

# Wessex College

Wessex Lodge, Nunney Road, Frome, BA11 4LA

**Inspection dates** 11–13 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good school

- The leadership and management of the school are good. The proprietor has ensured that all the Independent School Standards are met. She has appointed a head of children's services to support the headteacher and staff in their work so that the school continues to improve.
- Students settle well and make good progress in their learning. A suitable programme of work is established in response to their emotional and learning needs.
- The curriculum includes all the required areas of learning, including personal, social and health education which supports students' academic and personal development well.
- The school has established rigorous systems and procedures so that students understand the expectations the school has for them and as a result their behaviour in lessons is outstanding.
- The headteacher has built a strong and experienced teaching team. Teaching is good. It is well planned to meet the needs of students. Accurate assessment identifies any gaps in learning and teachers plan accordingly.
- The curriculum enables students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness to develop well.
- The safety and supervision of students are outstanding. Students are exceptionally well looked after and feel very safe in school.
- Students enjoy a good range of learning and social experiences, including cultural trips and outings. This helps them to build confidence and self-esteem, and to improve their social skills.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' recording of their work in lessons is inconsistent. As a result, it is difficult for students to revisit work to reinforce their learning or to see their progress over time in class work.
- Teachers do not always check students' work thoroughly enough. As a result, they do not always make the progress of which they are capable.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed the impact of five lessons taught by staff. School documentation was examined, including the school's own evaluation of its work, pupils' work, teachers' planning and information about pupils' progress.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor, the headteacher, teaching staff and the company's head of children's services. Interviews were also held with the company's designated lead for safeguarding and the human resources manager responsible for safe recruitment procedures and welfare, health and safety.
- School policies and other documentation were examined. Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were scrutinised.
- There were no staff questionnaires.
- There were too few responses to the online Parent View questionnaire for these to be published.

## Inspection team

Flora Bean, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Wessex College is located in Frome, Somerset. It is part of the Wessex Care organisation based in Warminster which provides residential care, foster care and specialist education.
- Wessex College, Frome, was established in 2001 as an independent day school. It offers specialist provision for up to 16 boys and girls aged from 11 to 16 with severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Students are referred and placed by a local authority; they join the school at any time of the year and attend for varying lengths of time, depending on the agreement with the placing authority. A small number of students are dual registered with their local school.
- There are currently 11 students on roll, nine of whom attend full time, and two part time.
- All students have special learning needs and two students have a statement of special educational needs. All the students are in residential care.
- The school aims to provide an educational framework that promotes stability and emotional development so that students are prepared for learning and able to achieve academic success from their starting points.
- No students are entered early for GCSE examinations.
- The school was last inspected in April 2012 when the school had a progress monitoring visit. The last standard inspection was in November 2011.
- The proprietor has sole responsibility for the governance of the school.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - encouraging students to develop a more systematic approach to recording their work so that they can revisit it and see their progress more easily over time
  - ensuring that students' work is regularly checked at the end of a teaching session so that they have accurate records of the work covered.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The proprietor has clear oversight and vision for the school. She ensures that the school is well led and managed by the headteacher who has significant experience in this type of school.
- The headteacher, ably supported by the Care Group's head of children's services, ensures that good teaching supports students learning well. The headteacher has created a strong staff team who are highly experienced and work well together. Well-defined systems and procedures ensure stability and routine for the students whose behaviour in lessons settles to become outstanding over time.
- The headteacher meets with teaching staff daily to plan for the day and to identify any specific issues that may have arisen from the previous day. Teaching staff know and understand students well. They set appropriate expectations for students' academic development and their behaviour. They implement the school's rewards and sanctions system exceptionally well to encourage and praise or to reprimand if required.
- Leaders have ensured that an appropriate range of policies is in place. Procedures are meticulously implemented to ensure the welfare, health and safety of the students. All policies and procedures are reviewed regularly so that they meet requirements.
- Arrangements for the safeguarding of students are stringent and meet current statutory requirements. Safer recruitment procedures for staff are followed meticulously. Leaders have ensured that all required checks are assiduously carried out on staff and recorded appropriately to ensure their suitability to work with students. All staff have received appropriate safeguarding training, including the senior designated safeguarding officer. The school is well supported by the lead safeguarding officer for the Wessex Care group.
- The school's arrangements for the supervision of students to ensure their safety and security are consistent and rigorous.
- Leaders ensure that behaviour and teaching are consistently good, so that students have stability and are enabled to learn. Rigorous systems of assessment and identifying learning needs ensure that teachers understand how to approach the work with students. Teachers are highly experienced. Together with leaders they ensure that teaching promotes high expectations for outstanding behaviour, equality of opportunity, respect and tolerance and democratic values.
- Courses are well planned to meet students' individual needs. The school's systematic approach to teaching and learning ensures students make overall good improvements in their learning. This includes in English and mathematics and increasingly ensures they are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Courses include regular personal, social and health education which promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Through regular lessons in personal, social and health education, students discuss a range of topics such as discrimination, racism and cultural diversity. In addition, students take part in a range of trips and outings so that they are being well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Students' progress is carefully monitored but teachers do not always check that all students have kept an accurate record of the work they have covered, so that they can look back over their work and see the progress they have made over time.
- School leaders ensure that the pupils' host schools are informed of their progress and behaviour. Parents and carers receive regular updates and termly reports on the progress of their children.
- The school works closely with the local authority careers service to help pupils make informed choices about their future plans.
- The proprietor and headteacher have ensured that the premises are fit for purpose and provide a good standard of suitable accommodation for the staff and pupils.
- Leaders know the strengths and the areas of the school's work to improve. They are continually working on the development of the school to meet students' needs.
- Procedures for the handling of complaints meet requirements.
- The school has few middle management roles as the school is small. Those with responsibility work well to support teaching and learning. The school is well supported by the Care Group senior leaders in Children's Services, human resources and for safeguarding.
- The proprietor and headteacher have ensured that all the Independent Schools Standards are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The proprietor's clear vision for the school ensures that the individual care and support for each student are sustained and paramount.

The proprietor has sole responsibility for governance and is fully committed to the duty of care and students' overall achievement.

The safety and personal development of the students are evident in the effective implementation of all policies and procedures.

The premises are well maintained with appropriate classrooms, a well-equipped kitchen and common room areas.

The proprietor ensures that the school identifies the specific behavioural and learning needs of the young people who attend. They are guiding and preparing them well for the next stage of their education.

The proprietor works well to support senior leaders to sustain outstanding levels of behaviour.

The proprietor and headteacher have an excellent understanding of the process for setting targets for teachers. Teaching is monitored to sustain high quality so that pupils learn to manage their emotions and improve their social skills and academic learning. Teaching is well managed with targets set and clear follow up to ensure that teaching consistently improves.

The importance of using performance information to monitor progress is well understood by the proprietor. Regular checks for attainment levels are used well but progress in individual lessons is less well monitored.

Financial resources are well managed to ensure that the school provides well for students and that they benefit from their time in the school.

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

- Students' behaviour is outstanding. The school has established rigorous behaviour management strategies that are consistently implemented so that students are secure in what is expected from them.
- The staff team work exceptionally well together to assist students in learning how to manage emotions and control their behaviour. This helps them to develop responsibility for both their behaviour and learning.
- All staff patiently support students and gently nudge them to see any setback as a learning opportunity and to persevere. This has a strong impact on students' ability to develop better coping strategies.
- The school has an excellent e-safety policy. Staff work hard to aid students to understand the different kinds of bullying that exist. They discuss with students how they can remain safe from bullying and in particular from any form of cyber bullying.
- Students develop increasingly improved social skills. Well-established daily routines and positive rapport with staff give students good opportunities to develop emotionally.
- Students state quite clearly that as they settle in and become familiar with the school, they enjoy coming to school and are pleased with their achievements.
- Students have a number of opportunities for trips and outings. For example, Year 11 students recently visited a theatre in Bristol to see a production of Romeo and Juliet as part of their GCSE English assessment.
- Students' attendance is good and improving. The school works hard to ensure good attendance. There have been no exclusions. The school sets clear attendance targets and gradually students increase their attendance. Students who previously were non-attenders now attend regularly and show positive attitudes to learning.
- The school has a range of policies in place to ensure that the promotion of extremism and political views is prohibited, so that all the Independent School Standards for this aspect are met.

### **Safety**

- The school's systems and procedures to keep students safe and secure are outstanding. Staff work exceptionally hard to understand students' emotional needs to ensure they feel safe in the school. If required, additional clinical therapeutic support is called for to help students overcome the fears which inhibit the confidence they have in their ability to cope in an educational environment. Staff are patient, nurturing and persevere to ensure students feel safe and secure.
- Meticulous attention to detail ensures that the arrangements for safeguarding are rigorously implemented. The human resources department works tirelessly to ensure all suitability checks are followed up and met. All staff demonstrate an unstinting commitment to the safeguarding of pupils. Arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff and appropriate training, for example in safeguarding, first aid and fire safety, are met.
- The proprietor has ensured that all the Independent School Standards for welfare, health and safety are met.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- The quality of the teaching is good. On arrival, a rigorous assessment ensures students' academic needs are accurately identified. Work is set at the appropriate level to meet students' learning needs. Teaching is well planned and effective in engaging students well.
- Teaching is well managed by the headteacher with focused targets set for teachers to achieve with clear follow up so that teaching consistently improves.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and adapt their approach well so that effective learning can take place. However, teachers do not always check that all students have clear notes of the work they have covered in lessons. Thus, students cannot always look back over their work either to see the progress they have made or to revise from them.
- The regular focus on developing students' communication skills increases students' emotional stability and helps them to settle well to learn.
- Teaching ensures that any gaps in pupils' basic knowledge in English are identified and work begins immediately to rectify the problem so that students' learning can progress well.
- Teaching patiently encourages and perseveres so that students improve their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Teachers read regularly with pupils so that they progress well from their starting points.
- In mathematics, teachers focus on key skills to ensure that any gaps are being covered. Mathematical concepts are explained to students so that they practise different skills until they firmly understand.
- Teaching care assistants are given a clear role in lessons. This supports the learning of students very effectively.
- Regular checks on pupils' progress are made and recorded accurately. Pupils' work is well marked, particularly for any assessed work for examinations.
- Leaders have ensured that all the Independent School Standards for the quality of teaching are met.

**The achievement of pupils is good**

- Students join the school at varying times of the academic year with levels of skill that are well below those typical for their age.
- Students' progress and achievement are good because teaching has a strong focus on developing their basic skills while covering all the required areas of learning.
- Once established in the school with their learning needs identified, students slowly begin to demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They begin to enjoy the range of learning activities that teachers organise for them.
- Key Stage 3 students develop good reading and writing skills. There is a strong focus on punctuation and spelling, which improves the quality of students' writing.
- Students who are behind their chronological reading age are encouraged to read to staff. They make good progress and over several months improve steadily to reach their chronological age.
- In mathematics and science, students make good progress through a range of topics to ensure they understand basic mathematical and scientific principles.
- Students develop their aesthetic and creative skills well in music and art lessons. This is enhanced by outings and visitors to school who organise music and art workshops.
- At Key Stage 4, students take GCSEs in English, mathematics and science. They also take qualifications in functional skills and in entry level tests in English and mathematics. Given the starting points and difficulties students have encountered, they achieve well.
- In mathematics, students' work shows that they can apply mathematical theories in practice well. In science, they are working well on relevant GCSE topics and making good progress, for example, in their knowledge and understanding of electromagnetic waves.
- Students have regular opportunities to practise their information and communication technology skills in a range of subjects. Assessed work in English demonstrated good use of technology.
- Good opportunities to develop physical skills through regular physical education lessons and outings to a local gym ensure students are encouraged to keep fit and healthy. Clear procedures to ensure students are safe are implemented for all trips and outings.
- All students, including those who are most able and those with special educational needs, make good progress in their learning. This is because of the high-quality care and support they receive.
- Those students who are most able are well supported to make good progress in their work and take GCSE examinations in a good range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. They are given excellent support and guidance to help them plan for the next stage of their education.

- When students are ready, the school organises work-experience placements, ensuring all checks are carried out for students' safety.
- The proprietor and headteacher have ensured that all the Independent School Standards are met so that students can progress well in their emotional and academic learning.

## What inspection judgements mean

**School****Grade****Judgement**

Grade 1

Outstanding

Grade 2

Good

Grade 3

Requires improvement

Grade 4

Inadequate



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133522
<b>Inspection number</b>	446282
<b>DfE registration number</b>	933/6210
<b>Type of school</b>	Day
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	11
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	02
<b>Proprietor</b>	Jo Sams
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nigel Troop
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 April 2012
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£44,000–£55,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01985 218486
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