

Danesfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Community Middle School

Address: North Road, Williton, Taunton, Somerset, TA4 4SW

Unique reference number (URN): 140631

Inspection report: 9 December 2025

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	● ● ●
Urgent improvement	● ● ●

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

This school requires significant improvement

His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires **significant improvement** because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Needs attention

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Leaders have yet to fully embed an inclusive school culture. Leaders have not ensured that staff have the knowledge and expertise to best support pupils to overcome their individual barriers to learning or personal development.

Recently introduced systems have improved the accurate identification of the needs of individual pupils. This information has begun to be communicated with staff to help them support pupils to overcome their challenges. This has increased the levels of learning pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) complete, which is now more similar to their peers. Similarly, disadvantaged pupils and pupils at risk of permanent exclusion are now benefiting from this work.

Recent work around inclusion has focused on building trust and confidence in the school's offer with families. Leaders acknowledge the need to increase staff expertise and knowledge to help ensure that appropriate adjustments and adaptations are made to pupils' learning and development. Currently, the quality of this support is variable. The expectations of pupils who have increased vulnerabilities, particularly those with SEND, are not high enough. This is hampered further by the widespread weaknesses in the curriculum more generally.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

A prolonged period of instability within the school and the multi academy trust has hampered efforts to bring about the necessary improvement.

Despite this, recently appointed school leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. In the short amount of time since starting leaders have identified and prioritised the initial areas to improve. Leaders have begun to develop a more positive culture, including around behaviour, and by starting to strengthen relationships with families. They have achieved some early successes, such as improving the support in place for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders have begun to support staff to deliver the curriculum well. This work is at an early stage. Leaders recognise that improving the school may have a negative impact on staff wellbeing and workload. They have tried to reduce this impact. For instance, staff have additional time allocated for professional learning.

Governors have started to improve their systems and expertise so that they can better support and challenge the school. They are now clear on their core functions and the

responsibilities they have for statutory areas. They are at an early stage of improving their engagement with parents and the community.

Parents have significant concerns about all aspects of the school. However, they are typically more positive about how leaders act in the best interests of pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Needs attention 

Leaders have recently revised the personal, social and health education curriculum to make sure that it is suitable for the age and phase of pupils. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online, and about healthy relationships. However, the current classroom experience for pupils means that they are not developing the knowledge and skills linked to these important topics as effectively as they should.

The pastoral support of pupils is a high priority at this school. Leaders have ensured that pupils have access to wellbeing support.

Pupils are inquisitive about their own beliefs. Spirituality is explored through shared moments of reflection. Class reading books help pupils to discuss different views about topics such as organ transplantations. The school engages with wider community events such as the 'Christmas Tree Festival' and charity fundraising. Through these experiences, pupils learn about their role as active citizens. This is increasingly helping pupils to celebrate diversity and difference.

The opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests are increasing. School productions and talent shows are particular highlights. Pupils talk enthusiastically about what they have learned on recent school visits. Pupils are proud to represent their school in sporting competitions. Leadership roles such as school chaplains are helping older pupils act as role models.

The careers curriculum provides pupils with experiences of the world of work. Guest speakers and workshops help pupils learn valuable skills such as personal finance. Leaders work closely with the local upper school to support pupils in making choices about future qualifications that align with their ambitions.

Urgent improvement

Achievement

Urgent improvement 

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Many pupils do not read or write well and have gaps in their mathematics knowledge. They are not well prepared for their next stages in learning.

Many pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are poorly supported to learn well. Pupils struggle to remember what they have studied before. As a result, they are unable to build on their learning to deepen their understanding.

Pupils do not achieve well in national tests taken at the end of Year 6.

Pupils' classwork is not of a high standard. The quality of written work for pupils of all ages is generally poor. It shows a lack of understanding of the curriculum they have been taught. Pupils' work often lacks basic skills, such as high-quality handwriting and the correct use of punctuation.

Attendance and behaviour

Urgent improvement ●

Too many pupils are absent from the school. Attendance has remained stubbornly low. The number of pupils who miss large amounts of school is too high. This is particularly concerning for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have not historically had a clear understanding of what is preventing pupils from attending school. Therefore, they do not take effective action to support pupils and their families to improve attendance.

While classrooms are typically calm, behaviour around the school is not always orderly. Leaders have recently raised the expectations for pupil behaviour. Teachers are increasingly using the school systems to help pupils learn what behaviour is acceptable. Pupils are starting to be clearer about how they should conduct themselves. Leaders ensure that pupils who need additional support are helped to improve their behaviour.

Pupils know that bullying is not tolerated. However, until recently, pupils have not been confident that reporting concerns would help solve issues when they occur. Pupils who do pass on concerns say that they appreciate the help they receive. Pupils are proud of the rewards that they earn. The 'Danesfield Duck' awards for demonstrating the school's values are a particular highlight.

Curriculum and teaching

Urgent improvement ●

The curriculum is often not well matched to what pupils already know and can do. Learning activities do not consistently help pupils to learn. Staff do not have the knowledge they need in order to provide clear explanations to pupils. Leaders have only recently begun to increase the expertise of staff.

Teaching is not adapted well enough to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Too many pupils with gaps in their foundational knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics do not get the support they need. Leaders have only recently identified which pupils have fallen behind. Many gaps in pupils' knowledge have not previously been identified. Consequently, staff have not been helping pupils to close these gaps.

Leaders have ensured that there is a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum makes clear what pupils should learn and is designed to help them to build on this knowledge over time. Leaders know which aspects of the curriculum need to improve further.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Turbulence in leadership and staffing at the school has had a negative impact on pupils. Leaders have an accurate evaluation of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. Many pupils are unsettled by the frequent changes of staff. In some areas, the relationships between staff, pupils and their families are supportive and caring. However, this is not consistent across the school.

Many pupils do not enjoy or engage well with their learning. Pupils are not supported to review their prior learning. Staff do not consistently check pupils' understanding. Many pupils struggle to recall what they have been taught. As a result, pupils struggle to access more complex topics across the curriculum.

A high rate of absence means that some pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, underachieve. They are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school has not ensured that all pupils are consistently respectful, kind and empathetic towards each other. Although standards of behaviour are starting to improve, some pupils continue to not behave well. When poor behaviour occurs, staff do not always intervene. Until recently, some pupils have not reported concerns about bullying as they did not feel confident that reporting it would make a difference.

Pupils are positive about the many clubs and trips that the school offers. For example, they thoroughly enjoyed a recent visit to Paris where they practised speaking French and learned about the culture. Pupils value the opportunities to develop their leadership skills through the prefect system and by serving on the school council.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff have the expertise they need to support pupils to overcome their individual barriers to learning and make improved progress through the curriculum.
 - Leaders need to ensure that staff have the subject knowledge and teaching expertise to teach the curriculum as intended.
 - Leaders must ensure that staff accurately identify and close gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge so they can access the curriculum as intended and are better prepared for their next steps in education.
 - Leaders should ensure that they understand the barriers to attendance. They should use this to help pupils overcome those barriers so that pupils attend regularly.
 - Leaders need to ensure that staff have the knowledge to support pupils to learn the important knowledge in the personal development programme well.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Beacon Education MAT Ltd, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Trudy Danby, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jane Bellamy.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors met with senior leaders, the CEO of the trust, trustees, pupils, staff and parents during the inspection.

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.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. The headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team have been recently appointed, and the CEO is currently serving in an interim capacity.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The last inspection under section 48 of the Education Act took place in September 2023.

The school makes use of 3 alternative provisions. All 3 are unregistered.

Headteacher: Joanna Smith

Lead inspector:

Sarah Favager-Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Leanne Thirlby, His Majesty's Inspector

Sara Berry, His Majesty's Inspector

Susan Aykin, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.



This data is from 9 December 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

349

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

450

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

36.10%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

4.01%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

16.91%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	29%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	27%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	17%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	42%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	56%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	54%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	54%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	60%	73%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	43%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	40%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	20%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	62%	71%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	50%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	46%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	48%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	55%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	9%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	9%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	0%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	16%	44%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	42%	62%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	39%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	32%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	51%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	27%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	21%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	3%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	51%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	33%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	33%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	29%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	35%	59%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference

between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	9%	68%	-59 pp
2024/25 (revised)	9%	69%	-60 pp
2023/24 (final)	0%	67%	-67 pp
2022/23 (final)	16%	66%	-50 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	42%	80%	-38 pp
2024/25 (revised)	39%	81%	-41 pp
2023/24 (final)	32%	80%	-47 pp
2022/23 (final)	51%	78%	-27 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	27%	78%	-51 pp
2024/25 (revised)	21%	78%	-57 pp
2023/24 (final)	3%	78%	-74 pp
2022/23 (final)	51%	77%	-26 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	33%	80%	-47 pp
2024/25 (revised)	33%	81%	-47 pp
2023/24 (final)	29%	79%	-50 pp
2022/23 (final)	35%	79%	-44 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	10.1%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	10.1%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.7%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	26.2%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	29.3%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	27.9%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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