

Marden Vale CofE Academy

William Street, Calne, Wiltshire SN11 9BD

Inspection dates

21–22 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Trust directors and local governors have not ensured that leaders have driven improvement to raise standards quickly enough.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is not incisive. Leaders, at all levels, are not able to evaluate fully the impact that actions have had.
- The culture of safeguarding is weak. Leaders have not created a climate where safeguarding is considered everyone's responsibility.
- Instability in staffing has hampered the school's capacity to improve. A significant majority of parents have lost trust in the school.
- Pupils' attainment at key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics has been in the bottom 20% of schools nationally for the last two years. In 2017, the progress that pupils made in key stage 2 was in the bottom 10% of schools nationally.
- The curriculum lacks breadth and depth. Pupils' knowledge and skills across a wide range of subjects are not developed sufficiently.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is poor. Teachers do not routinely set work that challenges the most able pupils and supports pupils effectively, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- The proportion of children who reach a good level of development in the early years has been below the national average for the last two years.
- Leaders do not evaluate the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and the development of sport adequately. As a result, actions do not ensure that there are sufficiently rapid improvements.
- Teachers do not consistently make their expectations clear or act to challenge poor behaviour. As a result, poor behaviour continues, which limits the learning of others and contributes to pupil disengagement.
- Absence and persistent absence rates are above the national average.

The school has the following strengths

- The new leadership team of the school is committed and well placed to provide much-needed stability to the school after a period of significant turbulence.
- Staff in the early years have created an environment that is nurturing and safe. Children cooperate well with each other and respond positively to adults.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - the trust board and governors hold leaders to account for outcomes and standards in the school more robustly
 - safeguarding processes are effective in minimising risk to pupils
 - improvements are planned precisely so that actions taken are highly effective
 - all staff have suitably high expectations of pupils' conduct and their progress
 - the curriculum is broad and balanced so that pupils can achieve well and have a greater understanding of a range of issues relating to their personal development
 - the leadership of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is sufficiently rigorous and strategies are implemented effectively to support strong pupil progress
 - relationships with parents are strengthened to restore trust in the work of the school
 - middle leaders are suitably skilled so that they can support the drive for rapid improvement
 - trust directors and governors fully evaluate the impact that additional funding is having on improving the outcomes and personal development of disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - making sure that teaching staff and adults who support pupils in lessons have the subject knowledge and behaviour management skills that they need
 - using assessment information to plan work that matches the learning needs of all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils
 - challenging the most able pupils to reach the highest standards
 - identifying pupils' knowledge and understanding accurately so that gaps in learning are reduced
 - insisting on high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - reducing the incidence of poor behaviour and lack of engagement in learning
 - improving the attendance of pupils and reducing the proportion who are persistently absent

- ensuring that relationships between pupils are positive so they understand how to play cooperatively together.

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

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Governance has been ineffective and therefore trust directors and governors have not addressed the right areas for improvement or established the right priorities. This has allowed endemic weaknesses in many areas of the school's work to continue since the school opened in 2015.
- There have been three headteachers over the last two years, in addition to instability at deputy headteacher level. This has hindered the rate of progress of much-needed improvements. Support from the multi-academy trust is providing interim leadership until the new headteacher takes up their post and this has increased capacity. However, progress remains too slow.
- The leadership team has not had sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching to an acceptable standard. There have been significant changes in teaching staff and the quality of teaching remains weak. Pupils do not make the progress they should in many classes, particularly those where a regular teacher is not in place.
- Subject leadership is weak. Changes in staffing have meant leaders have not been able to develop middle leadership across the school. Action planning is not incisive enough to check and evaluate the progress that pupils are making.
- Instability in the role of the SEN coordinator has meant that there has been insufficient oversight of this area of the school's work. As a result, strategies at classroom level are not supporting pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities sufficiently.
- Parents have lost trust in the school's ability to provide adequate support for their children. They are frustrated by the lack of communication from the school. While leaders have used expertise from within the trust to provide some much-needed continuity, this is not a long-term solution and leaders are actively seeking to appoint a permanent SEN coordinator.
- The curriculum lacks the structure and depth to ensure that pupils improve their understanding across a broad range of subjects. They are not able to build on their prior knowledge successfully or make links to improve their skills in reading and writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not making the progress they should. Leaders have identified the barriers to learning for this group of pupils but are not clear on the effectiveness of the actions taken to address these. Pupils are, therefore, not supported well to make the accelerated progress they need to catch up with their classmates.
- Support from the trust has provided the training and the expertise to begin to address the school's weaknesses. Leaders are outward-looking and have used support both from within the trust as well as from further afield to inform the decisions made. For example, the literacy co-ordinator and phonics leader are implementing strategies that are beginning to have a positive effect, particularly in writing. However, this is still at an early stage and not yet seen in pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have recently begun to track pupils' progress with greater accuracy. This has enabled leaders to have a better understanding of the progress pupils are making.

Teachers confirm the accuracy of their assessments with schools across the trust so there is greater confidence in the rigour of this information. However, teachers do not routinely use this information to challenge and support pupils effectively. This slows the progress that pupils make.

- Leaders provide suitable support for pupils who attend the specialist resource base for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the 'Nurture' provision, the school's onsite behaviour support facility. In these areas, leaders are clear on pupils' needs and provide suitable strategies that pupils can use to tackle these. Therefore, pupils make stronger progress in their academic and/or social and emotional development. However, staff do not build on these strategies sufficiently when pupils return to their regular classes.
- The current executive headteacher and interim headteacher have been decisive in tackling issues where standards fall below expectations. The trust has made arrangements to ensure that there is continuity in the support provided for the new leadership team when it takes up post.
- It is recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- Trust directors and governors have not ensured a good quality of education for pupils in the first two years of the school's life. Until recently, governors did not have reliable information. Therefore, they were unable to ask the right questions and be confident that the assertions made by senior leaders were accurate.
- Governors have not challenged leaders effectively enough to improve attendance and behaviour, which both remain poor.
- Governors' evaluation of the impact of additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils and the sport premium is not precise enough. Governors track actions and expenditure but are not able to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies to inform future spending decisions.
- New governors have the necessary skills and expertise to provide better challenge now. Governors have undertaken training to increase their understanding of the school's performance and they have identified the skills required to strengthen their effectiveness further.
- Governors have raised their profile across the school and now meet with school leaders regularly. They work with trust leaders to ensure that they have first-hand experience of the effectiveness of school's work and a better understanding of the progress that the school is making towards achieving key priorities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- The culture of safeguarding is weak. Staff do not consistently implement routines to keep children safe and do not always take responsibility for pupils who make poor

choices in the way that they behave. Not all staff have the necessary skills to manage appropriately episodes of poor behaviour that present a risk to pupils' safety.

- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View say that they are not confident that their children are safe at school. A significant number of staff support this view. Pupils say that they feel 'uncomfortable' when there is poor behaviour and do not know how best to respond when this happens.
- All staff know how to apply child protection procedures. Relevant training is up to date and includes protecting pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Staff know who to refer information to when they have a concern.
- Leaders now work effectively with external partners to support pupils who are at risk. When necessary, they ensure that referrals are timely and that effective action is taken. Leaders ensure that statutory checks are made and adhere to safer recruitment processes.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is weak because teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. Teaching does not take into account pupils' starting points. Therefore, the most able pupils do not consistently have opportunities to extend their thinking or demonstrate higher levels of understanding. Teachers' support for pupils who fall behind, particularly disadvantaged pupils, is not suitably planned to remedy historical gaps in knowledge or skills, which means that rates of progress are slow.
- Teachers do not use assessment information well to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Teachers do not routinely tackle misconceptions, in line with the school's assessment policy. For example, teachers do not address pupils' difficulties in the formation of letters and numbers early enough and therefore younger pupils continue to make the same mistakes or produce work of poor quality. Indeed, work is praised when it is clearly not the pupils' best efforts.
- Leaders have not established a reading culture. Although the improved quality of phonics teaching has meant that pupils are becoming more confident readers, there are too few opportunities for pupils to read in school. Few pupils read at home regularly.
- The quality of mathematics teaching is too variable. Although the mathematics curriculum is suitably broad, teachers' planning does not enable pupils to access tasks at their level of ability. Pupils do not, therefore, build on their existing knowledge. Basic miscalculations are often not corrected, work is unfinished and teachers do not insist on high-quality presentation. Pupils often complete work that is too easy and lack the motivation to attempt more complex problems. Teachers do not ensure that pupils are tackling suitably challenging work.
- Teachers have been successful in improving pupils' writing. Agreed approaches enable pupils to write for a range of audiences and purposes. The most able pupils draw on their reading experiences to write creatively and use adventurous vocabulary to create effect. These examples show that pupils are secure in their ability to apply their spelling and punctuation in their writing. However, this is not consistently the case and

pupils often do act upon the feedback that teachers provide, despite the school's expectation that they do so. In these instances, grammatical and spelling errors persist. This limits the progress that they make.

- Teaching staff have improved the quality of teaching phonics. The youngest pupils have strong knowledge in this area. However, this understanding is not secure for the older pupils, due to historical underperformance in this area.
- In some classes, teaching staff have high expectations, have established clear routines and use their subject knowledge to probe and develop pupils' understanding well. In these cases, learning is strong, motivation is high and pupils readily engage in discussion without interruption.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Leaders have not created a positive learning culture in the school. Too many pupils' attitudes to learning are poor and this has a significant negative impact on those pupils who want to learn. Pupils' ability to engage in lessons is reliant on pupils' own self-motivation rather than the expectations set by teachers and the implementation of effective behaviour management strategies. Where pupils do not have their regular teacher, pupils' conduct is noticeably poorer.
- Pupils' relationships with each other are not always positive, particularly at break and lunchtime. Pupils say that instances of bullying are frequent and they are not confident in their teachers' abilities to deal with these effectively.
- Instances of pupils using racist language is too high. Leaders deal with these incidents when they occur. However, these actions are reactive rather than preventative. This is because leaders have not planned the curriculum sufficiently to ensure that pupils are suitably well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders place emphasis on promoting the religious and spiritual ethos of the school. For example, all pupils have contributed to the beautiful array of painted butterflies in the school's reception area, which symbolises the spreading of wings and the raising of aspirations. There are opportunities for pupils to consider other faiths and discuss moral issues.
- Staff successfully develop pupils' understanding of how to stay healthy and understand risk. For example, pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and what a healthy diet is. Pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe online is strong.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- There is a significant amount of disruption in classes which prevents pupils from concentrating on their work. Too many pupils leave lessons and where they are not

supervised adequately, this poses a risk to their safety. Pupils say that they find this disruption frustrating and are not confident in their teachers' ability to deal with this.

- Younger pupils do not always understand how to play positively together. This leads to disputes during recreational time. Pupils are often disrespectful to adults and do not respond positively to instructions when they are given. Staff, parents and pupils say that behaviour at the school is poor.
- The rates of absence, particularly persistent absence, are still too high. Leaders' analyses of attendance is not precise enough to identify patterns or trends. Therefore, the work to improve attendance has had limited impact and there is insufficient capacity to ensure that all issues relating to attendance are fully addressed. Leaders have prioritised providing support for some of the families of more vulnerable pupils. This is building relationships and is showing signs of improving attendance.
- Where teaching is stronger and pupils' needs are met, relationships are positive and pupils are keen to learn. When pupils are given responsibility and are recognised for their work, they are proud and keen to do even better. They value 'Learning Ladders' where they can visibly see their good behaviour rewarded. There are many examples where older pupils work positively with younger pupils as suitable role models.
- Pupils generally enjoy school but want their teachers to ensure that behaviour is good so they can learn effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils' prior attainment is below, and often significantly below, national comparisons in reading and, particularly, in writing.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the combined expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 is below the national average, particularly for boys. Attainment in writing has been in the lowest 20% of schools nationally for the last two years. Current pupils show an improvement in writing.
- Pupils' progress at the end of Year 6 dropped sharply in 2017 in reading, writing and mathematics. In reading and writing, progress was in the lowest 10% of schools nationally. Current pupils are showing better progress in reading and mathematics but not as strong as in writing.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the standard expected in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 has been in the bottom 20% of schools nationally for the last two years. Current pupils are making better progress from their starting points in reading and mathematics but this is not as strong in writing. In all areas, pupils are performing below age-related expectations overall.
- Over the last two years, disadvantaged pupils have attained below the national average at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress that pupils make from their starting points is in line with other pupils nationally in writing and mathematics. However, disadvantaged pupils' progress in reading fell in 2017 and is well below that of other pupils nationally.
- In key stage 1, less than half of the disadvantaged pupils reached the standard expected for their age in 2017. In 2016 and 2017, the school was in the lowest 20% of

schools in all three subjects. Currently, in all year groups, disadvantaged pupils do not reach similar standards to other pupils nationally.

- Over the last two years, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have not met the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of both key stage 1 and 2. Pupils did not make the progress expected from their starting points in reading and writing over the last two years or in mathematics in 2017. Current pupils in all year groups continue to make slower progress than their classmates.
- Over the last two years, all of the most able pupils reached the standard expected by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, but a lower proportion than seen nationally reached the higher standard. In 2017, there was a sharp improvement in the proportion of pupils who achieved greater depth in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Current pupils in all year groups across the school continue to meet age-related expectations, but the proportion of pupils who go on to achieve greater depth in mathematics is not as strong as in reading and writing.
- The proportion of pupils currently in Year 1 who achieve the phonics screening check has increased and is now in line with levels seen typically nationally.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The proportion of children who reach a good level of development has improved over the last two years but is still below national figures. This remains the case for children currently in Reception.
- Leaders' strategic planning is thoughtful and detailed. Leaders have a clear understanding of priorities and regularly evaluate the impact of actions to make sure that children who fall behind can catch up. This is based on an accurate understanding of the ability of each child when they start at the school and an effective assessment system as they progress through the Reception Year.
- Leaders ensure that curriculum activities enable children to develop their knowledge and understanding across areas of learning. They have developed outside spaces to extend this further. There is a suitable blend of activities which support children's physical development, and the majority of children are able to sustain concentration in these situations. In free play, staff supervision is appropriate and children play safely together.
- Teachers plan activities, both in structured situations and free play, to support the development of children's fine-motor skills. As a result, the majority of children form letters and numbers correctly.
- Teaching staff support the most able children well. As a result, these children can demonstrate a deeper understanding in their reading and writing. Tasks in mathematics do not provide a similar level of challenge.
- Leaders are accurate in their assessment of the needs of children who have SEN and/or disabilities or who require additional emotional and social support. Additional adults support children well.
- Teachers regularly use a variety of methods to develop sequencing and counting skills. As a result, the majority of children are confident in counting up to 100 and understand

tens and units. Children are able to solve simple problems. However, teaching staff do not challenge children. Consequently, progress is not as rapid as it should be.

- Most children are able to use their understanding of phonics to read regular words and the most able children are able to read irregular ones. Teachers support children well and involve parents to support their child's reading. As a result, children are able to sound out unfamiliar words and show a good understanding of the books they read.
- Teaching staff have high expectations of children's writing. Teaching supports children to use adjectives and expand their vocabulary and questioning is used effectively to develop high-quality conversation. Those children who are able to write independently are actively encouraged to do so and can spell and punctuate their work. These pupils show high levels of motivation and are eager to share their writing and celebrate the work of others.
- Leaders' ambition to provide a 'pocket of happiness' has created an environment that is nurturing and safe. There are clear routines which mean that children cooperate well with each other and respond positively to adults. To establish these expectations, leaders work proactively with the privately-run nursery which shares the school's site. This ensures that transitions are smooth and children feel comfortable when they move into Reception.
- Staff have developed effective communication with parents and carers and are now more successful in involving them in their children's learning. 'Learning stories' ensure that there is a shared understanding of children's achievements and welfare needs. Parents are encouraged to join their children in learning activities on a regular basis and many parents choose to do so. These parents feel that teachers support their children well and comment on how happy their children are at school.

School details

Unique reference number	141988
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10048356

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	265
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Tony Smith
Executive Headteacher	Andrew Wilson
Telephone number	01249 813505
Website	www.mardenvale.dsat.org.uk
Email address	admin@mardenvale.dsat.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Marden Vale Church of England Academy joined the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust (DSAT) in September 2015.
- The school is currently overseen by an executive headteacher, appointed in February 2018. An interim headteacher has been in post since April 2018.
- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average. There is a specialist resource base on site for pupils who have complex needs.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average.
- In 2017, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a range of subjects and age groups and scrutinised pupils' work. Some of the observations were conducted jointly with middle or senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with members of the leadership team and representatives from the multi-academy trust and the governing body. In addition, inspectors met with curriculum leaders and pastoral managers. One inspector spoke on the telephone with the local authority designated officer for safeguarding.
- Inspectors met with pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, both formally and informally, to discuss their views about their experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at the school's documentation, including the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and priorities for future improvement. Inspectors reviewed progress, behaviour and attendance information relating to current pupils, and governors' minutes.
- School policies relating to safeguarding, pupils' behaviour, the use of additional funding, including pupil premium and sport premium, and the curriculum were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors listened to a selection of pupils read.
- Inspectors considered 65 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 41 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. Inspectors also considered a complaint received during the inspection. Inspectors also met with parents and the manager of Sunbeams Nursery, which shares the school's site.

Inspection team

Sarah McGinnis, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nick Sheppard	Ofsted Inspector
Jen Southall	Her Majesty's 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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