

Inspection of Fairlands Middle School

Masons Way, Cheddar, Somerset BS27 3PG

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Rebecca Bennett. This school is part of Wessex Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Gavin Ball, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Jacobs.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this school. They are happy, safe and well supported. They have trusted adults they can talk to if they have any worries. Staff act promptly when pupils need help.

The school has high aspirations for what all pupils can achieve. The curriculum is suitably ambitious. Historically, pupils have not always secured the best possible outcomes in key stage 2 tests. However, recent changes mean that pupils now know and remember more.

Theatre visits, competitions hosted at universities and outdoor education broaden pupils' horizons, giving them access to experiences they might not otherwise have. Visits to local rivers and places of interest support learning and enthuse pupils.

Pupils appreciate the raised expectations of behaviour. Most pupils behave well and are keen to learn. At social times they share play equipment and cooperate well with one another.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop beyond the academic curriculum. Pupil leaders in sports and languages make a tangible contribution to the life of the school. For instance, Year 8 'buddies' help younger pupils to settle into school.

Communications with families are strong. Parents and carers know what their child is learning and how they are getting on at school. They find staff approachable and responsive.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum is broad and logically ordered. The school has identified the knowledge and skills that pupils must learn in all subjects. Pupils have opportunities to re-visit what they have learned before and build on this knowledge.

The school has recently improved the curriculum and how it is taught. While pupils' achievement, as evidenced in published outcomes, has not been consistently strong, the impact of recent improvements is now evident. Pupils have strong recall of what they have learned of the new curriculum. This means they are well prepared for their next steps.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this to design learning activities that are well matched to the knowledge and skills that they want pupils to build. However, sometimes they do not explain these activities well enough for pupils to learn all that is intended.

The school accurately identifies pupils' additional needs. Staff adapt learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This enables most to learn the same curriculum as their peers.

The reading curriculum builds pupils' knowledge of different cultures and of complex issues, such as migration. It also develops their vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. The texts pupils read are ambitious and support learning across the subjects they learn. Pupils who do not read well enough are promptly identified. They get the help that they need to catch up with their peers.

The school has taken effective action to improve behaviour. Pupils who struggle to meet the school's raised expectations receive the support they need. Consequently, most pupils learn, attend and behave well. Suspensions and other sanctions have reduced significantly because most pupils now behave consistently well. However, occasionally learning is interrupted by a minority of pupils.

The school has used pupils' interests to expand the clubs and activities on offer. Many more pupils now take up these opportunities. The school has ensured that pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged take part alongside their peers.

Pupils learn about different jobs, colleges and university. Careers events and interactions with employers and employees enable pupils to explore options for their futures. Pupils value this.

Pupils' wider development is well catered for. They understand respectful relationships, online safety and how to protect their physical and mental health. Pupils learn about fundamental British values and the cultures, faiths and experiences of people from different backgrounds. However, some pupils use language that is not acceptable in modern Britain. The school deals with these incidents promptly and robustly.

Leaders, including trustees and the local partnership board, use the information they hold to gather an accurate view of the school. They have a clear vision for how to further improve the school. This vision has created a common sense of purpose and greater consistency among staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, teachers' explanations and instructions are not clear enough. As a result, pupils cannot always complete the tasks expected of them, or understand the root of misconception they may have. The school needs to ensure that teaching consistently enables all pupils to learn the curriculum effectively.

- Some pupils' behaviour in lessons does not meet the high expectations that the school has of them. Learning is sometimes interrupted as a result. The school needs to ensure that low-level disruption does not prevent pupils from learning.
- A minority of pupils use discriminatory language, particularly that which is homophobic. This makes their peers uncomfortable. The school needs to strengthen the curriculum further to ensure that this minority of pupils understand and use language that is acceptable in modern Britain.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	147825
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10344838
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	412
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Jacobs
CEO of the trust	Gavin Ball
Headteacher	Rebecca Bennett
Website	fairlandsmiddleschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Fairlands Middle School opened in April 2020 as part of the Wessex Learning Trust. When its predecessor school, Fairlands Middle School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good for overall effectiveness.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2024. There was an interim headteacher in post from May 2024.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and

management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages (French).
- For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the reading curriculum.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- An inspector met with governors and with a representative of the local authority, trustees and staff from the multi-academy trust, including the CEO.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the views of staff and pupils in Ofsted's online survey. Inspectors also spoke to pupils and staff in meetings and around the school site.

Inspection team

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