

Brewood CofE (C) Middle School

School Road, Brewood, Stafford, ST19 9DS

Inspection dates 23–24 September 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Leaders do not systematically evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, their efforts to raise standards are not well-focused. There is no planned co-ordinated approach by senior leaders to move the school forward.
- Areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection have not all been successfully achieved.
- Teachers' marking does not consistently give pupils good advice on what they need to do to improve. Not all teaching provides enough opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills.
- Younger pupils do not make the same rapid rates of progress as pupils in Years 7 and 8.
- Leaders are not using information about pupils' achievement well enough to take swift action to prevent any underperformance.
- The governing body is not accurate in its understanding of how well pupils are achieving. Governors are not holding leaders effectively to account for the school's performance.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils achieve well because attainment is above average by the end of Year 8. As they move through the school pupils make accelerated rates of progress.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Pupils make good gains in their learning and demonstrate high levels of engagement in lessons which develop their practical skills.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are polite, well-mannered and highly articulate. Attendance is very high and pupils say they feel safe at school.
- The range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural activities and the school's distinctive faith ethos significantly enhance pupils' personal development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 part lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the executive headteacher.
- Inspectors undertook a thorough work scrutiny that examined pupils’ progress across several year groups.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and subject leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair and members of the Governing Body and two representatives from the local authority who support the school’s work.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 39 parents who responded to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors analysed the results of the 24 replies to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at the school’s data on pupils’ progress, lesson plans, minutes of meetings and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance. They also reviewed the school’s checks on how well it is doing and school improvement plans.

Inspection team

Lisa Fraser, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Rose	Additional Inspector
Suha Ahmad	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most secondary schools.
- Pupils come from mainly White British backgrounds.
- Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is lower than average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs on the school roll is about 13 percent. This is lower than found in most schools.
- The school formed a federation with St Mary's Church of England First School, Wheaton Aston, in April 2011. The two schools share a governing body and the headteacher is executive headteacher of both schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for Key Stage 2, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring all pupils make rapid rates of progress by rigorously analysing data on their achievement and taking swift action to prevent any underperformance
 - making sure leaders regularly evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses and use this information to inform a whole-school development plan
 - ensuring senior leaders create a whole-school development plan with clear measurable targets for success and regular check points so that governors can hold leaders robustly to account
 - improving governors' understanding of published data so that they understand how the school performs in comparison to other schools nationally.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that achievement improves, particularly at Key Stage 2, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers focus on improving pupils' writing skills
 - the excellent practice in marking and feedback which exists within the school is shared so that all pupils receive clear advice on how they can improve their work.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership requires improvement because leaders do not systematically review the school's performance to identify strengths and areas of weakness. As a result, their evaluation of the school's performance is not accurate.
- Activities, such as checking the quality of teaching and looking at information about pupils' achievement, take place but a coordinated approach to moving the school forward is lacking. There is no plan with clear success criteria to help senior leaders and governors monitor whether these actions are making a difference.
- The school collates a great deal of data on pupils' attainment and progress. However, leaders' data analysis is not yet sufficiently rigorous to enable early action to be taken when pupils are at risk of underperforming. Last year, leaders' focus on pupils' achievement in mathematics and writing by the end of Year 6 was not sharp enough to prevent a considerable dip in the number of pupils making the progress expected. At the time of inspection, leaders could not identify the reasons which contributed to this decline.
- Senior leaders are currently reviewing teachers' pay policy. At present, teachers' pay progression does not link closely enough to pupils' attainment and progress. However, in the past leaders have taken difficult decisions to eradicate inadequate teaching.
- Pupils' work is currently assessed using the former National Curriculum levels. In English and mathematics, pupils' work is sometimes externally checked to ensure that teachers' assessments of pupils' work are accurate. Nevertheless, some issues identified at the previous inspection linked to the quality of teaching and assessment remain.
- The range of subjects matches the needs of pupils. Opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills are strong and reinforced by the school's Christian ethos. Pupils regularly attend church and deliver readings. Pupils also learn about people who may be different to themselves through their study of different faiths in religious education and leaders' work to promote their understanding of disability in sport.
- Leaders strive to extend pupils' horizons through a number of local and European residential visits. Pupils gain a good understanding of the democratic process through their participation in the school council and an annual visit to Parliament, organised by the local MP. A visiting theatre group helps older pupils understand the dangers of drugs, sexual exploitation and alcohol. In Year 8, 'Careers day' prompts pupils to start thinking about their futures.
- The local authority has recently provided good support to the new leader of mathematics in order to begin to analyse the reasons why pupils' progress is slower in Years 5 and 6.
- Primary school sport funding has enabled pupils in Years 5 and 6 to get involved in a diverse range of physical education including the recent 'skipping day', tri golf and kwik cricket. In discussion, pupils demonstrated very positive attitudes to competitive sports.
- Safeguarding requirements are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors' monitoring of senior leaders' work has not been effective because there has been no regular thorough assessment of how well the school is doing since the previous inspection. The governing body does not have a good enough understanding of published data on pupils' achievement, such as the *Data Dashboard*, to know how the school compares to other schools nationally. As a result, governors do not challenge senior leaders enough about pupils' achievement, particularly in Years 5 and 6. The

lack of a clear strategic plan so that governors can check if the school is meeting its targets is a barrier to how quickly the school improves.

- The governing body is keen to promote pupils' all-round education and has a good understanding of the range of activities on offer which promote pupils' personal development. Governors have been briefed on the arrangements for the management of teachers' work and know that teachers' pay rises and promotion should be tied to the progress of their pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are keen to do well, have very positive attitudes to learning, and are smartly turned out in their uniforms. Attendance is very high because pupils are proud of their school and value what it offers them.
- Relationships between pupils and their teachers are strong. Pupils are also very mature in their interactions with other adults. Visitors are welcomed warmly because pupils are polite, friendly and highly articulate ambassadors for their school.
- The school's positive ethos promotes good behaviour and contributes to pupils' good progress. School records confirm that this is the norm. The merit award system encourages pupils to aim high and 'Be the best they can be'. Clear and fair boundaries are set for pupils which are well understood by all.
- Pupils enjoy developing their leadership skills by taking on positions of responsibility such as prefect, librarian and house and form captain roles. Pupils are invited to apply for the position of head boy or girl. The school council is active and has recently influenced changes to school lunches.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is secure. Pupils and their parents agree they are safe at school. Pupils understand bullying in all its forms, including cyber and racist bullying. Inspectors looked into how leaders deal with bullying carefully and concluded that bullying is taken very seriously. In discussion, most Year 5 pupils who have just joined the school say they are settling in well.
- Fixed-term exclusions are low and there have been no permanent exclusions for several years. A few pupils said, however, that in certain areas of the playground the boisterous behaviour of a few can sometimes be a problem. On occasion, a small minority of pupils are less than kind to each other.
- Around the school and in the dining hall, pupils show respect for their environment. There is little litter, classrooms are tidy and work on display is attractive and well-maintained.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good over time. Teachers have good subject knowledge, high expectations and plan activities which support pupils' good progress.
- Teachers skilfully design activities which enable pupils to develop their speaking skills. For example, in a Year 8 registration period, pupils were encouraged to discuss recent items in the news. Pupils say they particularly enjoy these opportunities to express their opinions and they do so with confidence. In addition, pupils show good respect for the views of others and a growing awareness of politics both within the UK and overseas.
- Pupils demonstrate high levels of engagement and achievement. For example, pupils in a Year 5 physical education lesson achieved well and enjoyed testing their skills against each other when developing their dribbling skills in football. In design technology, Year 6 pupils made good gains in their learning because they were motivated by the prospect of gaining their 'sewing machine driving licence'. In Year 7 science pupils demonstrated great enthusiasm and made good progress when exploring 'living things' under the microscope.

- The most-able pupils are usually challenged in lessons. For example, in French many make rapid progress in their listening and speaking skills because the majority of teaching is delivered in the target language.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive good support from teaching assistants. Teachers are provided with good quality information about these pupils' needs from the head of special educational needs.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to gauge pupils' understanding and regularly provide pupils with good quality verbal feedback in lessons. The very best teaching identifies targets which are highly individualised to each pupil. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson pupils made rapid progress in their understanding of creating number sequences as a result of advice from the teacher which was closely matched to their different starting points.
- Teachers' marking and feedback to pupils, although effective in some classes, lacks consistency across the school. Not all teachers provide clear enough advice for pupils about how to further improve their work and do not always make sure that pupils follow up this advice by applying it and showing their teachers that they have understood.
- Across the range of subjects there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills because not all teachers plan activities which allow students to practise writing in different subjects and contexts.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good overall because all groups of pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils join the school with broadly average skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress is slower in Years 5 and 6. At the end of Key Stage 2 the percentage of pupils reaching the level expected for their age (level 4) is in line with the national average. However, pupils make more rapid rates of progress as they move up the school. As a result, pupils' attainment is above that expected for their age in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 8.
- Achievement in most subjects, as shown both in lessons and through the work in pupils' books over time, is consistently good.
- Activities to promote pupils' interest in reading, including meeting published authors, have had good success. Examination data indicate that over half of pupils in Year 6 attain a level 5 in reading.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well. Several pupils spoke enthusiastically to inspectors about how the extra one-to-one support they receive has helped them improve their skills. Information for parents about what they should do if they think their child has special educational needs is clearly available on the school's website.
- The most-able pupils make the progress they should with a number of pupils attaining a level 7 in both reading and science by the end of year 8.
- Additional funding which supports pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is spent on a number of initiatives which include supporting the costs of educational visits, teaching in small groups and mentoring. The small number of pupils who are eligible for this funding varies from year to year and it is difficult therefore to gauge if such gaps are closing. In Year 6 in 2014, disadvantaged pupils were roughly two terms' behind their classmates in reading and writing but over a year behind in mathematics. In comparison with the same group nationally, these pupils attained the same results or better in writing and reading. However, in mathematics, disadvantaged pupils at the school were some way behind their peers nationally.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is making a difference to the achievement of pupils who start Key Stage 3 with weak literacy and numeracy skills because the majority who have benefitted from extra support have made accelerated rates of progress.

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	124452
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	449108

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Doreen Ellis
Executive Headteacher	David Swift
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2012
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