

Inspection of Allenbourn Middle School

East Borough, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 1PL

Inspection dates:	14 and 15 January 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Mark Legge. This school is part of Initio 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, Elizabeth West, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Deborah Fleming.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Allenbourn Middle School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Allenbourn Middle School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as an academy. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Allenbourn Middle School is ambitious for pupils to achieve highly and develop their individual character. Leaders have created a clear vision for the school and this has enabled improvements to be made in many areas. As a direct result, the outcomes for pupils continue to rise and they are well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils show exceptionally positive attitudes towards their learning. Disruption to lessons is rare and never tolerated, so pupils learn without distraction. The school's 'Rights Respecting' ethos means that pupils show a high level of courtesy towards each other and adults. Pupils trust adults to help them with any concerns that they may have. This makes them feel safe and happy in the school.

The range of extra-curricular clubs and activities offered to pupils is extensive and pupil engagement is impressively high. Pupils showcase their talents in performing arts and a wide range of sports. They have opportunities to develop new interests through groups, such as the enterprise team. The pupil parliament and the class representatives take great pride in their work to improve the school. Volunteering roles such as pupil librarians mean that older pupils act as exemplary role models for others. Younger pupils speak excitedly about being able to do the same in the future.

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

The school, with the support of the trust, has developed a bespoke curriculum for the middle school setting. In some subjects, this extends beyond the national curriculum. For example, in design and technology pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit from specialist teaching and workrooms to bring their ideas to life. The school has set out the knowledge and skills pupils will learn in each subject each year. Teachers accurately check what pupils know and can do. However, sometimes this information is not then used to adapt the curriculum to help fill gaps or resolve misconceptions. This can hinder pupils when learning the subsequent topics.

Reading is at the heart of the school. The curriculum includes a wide range of books carefully chosen to interest and excite readers. Pupils look forward to hearing their class book and enthusiastically recommend books and authors to each other. Pupils who need additional support with reading get the help they need to quickly improve their accuracy and confidence.

The school accurately identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It provides adults with the information they need to support these pupils effectively. As a result, pupils with SEND learn the curriculum as well as their peers. The school is taking steps to further engage parents in discussing pupils' needs. Recent events include coffee mornings and workshops with other professionals.

The personal development programme is extensive and prepares pupils well for adult life. Pupils know how to look after their physical and mental health as well as how to keep themselves safe. Pupils are exceptionally knowledgeable about the fundamental British

Values and protected characteristics. They can reflect on what these mean for them in school. Pupils demonstrate a high level of respect for others. They express their own views and opinions in a highly reflective and considered way.

The school provides careers information to all pupils. Pupils meet employers and learn about the skills needed to prepare for future employment. The school ensures pupils learn about the range of education, employment and apprenticeship opportunities available when they are older. This encourages pupils to be aspirational for the future.

The collaborative work between the school and trust has led to rapid improvements in many areas of the school, such as behaviour. Those responsible for school governance do not have the same awareness of the priorities for development. Therefore, they are unable to fully challenge and support leaders' decisions.

The school has been through a period of rapid change. Leaders are considerate of staff workload and well-being. Staff have a wide range of professional development opportunities within the school and trust. This makes them feel valued. Staff are united in their desire to make the school the best that it can be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, the assessment information collected about pupils' knowledge and understanding is not used effectively to inform curriculum changes and activity selection. As a result, gaps and misconceptions can remain and hinder pupils' future learning. The trust should ensure that assessment information is used to inform decisions about how the curriculum is implemented.
- Those responsible for school governance do not have sufficient systems in place to assure themselves of the quality of education. This means that they are overly reliant on school leaders' self-evaluation to inform their decisions. The trust should ensure that those responsible for governance have sufficient information to obtain an accurate and independent view of the school so that they can effectively challenge and support its leaders.

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	141757
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10307255
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	513
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Deborah Fleming
CEO of the trust	Elizabeth West
Headteacher	Mark Legge
Website	www.allenbournmiddle.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Initio Learning Trust.
- 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 school uses two registered alternative provisions.
- There is a breakfast club led by the school for pupils who attend the school.

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 held discussions with school leaders at all levels. Inspectors also spoke with teaching staff, support staff, trust executive leaders, local committee members and trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, design and technology and languages (French). For each deep dive, inspectors held discussion 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 observed pupils’ behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at lunchtime and breaktimes.
- Inspectors viewed a range of school documentation, including the minutes of governance and trustee meetings, the school’s self-evaluation documents and improvement plans.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the view 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.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as responses to the staff survey and pupil survey.

Inspection team

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His Majesty’s Inspector

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