

Wadham School

Mount Pleasant, Crewkerne, Somerset, TA18 7NT

Inspection dates 7–8 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- Senior leaders' and governors' successful actions since the previous inspection have improved students' achievement and the quality of teaching a great deal.
- At the end of Year 11, the proportion of students attaining five or more good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, is well above the national average.
- Students make good progress, especially in English where their attainment and progress exceed national averages. Students' written work is especially good.
- Students make increasingly good progress in other subjects including science, history, geography and physical education.
- Teaching is good, with some being outstanding. Teachers routinely plan work that enables all students to make good progress. Marking and feedback are particular strengths that help students to improve their work.
- Students are keen to learn and they behave well. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education and understand the importance of doing well at school.
- Students and parents say there is little bullying and that any which occurs is dealt with effectively. Students have a good understanding of the different types of bullying.
- School leaders and governors have a perceptive insight into the school's strengths and weaknesses and have tackled the latter effectively.
- Teachers' performance is managed well and the quality of subject leadership is steadily improving.
- The sixth form is good. Students make better overall progress than is the case nationally. Results in A level and other examinations are above the national average. Many students progress to higher education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- At the end of Year 11, some students do not achieve as well as they should in mathematics. This is because staff are too cautious in entering them for the hardest GCSE examination.
- More needs to be done to eliminate the gaps between the achievement of students entitled to additional funding and other students. Additionally funded students do less well.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 33 lessons. About one third of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Tutorial sessions and an assembly were also observed.
- Inspectors reviewed documents, including those about students' attainment and progress, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with staff, groups of students and members of the governing body. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The views of 53 parents and carers, who submitted them on the Ofsted online Parent View website, and of 52 staff who completed a questionnaire, were analysed and taken into account. A very small number of letters received from parents were also considered.

Inspection team

Paul Sadler, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

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Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Most students are admitted at the start of Year 9 having attended middle schools in the towns of Ilminster and Crewkerne. In the wider area, students transfer to secondary school at the start of Year 7.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported through school action is below average. The proportion who are supported through school action plus or who have statements of special educational needs is broadly average. Most of these students have moderate learning or behavioural difficulties, although some have more profound difficulties such as autism.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for looked after children and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A few students are at an early stage of learning English.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Some students in Years 10 and 11 study courses at Yeovil College. The school does not use any other alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- So that all students achieve as highly in mathematics as they do in English and other subjects, enter all those capable of attaining top GCSE grades for the more demanding examinations.
- Eliminate the gaps between additionally-funded students' and other students' achievement by:
 - checking that the methods being used are improving every individual, additionally-funded students' achievement
 - selecting the most successful approaches for each of these students to enhance their progress still further.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students start school at the beginning of Year 9 when there is no national measure of their performance. School leaders, rightly, measure achievement and set targets based mainly on students' progress since the end of Year 6, when their attainment is generally below average. This approach enables the school to compare its performance with that of secondary schools nationally. It is able to refine the approach for individual students because of increasingly useful information shared with the middle schools from which students transfer.
- Students make good progress throughout the school. By the end of Year 11, the proportion attaining five or more GCSE passes at grade C and above is well above the national average. There are no early entries for GCSE in any subject,
- In English, achievement is high. By the end of Year 11 in 2013, the proportions making good or better progress in the subject were well above national averages. This very good achievement in English is seen in the high quality of students' written work in many subjects, and in their well-informed and articulate conversation, reflecting their wide reading.
- In mathematics, most students make good progress. A minority of those capable of attaining the higher GCSE grades in mathematics do not do so. This is because staff are sometimes over cautious about entering students for the harder examination..
- The most able students achieve well and attain grades A* or A at GCSE in a range of subjects. Many go on to achieve success at A level and gain places at universities, including some with very demanding entry requirements.
- Students achieve well in other subjects, particularly those that involve extensive written work such as history and geography. They also achieve increasingly well in science, so the subject is no longer an area of concern, and in subjects such as music and physical education.
- Achievement in modern foreign languages has been in need of improvement, partly because of the short time available for students to study them. However, more effective links with middle schools about students' introduction to French and German are beginning to bear fruit and achievement in languages is improving.
- Students who are disabled or have special educational needs achieve well. This is because teachers understand their needs and plan well to meet them. Those that require it receive good quality additional support. Some of these students study courses such as vehicle maintenance at Yeovil College. The school's regular checks on the progress of these students confirm that they all achieve well.
- The achievement of students entitled to additional funding, who finished Year 11 in 2013, was considerably lower than that of other students. For example, their average performance in GCSE English and mathematics was almost two grades lower than that of others. Evidence shows that a high proportion of this small group of students had unusually complex needs. Students entitled to additional funding are making much better progress and are on track to close these gaps significantly, to less than one grade for the current Years 9 to 11.
- Previous differences between the achievement of boys and girls in certain subjects have been successfully removed. Students of both genders achieve equally well, demonstrating the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- Students in the sixth form achieve well. Having achieved GCSE grades that are somewhat below the national average for the courses they follow, they go on to attain above average results, representing good progress. For example, very high quality work was seen from students, most of whom had modest GCSE results, studying a sports science course.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The great majority of teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. The profile of teaching represents a very considerable improvement on that found during the previous inspection.

- Teachers have good quality information about students' progress and their particular needs. They use this information very well to plan work that helps students to increase their knowledge and understanding. This information is also prominent in the staffroom, showing the importance the school attaches to maximising the progress of all students.
- Scrutiny of students' work shows, especially through the increasingly high quality of their written work, that teaching is improving. All aspects of literacy are developed well by teachers in most subjects and involve students of all abilities. Most students can also successfully solve mathematical problems and apply other skills and knowledge they have learnt in mathematics in different subjects.
- The marking of work, formerly an area of weakness, is now a major strength. Teachers attach stickers to work with comments on its quality and ideas to improve it. Where appropriate, students write a response to show they have acted on the advice. Students note the increasingly consistent use of this approach, which they welcome and find very helpful.
- Students are given suitably challenging targets which are regularly reviewed and revised. In some subjects, such as mathematics, their targets are not reviewed often enough as examinations approach, so some students are not entered for the examination that will enable them to best demonstrate their achievement.
- Homework is used well, especially to promote extended research. Students and parents are content with the amount and type of homework and confirm that it is followed up and marked helpfully.
- Additional adults support students who need extra help well. Other methods such as one-to-one teaching and programmes designed to enhance students' social and emotional skills are also used effectively. However, checking of the impact of these programmes on individual students' progress, especially for those entitled to additional funding, is not rigorous enough.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Many classes are small, enabling the teacher to give much individual help. In a Year 13 mathematics class, where students' target grades ranged from A* to E, the teacher challenged lower attaining students with difficult questions, and gave help with unfamiliar specialist terminology to a student developing his fluency in English.
- Teaching is not outstanding, in part because teachers are sometimes too slow to intervene when students stop working and talk amongst themselves.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Almost all enjoy coming to school, are keen to learn and behave well in lessons. Only rarely is learning slowed by poor behaviour, and when this occurs it is usually dealt with effectively. Behaviour around the site at lunch and break times is friendly and orderly, showing the school's success in fostering good relationships.
- Students have a particularly well-developed understanding of the importance of education and are keen to do well, even in subjects in which they are less interested. They have a good knowledge of the grades they need to pursue particular courses or careers. At the end of Year 11 they have a wide range of choices for continuing their education. They put much thought into this and make mature, well-informed decisions.
- Students say there is little bullying. The school's records confirm that there has been very little racist, homophobic or transgender bullying for some time, showing the school's success in tackling discrimination. There have been no permanent exclusions for over a year, and fixed-term exclusions are below the national average and are falling. Students are well informed about situations that can lead to bullying and are especially aware of the dangers of misuse of electronic media. Parents also say they are content with the way any bullying is handled, or that they have no experience of it.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now average for all secondary schools. Comparison with other schools for students in Years 9 to 11 suggests that attendance is above average for this type of school. The school has worked successfully with other agencies to reduce the number of students who are persistently absent.

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. All adults are checked as required and risk assessments for outdoor and adventurous activities are of good quality. Arrangements for child protection exceed the legal minimum and students say there are adults in the school to whom they could turn with concerns.
- The welfare of students who learn at Yeovil College is monitored well by the school, in part through frequent discussions between students and teachers at school.
- Inspectors investigated some concerns raised by parents about behaviour and safety matters. In almost all cases no evidence was found to support the concern, for example all equipment in design and technology was found to have the correct guards and other safety requirements in this area were rigorously followed. However, it was confirmed that some students occasionally play with mobile phones in lessons. While the school has suitable policies for dealing with this issue, staff do not always apply them consistently. The importance of them doing so was discussed with senior leaders.

The leadership and management are good

- Under the effective leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors have worked successfully to eliminate the weaknesses in teaching and students' achievement that were identified at the previous inspection. They have created an atmosphere in which good behaviour and achievement can flourish.
- Teachers' performance is regularly and accurately checked by senior staff. The results are used appropriately to determine pay levels. Where necessary, action has been taken to improve teaching through support and additional training. As a result, the morale of teaching staff is high and teachers are keen to continue to improve.
- The quality of subject and other middle leadership is good and is improving. This is reflected in the improvements in students' achievement, for example in English and science. One subject leader is keen to visit schools where work in the subject is outstanding, reflecting the ambition of these staff to bring about further improvement.
- Self-evaluation by senior leaders and governors is accurate and the resulting plans are detailed and useful. These have necessarily been focused on bringing about short-term improvement, with longer term plans under regular review.
- Data are used well to monitor academic progress and other aspects such as attendance. While the progress of students eligible for additional funding is checked, there is too much emphasis on checking what support is offered to students, rather than its impact on their achievement.
- The school has improving and productive partnerships with its partner middle schools and with external agencies. The curriculum successfully promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through effective teaching, for example of religious education. This is shown by students' good behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- School leaders rightly value the good quality external help they have received to address the required improvements since the previous inspection. This includes support from Her Majesty's Inspector and from an effective external consultant commissioned by the local authority.
- The curriculum meets the needs of students in Years 9 to 11 and the school is tackling weaker aspects, such as the time available to learn a modern foreign language. Students get good opportunities to play sport and to take part in performing arts.
- The sixth form is well led and the curriculum meets the needs of the relatively small proportion of students who choose to stay and study at the school. As the sixth form is small, students are guided carefully to the provision that best meets their needs.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is effective in challenging school leaders to bring about improvement, for example by asking penetrating questions, and in supporting them in doing so. Governors understand the analyses of data and know where the school stands when compared with others locally and nationally.
 - Governors have a broad understanding of the performance of teaching staff and of how their

responsibilities are remunerated. They are also aware of the work undertaken to improve teaching. Their understanding of the links between teaching performance and pay progression is more limited.

- Governors monitor the impact of spending decisions. In the case of additional funding they have recently begun to ask the right questions about the effect of spending on improving students' achievement.

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

Unique reference number	123893
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	442500

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	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	662
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Shepherd
Headteacher	David Derbyshire
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 November 2012
Telephone number	01460 270123
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