behaviour. As a result, fixed-term exclusions have reduced sharply and pupils now behave well.
- Although school leaders generally engage well with parents, the communication with parents whose children are persistently absent from school is less effective. As a result, the rate of persistent absences remains high. Leaders have introduced plans to improve this situation. It is too early to see the impact of these actions on improved attendance figures of pupils with low attendance rates.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils' published outcomes are key stage 2 SAT results, which are taken approximately four terms into pupils' time at the school. After those assessments, pupils spent a further two years at this school, and those outcomes are not published. Historic outcomes at the end of key stage 2 have been weak. Pupils currently at the school make better progress. This is because of the now improved quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance figures.
- Disadvantaged pupils have historically underperformed significantly. Leaders have recognised this and have put targeted and individualised interventions in place. As a result, current disadvantaged pupils make better progress, although differences between their performance and that of other pupils nationally remain.
- Leaders now collect meaningful information about how well pupils are performing and analyse this information effectively. They then use the information to inform their next steps. For example, pupils who fall behind can now quickly be identified and supported to catch up through targeted intervention. As a result, pupils make good progress in a range of subjects.

- Pupils with SEND now achieve well because of the targeted support they receive. This is evident in their books and in assessment information about them. As a result, these pupils are now able to access their learning and make the progress of which they are capable.
- The school's curriculum has a clear focus on raising pupils' literacy and oracy skills. For example, pupils are encouraged to answer questions in full sentences and to correct their own spelling mistakes in their work. As a result, work over time shows fewer spelling mistakes, and pupils are very articulate about their learning.
- Leaders use the Year 7 catch up funding successfully. The school's numeracy and literacy intervention programmes Numbers Count and Renaissance Reading ensure that targeted support is available for pupils who need to catch up. Consequently, pupils' reading ages and numeracy skills have improved. Pupils display an enjoyment of reading and speak highly about these sessions. They say that the sessions help them to improve their work.
- Senior leaders' work to prepare pupils for their next steps is effective. For example, pupils benefit from visits to universities to raise their aspirations. Furthermore, the redesigned curriculum in key stage 3 offers pupils a range of vocational and academic subjects. Leaders have taken the decision to broaden the curriculum in key stage 2 and 3 beyond English and mathematics to ensure that their pupils gain experiences in subjects such as art, cooking, technology, languages and humanities.

## School details

|                         |                |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| Unique reference number | 142543         |
| Local authority         | Worcestershire |
| Inspection number       | 10058525       |

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

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Type of school                      | Middle deemed secondary  |
| School category                     | Academy  |
| Age range of pupils                 | 9 to 13  |
| Gender of pupils                    | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 310  |
| Appropriate authority               | Board of trustees  |
| Chair                               | Eric Griffiths   |
| Headteacher                         | Diane Smith  |
| Telephone number                    | 01527 585 580  |
| Website                             | <a href="http://www.churchhill.worcs.sch.uk">www.churchhill.worcs.sch.uk</a>       |
| Email address                       | <a href="mailto:office@churchhill.worcs.sch.uk">office@churchhill.worcs.sch.uk</a> |
| Date of previous inspection         | January 2013   |

## Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average middle school deemed secondary school. The school is part of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) family of schools.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average. The number of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is average.
- A very small number of pupils attend an off-site alternative provision for medical reasons.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation. This included: the school's self-evaluation and action plans; school policies; information about pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour, attendance and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors visited lessons in all key stages in a wide range of subjects, most jointly with senior leaders. They observed pupils' behaviour between lessons, at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors evaluated the work in pupils' books and folders across a range of year groups when visiting lessons.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with governors, senior and middle leaders, and teachers. The lead inspector met with the Chief Executive Officer of the trust.
- The views of parents were considered through the 10 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and a number of the school's own parental questionnaires collected this academic year.
- Inspectors considered the 22 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors had informal discussions with a large number of pupils in lessons, at breaktime and lunchtime and considered the 23 responses to the pupils' online questionnaire.

## Inspection team

|                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Bianka Zemke, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Clare Considine              | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Gwendoline Onyon             | Ofsted Inspector        |

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