

Pittville School

Albert Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL52 3JD

Inspection dates 25–26 November 2015

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has created a culture in which he, other leaders, teachers and governors are sharply focused on securing the best possible outcomes for pupils. His excellent leadership has been instrumental in accelerating the pace of improvement since September 2013.
- As a result of strong leadership and a clear drive to improve teaching, achievement is good. Pupils are now making good progress from their starting points when they joined the school in Year 7.
- Governors have taken effective action since the previous inspection. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and needs of the school and provide good support and challenge to the headteacher and senior leaders.
- Accurate assessments, careful checks on pupils' progress and effective action to tackle underachievement have contributed well to narrowing gaps between the outcomes of different groups of pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are now making good progress in all years.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. Strong leadership and good support from additional staff have ensured that these pupils make good progress.
- The quality of teaching across the school is now good. Teachers generally capture pupils' interests well with exciting and demanding activities.
- Pupils feel safe and well supported by school staff. They behave well in lessons, enjoy class discussions and take pride in their work.
- Relationships are strong. Staff are ambitious for the pupils, and fervent in their aim to get the best from each one, academically and personally.
- Pupils achieve well not just because teaching, learning and the curriculum are good, but because they are encouraged to see their potential, aim high and work hard.
- Pupils' welfare and their personal development are given a high priority in all the school's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards reached by the end of Year 11, although rising, are still below average.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding.
- Some subject leaders do not fully hold their teams to account for the quality of teaching and learning and pupil progress.
- Attendance rates are improving but a few pupils still miss too much time from school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that achievement improves, and all pupils make rapid progress by:
 - using information about pupils' current knowledge, skills and understanding even more effectively to plan learning which consistently stretches and challenges all pupils in every lesson
 - consolidating the successful strategies already in place to narrow the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school and nationally
 - making sure all teachers pose questions which encourage pupils to think carefully about their work and answer questions in detail.

- Build on the successful measures that the school has taken to improve attendance to make sure that all groups of pupils attend school regularly and that persistent absence is rare.

- Improve leadership and management by making sure that all subject leaders have the skills and confidence to take more direct responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and holding their teams to account for pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The strong and tenacious leadership of the headteacher, effectively supported by a talented and energetic senior team, is one of the key factors in the school's success and its strong capacity to sustain further improvement.
- The headteacher is widely acclaimed by staff, parents and governors as having been hugely instrumental in leading a transformation of the school. He has taken decisive action to improve the quality of leadership, teaching and behaviour in school.
- A new leadership structure across the school has enabled the key areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection to be successfully addressed. All leaders in the school are very clear of the school's priorities and their responsibilities. This has made a difference, as all groups of pupils currently make good progress.
- Leaders have an accurate picture of the strengths and areas for development in teaching. They use their excellent coaching and mentoring skills well to offer constructive advice and training and use their highly effective teachers to extend and share good practice. As a result, teaching is good and improving.
- Leaders have considerably strengthened the way in which teachers are accountable for their performance and do not allow staff to be rewarded financially unless they are successful in helping pupils make at least good progress.
- Pupils' ambitions have been raised through challenging academic targets. Systems to check pupils' progress are used well to spot where individuals or groups are not making the progress that they should. Additional support is effective and timely in accelerating improvement.
- Most subject leaders check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress 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 as not all middle leaders have the skills and confidence to develop their teams, particularly in relation to improving the quality of teaching and taking firm action.
- The curriculum contributes well to pupils' improved attendance, better outcomes and good personal development. There is an appropriate breadth of subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4, with additional support available to those pupils who need to further develop their language and number skills. There is good planning taking place to review the curriculum in response to recent national changes. Leaders guide and advise pupils well in their subject choices so that they have clear routes for further study beyond their time at school.
- The curriculum supports pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well through the wide range of opportunities for pupils to extend their education outside of classes, particularly in the arts, in music and in sport. The good choice of extra-curricular and enrichment activities is broadening pupils' experiences and effectively promoting their well-being.
- Pupils learn about British values and speak about the atmosphere of tolerance in the school. The curriculum design includes an appropriate focus on protecting pupils from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Pupils studying off-site courses attend regularly and make good progress as a result of the effective systems that are in place to support them and provide extra help when needed. Such provision ensures that learners gain qualifications that will enable them to progress to the next stage of their education or training.
- Leaders check the impact of additional funding carefully. They know that during the last academic year, the Year 7 catch-up funding (additional government funding for pupils who did not reach the expected levels in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6) has had a strong impact on improving their progress in English and mathematics.
- Leaders' use of pupil premium funding (additional money to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and children looked after by the local authority) has helped to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils over time. Pupils' attainment has improved steadily in comparison with national figures. Gaps between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school are closing but are smaller in some years than others. The school benefits from a good level of support from the local authority, and this includes checking the school's progress regularly and training subject leaders in assessing the quality of teaching. The school's partnership with a local outstanding school has also given school leaders additional confidence and resolve to pursue their agenda for improvement at Pittville.
- Senior leaders work closely with parents to build good relationships with the school; this is evidenced in the increased attendance at parents evenings.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are highly ambitious for Pittville and have a good knowledge and understanding of how well the school is doing and the progress it has made since the previous inspection. Governors have regular training to keep their skills up to date.
- Governors question and challenge senior and subject leaders regularly and have a good understanding of how teachers' performance is managed.
- Members of the governing body have made sure that money is spent appropriately to support particular groups of pupils and their families and that the impact is clearly seen through the accelerating progress of all groups of pupils. They have contributed fully to the discussions on how the pupil premium funding should be spent and have kept a careful check on the impact of the extra support and guidance provided for eligible pupils. Governors meet all their responsibilities well, including national requirements for safeguarding pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Training for staff has ensured they all understand their roles with regard to safeguarding children, including protecting them from the risk of radicalisation, extremism and child sexual exploitation. School policies reflect latest guidance and are well implemented.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are improving consistently due to the determined and clear-sighted drive of the senior leaders. This, in turn, is leading to pupils' achievement accelerating.
- Teachers have well-established, positive relationships with pupils, so that pupils are calm, settled and ready to learn. Most pupils are eager to meet teachers' high expectations of behaviour and learning.
- The most effective teaching is enthusiastic and exciting, capturing and holding pupils' interest. Pupils respond with eagerness and enthusiasm and soak up learning, especially when they are actively involved in lessons.
- Pupils develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding well through regular time and opportunity to discuss and debate ideas with partners or in small groups. They relish working together and readily cooperate and share ideas, and so learn well from each other.
- In practical subjects, teachers select and prepare resources carefully. Pupils demonstrate a real passion for expressing themselves through their drawings and designs. The standard of work displayed in art and other practical subjects around school shows the many excellent opportunities for pupils to be creative and reflective about the world in which they live. Pupils' creative work is both moving and thought provoking.
- Teaching is improving the progress that pupils make because pupils' work is assessed in more detail. Marking and feedback consistently follow the school's policy. There are some very strong examples of pupils responding to the guidance that they have been given and making improvements to their work as a result, especially in English, science, mathematics and humanities subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs experience good teaching. Teachers plan well to meet these pupils' needs, and teaching assistants provide good support to help pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Developing reading and writing skills in subjects other than English is good.
- Teaching is most effective when the work set in lessons helps pupils of all abilities to do well; pupils become absorbed in the tasks, relish the challenge and work flat out, putting energy and thought into all they do.
- This is not always the case and sometimes pupils mark time as they wait for others to catch up with them or are given extra work when they complete a task, which does little to extend their thinking or deepen their skills.
- In most subjects, teachers use questions skilfully to challenge pupils to think deeply about what they are learning. Just occasionally, though, pupils are allowed to get away with superficial answers that are poorly explained.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good
- Pupils' greatly enjoy school and learning; they develop very well as confident, articulate and considerate

young people. They take pride in their appearance and look after the school's environment.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel completely safe in school. They are well informed about risks associated with use of the internet, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation or extremism.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are typically positive. They readily work cooperatively and listen attentively, taking turns and giving and receiving positive criticism.
- Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported so that they feel secure, and socialise and study confidently with other pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire 'Parent View' were unanimous about how well the school looks after their children and how good behaviour is at the school.
- The school's systems to manage behaviour are well understood by pupils and consistently applied by staff.
- Pupils say that bullying rarely happens at Pittville and that they would be able to talk to an adult if they thought that it was happening to them or to somebody else. They have a secure understanding of the different forms of bullying, such as cyber-bullying and they know that some internet sites are not safe.
- Pupils know that the use of derogatory or homophobic language is not acceptable and that staff deal with it robustly. Pupils are also very definite that there is no racism and no discrimination based on race or gender.
- Action to improve attendance has been effective and absence rates are declining over time. Pupils understand the importance of good punctuality and attendance. However, although improving strongly with a much better current picture, attendance remains below the national average and a small minority of pupils still do not attend school regularly enough.
- Pupils who access alternative provision are well supported and safe. Attendance for this group of pupils has improved and they behave well.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The school has been working relentlessly over the last two years to boost the achievement of all groups of pupils in all subjects. Careful tracking of the progress being made by individuals and groups and timely interventions when pupils start to slip behind are beginning to pay dividends.
- School performance information shows that pupils in all years are typically making good progress in English, mathematics and most other subjects as a result of good teaching, learning and assessment. The school's records show that standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are on track to rise further in 2016. Inspection evidence from lesson observations and pupils' work in their books supports this.
- Pupils join the school with attainment that is well below average. Attainment at GCSE is below average but is rising. The progress of pupils who left Year 11 in 2015 was not consistently strong for all subjects, including mathematics, where some pupils did not make the progress they should have done. Pupils did not achieve consistently well, despite accelerated progress during the last academic year, because of slower progress in earlier years.
- The school ensures that the most-able pupils achieve their potential and make good progress in most subjects. Their overall attainment is in line with most-able pupils nationally.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved in all years, particularly in mathematics, significantly narrowing the attainment gap between these pupils and others in the school. However, standards remained below those of all pupils nationally. Leaders and teachers are relentless in their focus on this group of pupils and current performance information shows that gaps are continuing to narrow quickly.
- Inspectors' observations of the quality of different groups of pupils' learning, the school's records and the work seen in pupils' books show that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress from their starting points in Year 7.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is the result of improvements to teaching, careful checking of their progress, and sharply focused additional help to address underperformance.
- Pupils who enter the school with standards below those expected for their age receive effective additional teaching and support to help them catch up. There is a strong focus on improving pupils' reading skills in Years 7 to 9, with regular opportunities for pupils to read on their own.

- The school no longer enters pupils early for any GCSE examinations.
- A very small number of pupils follow an alternative curriculum at Abbey View, Tewksbury. The school keeps close checks on their progress. Most are achieving well and are gaining the skills necessary to move on to suitable employment or further training.

School details

Unique reference number	115772
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10002408

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	581
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Palmer-Wilcock
Headteacher	Richard Gilpin
Telephone number	01242 524787
Website	http://pittville.gloucs.sch.uk
Email address	achieve@pittville.gloucs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 September 2013

Information about this school

- Pittville School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Practically all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils that are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government for groups of pupils including looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- A very small number of pupils study at an alternative curriculum at Abbey View, Tewksbury.
- The school has worked in partnership with and been supported by a local outstanding secondary school for the past two years.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 25 lessons in all year groups, including eight that were observed jointly with senior staff.
- The inspectors listened to pupils 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 pupils' progress in mathematics and a range of other subjects.
- Discussions were held with senior and subject leaders, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, four other governors and various groups of pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at its checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Planning documents, safeguarding procedures, external evaluations of the school's work and examples of pupils' work from a wide range of classes were also examined.
- The inspectors took account of 51 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Parents' and pupils' responses to the school's own recent surveys and written comments made by parents were also considered, as were the responses to an inspection questionnaire returned by 41 staff.

Inspection team

Michael Merchant, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Deborah Wring	Ofsted Inspector
Alun Williams	Ofsted Inspector

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