

Wadham School

Yeovil Road, Crewkerne, Somerset TA18 7NT

Inspection dates

26–27 June 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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have worked hard to improve the areas identified in the previous inspection. As a result, the progress that pupils make by the end of Year 11 is improving.
- Leaders and governors share a sense of commitment and purpose to continue to improve the standard of education that the school provides. However, while there are many actions taking place, leaders do not systematically evaluate their impact.
- Middle leaders are developing in their roles to support senior leaders in securing further improvement.
- Overall, teaching is good. Leaders provide suitable training for staff to develop their practice. However, there are variations in the quality of teaching and the use of assessment, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and boys.
- Pupils' attendance remains a key focus because rates of absence are too high overall. Leaders have implemented suitable interventions which are beginning to improve the rates of attendance for those pupils who miss school regularly.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not make the progress that they should. This is because leaders have not precisely identified the barriers to learning these pupils face. There is strong pastoral support for such pupils, but this is not aligned closely enough to academic outcomes.
- Leadership of the sixth form is effective. There is an improving understanding of the progress that students are making. Students who fall behind are offered good support and are now making better progress in this phase of their education.
- Staff promote pupils' personal, social, health and economic education well. The values of the school are explicit, and the curriculum is thoughtfully designed to support these. Pupils regularly consider the issues involved in keeping themselves safe, both in the community and when they are online.
- The school is an orderly environment within which pupils feel safe. Pupils are appreciative of the school's open and inclusive culture.
- Behaviour in lessons and during social time is positive, overall. Sometimes, behaviour slips when activities are not appropriate, or expectations are not high enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:
 - improvement plans have clear, measurable targets, with identified timescales, so that leaders and governors can evaluate the impact of their actions more precisely
 - improvement is sustained, and expectations are applied, so that teachers' practice is consistently good across all subjects
 - middle leaders develop the skills that they need to contribute further to school improvement
 - governors more precisely evaluate the impact that additional funding is having on the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make strong progress by ensuring that teachers:
 - use assessment to identify misconceptions and plan lessons that meet the needs of all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and boys
 - consistently insist on high expectations in pupils' attitudes to their learning.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by maintaining the focus on improving rates of attendance so that more pupils attend school regularly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have successfully maintained their focus on school improvement despite uncertainty about the school's future direction. They have streamlined leadership roles and have increased capacity through the development of middle leadership, as well as through key pastoral appointments. Leaders have maintained staff morale throughout this period of transition. Staff say that leaders are mindful of their well-being and are positive and supportive of leaders' initiatives. This means that the school is now well placed to move forward positively and with confidence.
- Senior leaders have reflected on what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. They have accurately identified priorities, and their actions are well devised. However, leaders are not systematic or probing enough when analysing the impact of these strategies. The plans for improvement, the lines of accountability and the measures for success are not precise enough. There is a consequent lack of clarity about whether actions are having the anticipated effect.
- Leaders have worked with the local authority so that they can get an objective perspective on the quality of their work. This has focused particularly on the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of middle leadership. Staff have also worked with other providers to share effective practice in priority areas. Leaders and governors are receptive to this advice and act on it to secure further improvement.
- Leaders regularly track the progress that pupils make. To ensure accuracy, staff moderate the standards of work within their teams, as well as with other schools. Some staff within departments have experience of working with examination boards, so there is confidence in the accuracy of this information. Leaders use this information to plan suitable training for teachers and to work with pupils who are falling behind their peers.
- Middle leaders understand the importance of their roles in creating the momentum for improvement and are becoming an effective team. They are keen to develop their skills and have a secure understanding of the quality of classroom practice. However, there is variation in the quality of their plans to tackle identified areas of weakness. Crucially, subject leaders' plans do not focus sharply enough on the impact that their actions are having on the quality of pupils' learning, particularly to overcome the concepts that pupils find difficult.
- The pastoral work of the school has evolved over the last academic year. This is particularly evident in the support provided for disadvantaged pupils. The work of the newly appointed pupil premium champion has been pivotal in this regard and is indicative of leaders' intent to raise the profile of this group of pupils. Leaders recognise that the academic performance of this group of pupils needs to improve as it is not as good as that of their peers. However, they have not focused closely enough on the quality of teaching as a means of achieving this.
- The special educational needs coordinator has a secure overview of the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have ensured that the provision for pupils with SEND is well resourced. They offer a range of additional interventions based on pupils' learning needs and their emotional well-being,

such as in the newly opened provision, 'The Bridge'. Leaders have given thoughtful consideration to when interventions will take place so that pupils do not miss important classroom input. Such interventions are reviewed regularly so that staff have a clear understanding of the improvements that pupils make because of this additional work.

- As pupils join the school in Year 9, leaders have designed the curriculum to prepare them for the demands of GCSE. They have ensured that pupils experience a wide variety of subjects and extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils speak highly of their experiences in creative subjects such as art, music and photography. Leaders also consider the needs of pupils and the profile of year groups when shaping the curriculum. For example, additional options for gifted mathematicians and linguists are planned for the forthcoming academic year.
- Parents, carers and pupils are largely positive about their experience of the school. Many parents commented on the support provided for their children and the range of experiences that they have. However, some parents expressed their concerns about the quality of the school's communication with them and the management of behaviour in some classes. Leaders have sought to improve parental communication through 'Wadham Words', the school's newsletter, and through electronic means of communication.
- Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school because of the support and quality of training they receive. Staff say that there is a culture of openness and say that they are encouraged to be innovative in their practice. Newly qualified staff meet regularly with their mentors so that they receive the support that they need at the beginning of their careers.

Governance of the school

- Governors are supportive of school leaders and are diligent in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. They successfully balance their consideration of financial issues alongside educational priorities.
- Governors receive regular reports and updates from senior leaders and from other staff who hold responsibilities in the school. This, together with their visits to the school, provides them with an accurate perspective of the standards that the school achieves. This is enhanced by governors who have roles which align with the key improvement-plan priorities. The conclusions of these visits are shared with the wider governing body so that everyone is aware of the full range of issues.
- Governors have identified that improvement plans are not sharp enough and have acted to ensure that leaders amend these accordingly. Governors ask pertinent questions about leaders' actions but do not probe closely enough to ensure that they are clear about the impact of these. This is particularly true of the funding provided for disadvantaged pupils. Governors know how the funding has been allocated but are not assured in their evaluation of the impact of the actions taken.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors have ensured that all staff fully understand the school's safeguarding policy and procedures. Employment checks are in place to ensure that all

staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

- Staff are well trained and know the areas that they need to be vigilant in, including the dangers posed by 'county lines' and the risks of exploitation and extremism. There is a clear process for reporting concerns, and leaders keep track of these through well-organised chronologies. They can therefore track the support provided to pupils and families over time.
- Leaders have a comprehensive knowledge of the most vulnerable pupils and families. They work closely with parents and external agencies to ensure that effective help and guidance are provided when needed. Where they are not satisfied with the resolution of referrals, they challenge appropriately.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders regularly monitor the quality of classroom practice. They have challenged where practice falls short of expectations and use their overview to identify teachers' training needs. As a result, teaching typically meets the needs of pupils.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subject. Pupils engage in their learning positively and have a clear understanding of the tasks set and know where they fit in with the sequence of learning.
- Teachers consolidate pupils' understanding with incisive questioning. They focus on exam technique so that pupils know what they need to demonstrate in their answers. Pupils are encouraged to think deeply about subject content and have secure knowledge recall. Pupils respond with good effect to the guidance that teachers provide. Teachers reinforce subject terminology, and pupils demonstrate a confident understanding of this.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers' questioning lacks depth and persistence. Pupils are sometimes confused by the tasks set and are unsure about their purpose. In some cases, teachers' feedback does not highlight misconceptions or signpost what pupils need to do to improve. Where teachers' advice is evident, pupils do not always act upon it.
- Some pupils do not take enough pride in their work. This is particularly evident in the quality of work for some boys and disadvantaged pupils, who do not always make the effort required of their own volition. There are, therefore, some gaps in understanding for these pupils.
- Staff are provided with effective information about the needs of pupils with SEND. They receive suitable training so that they have relevant strategies to support pupils. Where additional adults work most effectively with pupils, they are clear about the lesson content and aims. In the best practice, teaching assistants support pupils to work independently and use the strategies outlined on pupils' learning passports. However, this is not yet consistently done.
- Behaviour in class is mainly compliant and calm. This contributes to generally focused learning environments and positive relationships between staff and pupils.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders have developed a coherent programme to support pupils' personal development. This programme is valued by pupils and delivered effectively by staff. Pupils consider topics in an age-appropriate way. This is enhanced by external speakers, who inform pupils of relevant risks and how to manage these effectively. This includes keeping pupils informed about the dangers posed by extremism and radicalisation.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is equally well planned and has been reviewed in line with the school's 'values wheel', introduced this academic year and linked closely to the school's church ethos.
- Careers advice and guidance are strengths of the school and appreciated by pupils. The leader has a clear vision and has implemented this well, leading to very few pupils not continuing into further education or training at the end of Years 11, 12 and 13. Pupils receive advice which is impartial and independent, allowing them to make appropriate choices for their next steps. Leaders are briefed on the local context but are also keen to raise pupils' aspirations of what they can achieve further afield. To this end, pupils regularly take part in organised events to broaden their horizons.
- Leaders effectively track and monitor bullying incidents, including the use of derogatory language. Pupils report feeling safe at the school and know where to get support if required. There is an online reporting system where pupils can report concerns. Pupils act as anti-bullying and well-being ambassadors to support their fellow pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in the classrooms and around the school. This is encouraged well by the presence of staff around the site at all breaks during the school day. A small amount of low-level disruption witnessed by inspectors stemmed from inappropriate activities for pupils or lack of insistence on high expectations, rather than wilful disruption.
- Leaders are aware of the impact of the high rate of fixed-term exclusions and only use these where other strategies have not proved successful. There is a compelling rationale as to why this sanction has been used. Leaders keep close scrutiny of the effectiveness of reintegration and ensure that support is in place for pupils when they return to school.
- Attendance remains a key focus for the school. Leaders have renewed their attendance strategy, so it is now more reflective and systemic. This has not yet improved the level of attendance overall, but has led to a reduction in the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent. While leaders can give examples of individual success stories, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and girls still falls behind that of other groups in the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school in Year 9. The progress that pupils make by the end of Year 11 is improving and is now in line with national figures. The work of current pupils shows that this continues to be the case because of the improving standard of teaching across the school.
- In English and mathematics, pupils continue to make progress in line with the national average. The progress that pupils make in English has particularly improved, as a result of the actions taken to improve this area of the curriculum. Current pupils in Year 10, for example, demonstrate a secure ability to analyse language and understand the historical context in which texts were written.
- The proportion of pupils who follow the combination of subjects which constitute the English baccalaureate is in line with the pattern seen nationally. Pupils make progress in these subjects in line with their peers nationally. There is an improving picture in science, for example, where leaders have been reflective and are working hard to raise the profile and pupils' enjoyment of this subject.
- The most able pupils are usually challenged effectively. However, occasionally teachers do not tailor their planning to pupils' starting points. This leads to pupils not being moved on to applying their skills to more challenging tasks when they have demonstrated that they understand a concept.
- Leaders have implemented several strategies and interventions over the past year in an attempt to close the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. While this work has been extensive, there has not been a sharp enough evaluation of its impact. This has limited any improved academic outcomes for this pivotal group of pupils at the school.
- Leaders have improved the provision for pupils with SEND. As a result, this group of pupils are beginning to make stronger progress from their starting points. Leaders have identified pupils who arrive at the school with standards below that expected for their ages. Interventions are becoming more successful in supporting pupils to catch up, particularly in reading.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The leadership of the sixth form is effective, with a clear strategy to improve the disappointing outcomes of the past. Prior to students beginning their courses, leaders put plans in place to support students to prepare for the demands of A-level study. This includes preparing transition tasks and developing reading lists.
- Leaders regularly monitor the progress that students make, and action is taken to support students to get back on track when necessary. As a result, the progress that students make in this phase is improving, as are rates of attendance.
- Students are highly complimentary of their experience in the sixth form. They value the support they receive and have made a positive choice to stay on in the sixth form because of this. They are involved in the life of the school through the house system and often work with younger pupils to support them in areas of the curriculum.

- A key strand of the strategy for sixth form is to raise the aspirations of students. To this end, students receive detailed advice about their choices to help them prepare for the transition into higher education, training or employment.
- All Year 12 students have a work experience placement during the year. Students also have the opportunity to visit higher education settings or to hear from experts in vocational areas, such as civil engineering, accountancy and enterprise. As a result, the proportion of pupils who apply to university is increasing.
- Students consider issues relevant to their stage of education. The 'Sixth Form Matters' programme includes methods to improve students' well-being, such as yoga and relaxation techniques. There is also a practical focus, such as buying and maintaining a car. This programme is planned to have a greater emphasis on wider health issues next year. It will also help prepare students to recognise the risks from those who might try to influence them with extreme views.

School details

Unique reference number	123893
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10056201

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	503
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Jonathan Morris
Headteacher	Matthew Gardner
Telephone number	01460 270123
Website	www.wadhamschool.co.uk
Email address	office@wadhamschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 May 2018

Information about this school

- The school received a short inspection in May 2018. Although the school was judged still to be good, the inspector identified some priorities for improvement.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school, catering for pupils from Year 9 to Year 13.
- The headteacher was appointed in October 2018. There have been substantial changes to the leadership of the school, including the appointment of two deputy headteachers at the start of this academic year.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is lower than the national figure, including those pupils with an education, health and care plan.

- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average.
- Most pupils are White British, and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average.
- The school received a Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools in October 2014 to assess the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school. At this time, the school was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a range of subjects and age groups and scrutinised pupils' written work. Observations were conducted jointly with members of the leadership team.
- Meetings were held with members of the leadership team and representatives from the governing body. In addition, inspectors met with curriculum and pastoral leaders. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with the school improvement partner and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, 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' records.
- School policies relating to safeguarding, pupils' behaviour, the use of additional funding, including the pupil premium, and the curriculum were scrutinised.
- Inspectors considered the 52 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 44 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered 45 responses to the staff survey issued at the time of the inspection.

Inspection team

Sarah McGinnis, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Julia Chapman	Ofsted Inspector
Benjamin Antell	Ofsted 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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