

# Wellsway School

Chandag Road, Keynsham, Bristol, BS31 1PH

**Inspection dates** 12–13 February 2014

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Good</b>              | <b>2</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Good                     | 2        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Good                     | 2        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Good                     | 2        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Good                     | 2        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- All groups of students achieve well from their starting points and make good progress. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make equally good progress as others.
- Students' attainment at GCSE is getting better year on year and is significantly above average.
- The sixth form is good. Students do well in their examinations and make good progress.
- The school is closing the gaps in performance between those who may be disadvantaged compared to other students.
- The quality of teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers show great enthusiasm for their subject and, in most lessons, capture students' interests well with exciting and demanding activities.
- The opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the school are strong.
- Students behave well and feel safe in lessons and around the school. They have good attitudes to learning and get on well together.
- The headteacher, key leaders, managers and the governing body are working successfully as a strong team on improving the school and pushing forward the school's ambitious vision for its students and the local community.
- Leaders are successfully raising the quality of teaching and students' achievement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Too few students are making outstanding progress in their lessons and over time.
- Teachers sometimes give work that is too easy; they do not use questions well enough to encourage students to think deeply and marking does not always help students to improve their work.
- Some subject leaders do not fully hold their teams to account for the quality of teaching and students' progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 40 lessons across all year groups in the school, including 14 that were observed jointly with the senior staff.
- The inspectors listened to students read and visited classrooms with senior staff to look at how well disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are learning. They also visited lessons with senior staff to look at students' progress in mathematics, English, science and a range of other subjects.
- Discussions were held with senior and subject leaders, staff, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and various groups of students.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at its checks on the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Planning documents, safeguarding procedures, external evaluations of the school's work and examples of students' work from a wide range of classes were also examined.
- The inspectors took account of the 121 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as one other response that was submitted separately. Parents' and students' responses to the school's own recent surveys and written comments made by parents were also considered, as were the responses to inspection questionnaires returned by 40 staff.

## Inspection team

Michael Merchant, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Teresa Gilpin

Additional Inspector

Marian Prior

Additional Inspector

Helen Owen

Additional Inspector

Ian Bryant

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Wellsway School converted to become an academy school in September 2011. When its predecessor school of the same name was previously inspected by Ofsted in March 2011, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is much larger in size than the average-sized secondary school.
- The very large majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students that are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government for those known to be eligible for free school meals and other groups) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average as is the proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- A very small number of students spend time studying work-related courses at local colleges.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that students make consistently rapid progress in all classes by making sure that:
  - teachers get the most out of every student in their class in every lesson, both in the amount of thought and effort students are required to put into their work and in terms of their work rate
  - they consistently use the helpful marking provided by teachers to further improve their learning
  - all teachers use questions in lessons which encourage students to think carefully about their work and to articulate full answers.
- Improve leadership and management by making sure that all subject leaders take more direct responsibility for their departments, particularly for improving the quality of teaching and in holding teams to account for the progress of the students in their subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with attainment that is above that expected of their age. Attainment at GCSE is significantly above average and rising. The school confidently and realistically predicts that nearly three quarters of students in Year 11 will attain five or more good GCSE passes including English and mathematics in 2014.
- The progress measures of most groups of students, including high ability students, in most subjects over the past two years have been good overall, although some high attaining students did not show the progress they should have in English in 2013.
- The reasons for this dip have been identified and quickly addressed so that both attainment and progress have improved sharply. Detailed information presented by the school provided firm evidence to show that all groups of students in English are now making good progress across all year groups.
- School data shows that in English, more than 80% of students in Year 11 are on track to gain grades A\*-C in GCSE English in 2014 and the proportion of students making and exceeding the expected three levels of progress in English is higher than the national figure.
- In lessons observed during the inspection, students' achievement across all subjects, including English, was nearly always good, and in some cases, outstanding.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are identified quickly. Carefully targeted support means that they make good progress in relation to their starting points.
- Where the school thinks it appropriate, students are entered early for GCSE examinations in mathematics. They follow a well-planned programme that is closely linked to their needs. They make good progress and higher-attaining students are not held back by this policy and are attaining the grades of which they are capable.
- The school is successful at improving students' literacy skills. This is evident in most subjects, where opportunities are provided to promote students' confidence and skills in speaking, listening and reading. Students' capabilities in dealing with numbers are also consistently developed across the school.
- Effective use is made of funding received through the Year 7 catch-up programme (extra money from the government to support those students who attained below expected levels in English and mathematics in Year 6). Through additional support, such students make good gains in acquiring number, reading and writing skills.
- Until recently, there was some difference in the rate of progress made by students supported by the pupil premium and others in Year 11. In 2013 such students known to be entitled to free school meals attained, on average, over a grade lower in English and mathematics than did other students.
- School information shows that it now uses its pupil premium funding very effectively to support eligible students. It has provided financial support to enable them to participate in out-of-school activities and courses as well as providing individual help and guidance. This support has effectively reduced the attainment gap between these students and others across all years, so that it is much smaller than that seen nationally.
- The achievement of students in the sixth form is good. Students learn with eagerness and enthusiasm and show great enjoyment in their courses. Most are making good progress in lessons and most are meeting and exceeding their challenging targets.
- A very small number of students study courses at a local college of further education. The school keeps close checks on the progress of such students. Most are achieving well and are gaining the skills necessary to gain suitable employment or further training.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers expect much of their students and there is a very positive climate that encourages

good learning in the school.

- Most lessons across the school consist of a good variety of interesting activities, carefully sequenced to enable students to learn what was intended and make at least good progress.
- Teachers invariably have good relationships with the class. They keep students motivated and boost their self-confidence through judicious use of praise and encouragement.
- Teaching in the most effective lessons is lively and imaginative and so students' interests and enthusiasm are captured well. As a result, students put a great deal of effort into their work and keep up good levels of concentration.
- Where teaching was outstanding in a Year 12 biology lesson, students were gripped by the sheer demand of the tasks set by the teacher. They worked flat out, both by themselves and in pairs, to deduce the structure of haemoglobin and the collagen molecule, relishing the intellectual demand of the activity and taking great pride in accomplishing the task.
- Teachers' use of questions to extend students' understanding is often masterly. They use questioning very effectively to help students think about their work and to develop their understanding. For example, they often ask students to explain or justify their answers or to clarify them by giving examples.
- This is not always the case, however, and in some lessons, questions are not always used as well as they could be by teachers to check and probe students' understanding and to prompt them to fully explain their answers.
- Teaching assistants work effectively with teachers to ensure that materials are suitably adapted for disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers frequently develop high-powered class discussions by encouraging students to research a topic or idea and then share the result of their research with others.
- Where teaching is not yet outstanding, learning is held back because students sometimes mark time as they wait for others to catch up after completing work that does too little to extend their thinking or deepen their skills.
- Teachers' marking and feedback to students, although very effective in some classes, lacks consistency across the school. It does not always show students what they need to do to improve their work or follow up whether students have acted on this advice.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of students is good. Students show positive attitudes to learning and are well motivated to succeed.
- Behaviour around the school is good, including at break and lunchtime. Students consistently show respect towards staff and one another. They respond well to the effective systems the school uses to manage behaviour and promote positive relationships.
- Students have a clear moral understanding of right and wrong and are frequently encouraged to think of others, both in the school and in the wider community, for example by raising funds for various charities.
- During the inspection, students were keen to engage inspectors in conversation and share with them how much they enjoyed school. They are invariably polite, courteous and friendly, offering help and assistance to visitors and other students.
- School records show that poor behaviour is infrequent and there have been very few exclusions in recent years.
- Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, disabled students and those who have special educational needs are well supported so that they feel secure, and socialise and study confidently with other students.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel completely safe in school and if they have a problem, they know they can talk to a member of staff who will sort it out.

- Students understand about how to deal with risks they might face and understand issues relating to substance abuse and the dangers associated with using the internet.
- During the inspection, students displayed a good understanding of bullying and its different forms. They say that it is rare, and students and parents and carers say that offensive behaviour, such as name-calling, cyber bullying or bullying based on gender or sexual orientation, is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Attendance is above average for all groups of students. The school chases up the absence of any students with a history of poor attendance relentlessly.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because in some lessons, students are less than enthusiastic in their learning.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The school is managed well by the headteacher and the senior leadership team. They set high expectations of the school community and are bringing about significant improvements in students' achievement.
- Leaders have an accurate and realistic view of how well the school is performing. Action plans set out clear priorities and underpin the drive for improvement. Strong systems for checking on the performance of students and staff are helping to support continuous improvement.
- Teaching is improving because leaders carry out rigorous checks on its quality. They use their excellent coaching and mentoring skills to offer constructive advice and training and use their highly effective teachers very well to extend and share good practice with other colleagues. In this way, the quality of teaching and learning is going from strength to strength.
- Systems to manage the performance of staff are rigorous and linked to school priorities and current national teaching standards. Staff are gaining confidence in leading staff training.
- Students are given challenging academic targets that have raised their ambitions. Most leaders at all levels make good use of information on students' progress to check any slowing down. Checks are followed up swiftly with well-thought-out support that helps students to catch up.
- At the time of the inspection, there was no evidence of any discrimination and the school makes sure all have the same chance to succeed through this sophisticated monitoring and strong support.
- Most subject leaders check the quality of teaching and student progress in their respective areas rigorously. These leaders often know the weaknesses of their departments and act quickly to take action to secure improvement. This is not always the case and not all middle leaders have the skills and confidence to develop their teams, particularly in relation to improving the quality of teaching.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Careful attention to the progress of each student ensures that a very high proportion complete their chosen courses and achieve well.
- The curriculum supports students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well through the wide range of opportunities for students to extend their education outside of classes. In particular, the arts and music are very well promoted. This is a significant strength of the school and does much to support students' personal development.
- Leadership is not yet outstanding because the drive of leaders to ensure excellence has not yet resulted in a high enough proportion of outstanding teaching. Consequently, although students' progress is good, too few are making rapid progress across all year groups and subjects.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body brings a wealth of expertise to the school. Governors take a keen interest in, and have a good understanding of, the way the school works. They receive clear information on how well different groups of students achieve, to make sure that no group does less well than any others. They check to make sure that the arrangements for

safeguarding students meet all current requirements and that the school puts in place the correct procedures if an incident occurs. Governors have a good understanding of the system for managing teachers' performance and teachers' pay and, from this, understand how good the quality of teaching is in the school and what support has been provided to improve performance. They closely monitor the school's budget, including the spending of money from the pupil premium. All governors receive regular training. The governing body is effective in holding the headteacher and senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance.

## What inspection judgements mean

| School  |                      |  |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| Grade   | Judgement            | Description  |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding          | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.   |
| Grade 2 | Good                 | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.   |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.   |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate           | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

## School details

|                                |                              |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 137523                       |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Bath and North East Somerset |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 441131                       |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                         | Comprehensive                  |
| <b>School category</b>                        | Academy converter              |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                    | 11–18                          |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                       | Mixed                          |
| <b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>     | Mixed                          |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>    | 1335                           |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b> | 270                            |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                  | The governing body             |
| <b>Chair</b>                                  | Irene Arnold                   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                            | Andrea Arlidge                 |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>     | Not applicable                 |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                       | 0117 986 4751                  |
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