

Church Stretton School

Shrewsbury Road, Church Stretton, Shropshire SY6 6EX

Inspection dates

5–6 February 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders have high expectations, which the school community is determined to meet. They ensure that teaching and the curriculum meet pupils' needs so all can achieve. Pupils appreciate being part of an inclusive community that strives for excellence.
- Year 11 pupils are ambitious to secure the best outcomes possible. They are exemplar role models to younger pupils.
- Pupils show care for one another and respect for visitors. This is because their behaviour and attitudes are consistently positive. Most pupils rarely miss a day from school.
- In most lessons, pupils are eager to learn. Consequently, they demonstrate good behaviour for learning. Poor behaviour is rare.
- A revised curriculum has improved pupils' engagement and motivation. As a result, pupils' progress is strong.
- There is good teaching in the school. Most lessons are carefully planned with appropriate levels of challenge. Many pupils are stretched to work and think hard.
- School leaders have reviewed the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Outcomes for these pupils are improving.
- In 2018, attainment at the end of Year 11 was above average, although progress dipped to below average. Pupils' current progress is strong, and their attainment is good.
- Occasionally, work is too easy for some or teaching moves on too quickly for others. Teaching staff do not have enough opportunities to learn from the most effective practice in the school.
- The presentation and quality of boys' written work is not good enough.
- The effectiveness of middle leaders varies too much.
- Changes to the school day and to lunchtime have restricted the range of out-of-school activities available.
- At a strategic level, governors and leaders create informed plans but do not always keep a close enough eye on the impact of their actions.
- Pupils are safe in school but routines for checking paperwork lack rigour.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching by:
 - providing opportunities for the most effective teachers to coach and mentor colleagues
 - ensuring that all teachers check that pupils understand before moving on to new work
 - sharpening up the level of challenge in places
 - making sure boys get appropriate challenge and support to improve the presentation and quality of their writing.
- Strengthen leadership by:
 - improving the leadership and evaluative skills of middle leaders so they can make a greater contribution to sustainable school improvement
 - ensuring that governors and leaders check the progress of planned actions, such as the use of additional funding, against carefully crafted and achievable milestones so they know what works well and why
 - ensuring that important paperwork remains up to date.
- Ensure that pupils are not limited in their access to enrichment opportunities because of changes to the school day and the length of lunchtime.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are good because school leaders have high expectations and expect the best in all areas of school life. They have been meticulous in maintaining high standards of behaviour and promoting positive attitudes to learning. Consequently, pupils understand what is expected of them, behave well and enjoy positive working relationships with their teachers. Furthermore, school leaders are frequent visitors to lessons and know pupils well.
- School leaders respond well to challenges. If pupils show signs of disengagement or underachievement, leaders move swiftly to remedy the situation. Last year, for instance, leaders employed motivational coaches to re-engage a small number of older pupils who were starting to lose interest in learning. As a result, all pupils who left in 2018 went on to education, employment or training.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. School leaders have an accurate view of teachers' performance. They address any small pockets of underperformance through well-crafted professional development that is based on identified needs. For example, training for staff has been arranged to improve provision in key stage 3 by replicating features of successful teaching at key stage 4. As a result, teaching has improved. However, in places, there is still room for further improvement. Currently, there are not enough opportunities for staff to learn from the most effective practice in the school.
- The majority of middle leaders are effective and highly focused on their work. They manage their teams well and communicate their ambition to others. For example, leaders of English and mathematics insist that teachers have a secure understanding of pupils' starting points. As a result, these teachers are held to account for what pupils achieve. Inspectors saw examples of strong teacher knowledge about pupils' progress in lessons and over time.
- Senior leaders have recently devised a strategy called 'the rolling record' to improve outcomes for pupils, especially boys, the most able pupils and the disadvantaged. Senior leaders meet with middle leaders on a fortnightly basis to discuss pupils' progress and outcomes. Most middle leaders welcome these meetings and the accountability systems in school. In addition, any concerns arising from work scrutiny and data analysis are picked up quickly. However, a few middle leaders lack accuracy in their evaluations. They are reluctant to acknowledge that inconsistencies in practice remain or that further improvements could be made.
- School leaders have made changes to the use of the pupil premium and catch-up funding. This is because some disadvantaged pupils have not made as much progress as other pupils. In response, school leaders have prioritised the use of these resources in every subject area. Furthermore, current training for staff focuses on how teaching and additional support can accelerate progress for these pupils. Inspection evidence indicates that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving.
- Recently, the curriculum has been redesigned to give more breadth and depth of study and increase pupils' options about which 'open subjects' to follow.

- Senior leaders have adjusted the key stage 3 curriculum so that pupils' learning skills are strengthened in readiness for their studies at key stage 4. These revisions to the curriculum help pupils to develop skills in problem-solving, active learning and metacognition.
- Leaders have created a very inclusive ethos in the school based on a clear set of values. There is a strong sense of community, which leaders promote daily, and pupils are proud to belong. For example, during this inspection a carefully planned assembly about avoiding bias and prejudgement of others was well received by pupils. Pupils are encouraged to respect others and not to be selfish. They respond well to this.
- School leaders ensure that the school's values are central to pupils' daily experience of school life. For example, pupils are involved in the National Citizenship Service and in fundraising for charities, and many participate in competitions. The school celebrates pupils' achievements and ensure that all feel valued. For example, 23 pupils were praised in the most recent monthly newsletter for receiving a 'Master of Mathematics' award for excellence in classwork.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors are effusive in their commitment to the school. They are proud of its caring and inclusive character and have high expectations. They champion school leaders' promotion of respect, tolerance and fostering of community spirit. Governors do not shy away from the challenges school leaders face. They are assiduous in their questioning of school leaders and receive regular reports about pupils' progress. Nevertheless, they do not review and evaluate the impact of actions to drive school improvement regularly enough, so they do not know what has worked and what has been less successful.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is an effective safeguarding culture in the school because leaders and teachers work hard to ensure that all pupils feel safe and are kept safe.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and that incidents of bullying and poor behaviour are extremely rare. Nearly all parents and carers who completed Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire said their child feels safe at this school. Pupils know which adults to report concerns to and are confident that they will be helped. All teachers have key safeguarding contact information on the reverse of their identity badges. This contains details about how to pass on any concerns raised by a pupil and to whom these should be addressed.
- During the inspection, senior leaders immediately corrected a small number of record-keeping errors that were brought to their attention. Their checks on some aspects of paperwork are not tight enough.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Typically, teachers' explanations are clear and concise and help pupils to further their knowledge and understanding. In science sessions, for example, pupils responded with accurate and thoughtful answers to teachers' well-constructed questions. In subsequent group work, this enabled pupils to use their secure understanding to question their peers about hypotheses. This further enabled pupils to consolidate and deepen their learning.
- Teachers capture and direct pupils' interest in subjects very well. For example, teaching in art draws on very strong subject knowledge and has high expectations that inspire pupils of all abilities to produce quality pieces of work. As a result, pupils have made consistently strong progress since the beginning of the academic year. In their conversations with inspectors, pupils demonstrated a deep understanding of their current art work.
- Provision for the most able pupils has strengthened and teachers' expectations are high. During this inspection, pupils were able to apply their knowledge well to solve higher-level problems. Inspectors could see the progress made over time in these pupils' exercise books.
- In most classes, classroom management is effective, and activities are well organised and appropriately sequenced. Teachers routinely ensure that pupils' new learning builds further on secure understanding. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics class, the teacher checked that pupils understood the basic operations required when working with fractions before moving on to progressively more complicated fractions work. As a result of this attentive teaching, coupled with a consistent reinforcement of correct terminology, pupils progressed well. They became confident in using fractions and mixed numbers.
- In some lessons, teaching occupies pupils but lacks challenge. When this happens, pupils do not make the progress they are capable of. For example, at times, teachers do not check whether pupils have fully understood or if earlier errors have been rectified. As a result, some pupils continue to make the same mistakes. Elsewhere, some teaching provides routine tasks that do not offer stretch or challenge. While pupils do not disengage from their activities, they do not make the progress they are capable of.
- In other instances, some pupils could talk well about their learning and the progress they had made. However, the quality of their written work was disappointing. Inspectors saw this difference mainly in boys' exercise books, especially with extended pieces of writing and the drawing of tables and diagrams. School leaders are implementing plans to address this matter. Governors are committed to hold school leaders to account for improvements in the quality of boys' written work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- The very positive relationship between pupils and their teachers is a strength of the school. Among pupils, there is a strong sense of pride to be a member of this school community. Pupils demonstrate this satisfaction through their consistently polite, courteous and welcoming manner. For example, pupils routinely hold doors open for adults as a mark of respect. They wear their uniform with pride and look smart.
- Older pupils are effusive about the school and say, 'We like being here.' They value the sense of community engendered by a school where everyone knows one another. This prompted one to say, 'Everyone knows one another, and this is a friendly place.'
- Careers education information advice and guidance (CEIAG) is effective. It is mapped through the taught curriculum from Year 7 as part of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). Numerous opportunities are offered to all pupils, which they appreciate. Most older pupils have attended a careers fayre and, more recently, local employers visited the school to share their knowledge and expertise. As a result, pupils are informed about their future choices.
- From Year 9, pupils also benefit from the support given by a post-16 CEIAG adviser. As a result of this work, by the end of Year 11, all pupils have received at least one careers conversation and individual support in making their post-16 choices. The school is committed to strengthening the impact of this good work and has funded the CEIAG adviser's participation in further professional development. School leaders are determined to ensure that all school leavers will continue to be offered education, employment and training at the age of 16 and that all Year 10 students will continue to be offered work-experience placements.
- The school provides a range and breadth of activities within school and also outside of lessons. Pupils value opportunities to develop their involvement in sport, drama and music. Not all pupils can participate fully in these activities because of changes to the school day and a reduction in lunchtime. Senior leaders are currently working to address this concern.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been one permanent exclusion. The level of fixed-term exclusions has reduced in this academic year compared to the same point in the previous year. Inspectors could see that pupils behave well in lessons and during social times.
- During this inspection, pupils' behaviour was consistently good when moving to and from lessons, and in the canteen and assembly. The school is a calm, orderly place and pupils listen very carefully to their teachers and other adults. High levels of adult supervision are not required because almost all pupils know what behaviour is expected of them.
- Older pupils demonstrate maturity and work sensibly and productively even when relatively unsupervised. This is clearly the result of high expectations and good planning by many teachers. Inspectors could see that pupils enjoy a tangible sense of purpose in the tasks they are set.

- The strong relationships that are evident in classrooms and around school are a key feature of this school. Where relationships are strongest, pupils respond very positively, are eager to succeed and willing to try the different activities asked of them. These strong relationships are also a strength of classroom management. This was seen in many classes but was a particularly notable feature in English, drama, art and construction lessons. However, on occasions, while conduct was generally good, it was within a compliant and heavily controlled teaching environment, which restricted pupils' initiative and enthusiasm.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Currently, almost all pupils are making good progress. This is because the quality of teaching is strong, and expectations are high. Evidence of progress is apparent across the curriculum and in the quality of pupils' work. Pupils who talked with inspectors believe they achieve well because teaching meets their needs. For example, a group of current Year 11 pupils are determined to achieve 'the best results ever' in their public examinations.
- Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work in lessons found that rates of progress are improving, especially in Year 10. In part, this is because the school's approach to the assessment of pupils' progress has improved. In addition, there has been an increase in the number of teachers who are engaged as GCSE examiners. Consequently, the school has greater confidence in the moderation and accuracy of its assessment data.
- Outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in public examinations have been good for the past two years. The school's special educational needs coordinator has an accurate and detailed view of these pupils' needs. As a result, effective plans are in place to promote good achievement.
- In 2018, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 11 was above average and all pupils who left the school went on to education, employment or training. However, progress measures fell to below the national average and this was most noticeable for boys, disadvantaged pupils and the most able. This academic year, however, pupils' progress has improved in almost all subjects, including English and mathematics. Current standards are good.

School details

Unique reference number	139455
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10086924

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

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	538
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mike Collison
Headteacher	John Parr
Telephone number	01694 722 209
Website	www.churchstretton.shropshire.sch.uk
Email address	admin@csschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2016

Information about this school

- Church Stretton School is part of the South Shropshire Academy Trust (SSAT).
- It is a smaller-than-average secondary school.
- The school has a local governing body and the SSAT board of trustees oversees its work and effectiveness.
- The headteacher of Church Stretton School is also chief executive officer of the SSAT.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is broadly average.
- Most pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation. This included: the school's self-evaluation and development plans; school policies; and information about pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour, attendance and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 39 lessons and parts of lessons across a wide range of subjects and key stages and observed some lessons with a senior leader. They observed pupils' behaviour in assembly, between lessons and at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors evaluated work in pupils' books and folders in lessons across a range of year groups.
- Inspectors held meetings with trustees, governors, senior and middle leaders and teachers.
- The views of parents were considered through 101 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors considered 29 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.
- Pupils met with inspectors in two separate focus groups. Inspectors had informal discussions with pupils and considered 114 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Antony Edkins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Gill	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Byatt	Ofsted Inspector

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