

Bridgwater College Academy

Parkway, Bridgwater TA6 4QY

Inspection dates	28–29 June 2016
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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The determined ambition of the executive headteacher to improve the life chances of every pupil is at the heart of this school. The school continues to improve rapidly.
- Senior leaders are accurate in their assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Pupils in all years make good progress as a result of the good teaching they receive.
- Leaders make very good use of the additional funding available to them to make sure that the gap in progress between disadvantaged pupils and others is closing rapidly.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are clear about the school's high expectations. Pupils are polite and courteous. They are respectful of each other, the staff and visitors.
- Pupils' safety and welfare is the principal concern of school leaders. Staff ensure that the site is safe.
- Staff provide high-quality support for pupils' personal development. Pupils know there is always someone who will listen when they need help.
- Pupils in the Nursery and early years are well cared for and they make good progress.
- The school's role in the community is helping parents and their children to have higher aspirations about their future.
- As pupils now achieve better qualifications, the proportion of them carrying on to further education has increased since the previous inspection.
- Governance is a strength. The local governing body holds school staff to account robustly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Senior leaders have been slow to provide staff training to meet the particular learning needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language or who have special educational needs or disabilities.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities do not always receive the academic support they need to make the same progress as their peers.
- Levels of challenge vary too much between subjects; as a result some of the most able pupils do not achieve the highest grades.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise the attainment and progress of pupils by ensuring that teachers:
 - challenge the most able pupils to fully develop their skills, knowledge and understanding
 - ensure pupils who have special educational needs receive consistently effective academic support.

- Ensure that leaders strengthen the systems for monitoring, analysing and evaluating the school's work in order to:
 - identify the training all staff need in order to understand and best meet the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive headteacher leads the school well. His vision is clear and his ambition for every pupil to succeed is unstinting. This extends well beyond the education of the children to their personal well-being, support for their families and for the wider community.
- Staff share the executive headteacher's vision and all play their part in raising standards. They know that there is no room for complacency. They value the support they receive from senior leaders and are very clear that they are held to account for their work.
- Senior leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate. They have identified appropriate areas for further development which are strongly focused on improving pupils' achievements and well-being.
- All staff have high expectations of pupils' conduct. Staff work together to ensure that all pupils know what the expectations are and how they can achieve them. Pupils value this consistent approach. They know where they stand and are keen to reach the high targets set for them.
- Parents are extremely supportive of the good work the school does. The vast majority would recommend the school to other parents.
- Senior leaders, including governors, are determined that every pupil will receive high-quality teaching in every lesson. They underpin this basic principle with careful monitoring of pupils' progress, focusing particularly keenly on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. This means that they target intervention and support where it is most needed. However, these support strategies have been less effective, until recently, for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.
- The pupil premium (additional government funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or children looked after) is spent appropriately. Leaders carefully monitor the impact this money is having. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and the achievement gap between them and their peers is narrowing. The primary phase uses the sport premium funding effectively. This has improved the equipment on-site and provided extra swimming in addition to that required in the curriculum.
- Leaders regularly review the curriculum to make sure it fits the needs of individual pupils. This makes sure that they are well prepared for the next steps in their education, training or employment. The curriculum is wide-ranging and, in the secondary phase, includes the opportunity to follow more specialist courses through the sponsor, Bridgwater College.
- The opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are good. Through the curriculum and the extended curriculum, pupils develop an understanding of a range of cultures and faiths. Pupils understand and respect the different standpoints people take on an issue. In lessons, pupils new to the United Kingdom share experiences and cultures from the countries they have come from. Pupils are keen to learn from one another.
- Staff feel valued and trusted. The coaching that staff receive helps them to reflect on their teaching and improve their practice.
- Senior leaders acknowledge that some pupils' needs could be better met by a more tailored approach to training. For example, many teachers do not have the skills to help pupils who speak English as an additional language to convey their understanding in written English.
- Subject leaders and phase leaders, the majority of whom are new in post, bring with them a range of skills and expertise which they are beginning to use to develop their teams. While they are actively involved in monitoring the performance of individual members of staff, they are as focused on ensuring that their subject area contributes strongly to whole-school improvement.
- Leaders work closely with other local primary schools to ensure that all pupils are ready and feel welcomed to join the secondary phase. Leaders willingly share their work with other primary schools to help them develop their own systems and practice.
- Senior leaders have made changes to the leadership for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities recently, as this was an area of some concern. These newly appointed leaders are beginning to implement strategies aimed at improving the outcomes of specific groups of learners, but it is too early to see the impact of their work.
- Leaders make effective use of their partnership with The Bridge School to meet the very specific needs of pupils with medical conditions and specific behaviour difficulties. This work is having a positive impact in ensuring that these pupils continue to make progress in a range of subjects.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors bring a wealth of skills and experience to support and challenge the school's work. They are also committed to the role the school plays in the wider community to improve education and provide support to families. Governors are unwavering in their determination that the school will do all it can to improve the life chances of each pupil. They monitor the impact of pupil premium closely but are aware that the school's website does not yet provide all the required information, including a full account of the impact of additional funding on pupils' progress.
- Governors are clear about their role in overseeing staff appraisal, including that of the executive headteacher. They have clear oversight of the link between good performance and pay awards.
- The trust sponsor provides day-to-day support to the school when needed but has delegated the vast majority of its role to the local governing body while retaining a strategic view of the school's strengths and areas which need further work. The trust closely monitors the local governing body and, rightly, has confidence in its work.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. A team of very experienced staff work diligently to ensure that referrals are tracked and responded to by the local authority. The school keeps meticulous records and provides good support to pupils when needed. Staff are subject to rigorous checks about their suitability to work with children before being employed by the school. Senior leaders and governors are clear about what to do if an allegation is made against a member of staff.
- Staff and governors have been trained in safeguarding and in keeping children safe from the risks of extremism and radicalisation. As a result of their vigilance, they identify pupils who are at risk and make swift referrals to the relevant authorities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. As a result, pupils are making good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers track pupils' progress carefully. This has been developed most effectively in reading and writing in the primary phase, English in the secondary phase and mathematics across the phases.
- The quality of English teaching is a strength. There is a shared understanding of how teachers expect pupils' writing to develop across the school. Before they start their writing, pupils can carefully identify the vocabulary and give thought to the sentence structures they will use. This is as a result of teachers' very specific guidance. Over time pupils have developed both the quality and the length of their written work.
- Pupils use their skills and understanding in mathematics to solve challenging problems. This is a particular strength in the primary phase, where less able pupils make faster progress as a result of their increasing resilience in tackling mathematical tasks.
- Leaders are now ensuring that the developments and successes in English and mathematics are achieved as well in a wider range of subject areas. For example, pupils write with greater accuracy in geography.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) follows a consistent approach through the school. Pupils are highly engaged in this work. Pupils in Year 1 who read to inspectors were able to use their knowledge of phonics effectively to read words that were new to them. This is supporting them well to read with greater fluency and accuracy.
- Leaders have introduced a similar approach to the development of writing skills from early years through to Year 11. Pupils in the Reception Year use their phonics skills to help with the accuracy of their writing.
- Pupils find the feedback they receive useful. The feedback pupils in key stage 1 receive is helping them improve the quality of their writing.
- Pupils often act as 'lead learners' in a number of subjects. For example, in music, talented musicians share their skills with other pupils to help them improve their performance.
- Pupils extend or deepen their understanding through homework. However, some pupils in the secondary phase and a few parents commented that there are times when pupils are overwhelmed by the amount of homework they have to complete. Leaders are aware of this and are developing more manageable arrangements for homework.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Teachers and other adults know the pupils and their families well so they have a clear understanding of pupils' needs.
- Pupils show respect for one another and for others. They have a good awareness of the impact their actions can have on others. Working with a specialist teacher, Year 8 pupils were able to develop their understanding of how the words they speak can make others feel. Similarly, in an English lesson in Year 9, pupils came to a sensitive understanding of the damage caused by derogatory language, which they expressed with great empathy.
- Pupils feel safe. They have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe, including when they use the internet and social media. Visiting speakers often lead sessions on how pupils can recognise the risks that they may face and keep themselves safe out of school.
- Pupils are keen to take on leadership roles. During the inspection, Year 8 'peer mediators' led sessions as part of the Year 6 pupil induction programme which helped to prepare younger pupils for secondary school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of democracy and the rule of law. Each year, pupils participate in the election of members to the 'Senate', a group of pupil leaders.
- All pupils in the primary phase are offered breakfast each day. This gives them a good start to the day and prepares them well for their learning.
- Pupils in the secondary phase are punctual to their lessons. They come to school with the equipment they need for their lessons, listen carefully and follow instructions. Pupils in the primary phase are not as punctual but staff are actively working with parents to improve this.
- Leaders have secured additional funding to provide a wider range of sporting opportunities for all pupils and their families. This is helping them to lead healthier lifestyles and in developing teamwork skills and resilience.
- School staff provide care and support for each pupil to best meet their personal and social needs. Their fortnightly meetings with other agencies, such as children's social care, police and health professionals, make sure that pupils and their families receive a coordinated approach to the support they need.
- Pupils benefit from an extensive programme of careers education which involves visits to local further education colleges, universities and employers. This programme begins in Year 6. All pupils in Year 7 take part in a residential visit to the University of Cambridge and many visit other universities during the secondary phase.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders raised their expectations of pupils' behaviour at the start of the academic year. This created an increase in the number of sanctions, including fixed-term exclusions. Behaviour has improved and so the need for such consequences has fallen as pupils have risen to the new challenge. The number of pupils who repeatedly fail to meet the school's expectations continues to fall.
- Pupils wear the school uniform proudly and show their appreciation at being members of the school community.
- Behaviour in lessons is good. Poor behaviour is rare and is dealt with quickly. Pupils commented on how any misbehaviour is consistently tackled by staff and that bullying is rare.
- At morning break, lunchtime, before and after school, pupils behave sensibly and safely. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 play well alongside older pupils. Meal-time assistants and playground buddies are well trained and are supported by senior leaders to ensure pupils' safety and well-being.
- Pupils value the rewards system which recognises their good behaviour and regular attendance. While this is a strength in the main, senior leaders agree that the distribution of rewards needs to better reflect the achievements of disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils' attendance has improved, although it is still slightly below the national average for each phase. Staff use a wide range of strategies to support families and go to great lengths to explain the importance of good attendance. As a result of their work, attendance is improving, particularly in reducing the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent.
- Levels of absence for pupils who are persistently absent are reducing and are below the national levels. The absence of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs or disabilities is reducing but their attendance is still below their peers.
- School staff monitor meticulously the participation of pupils who attend alternative provision. They check their attendance daily and have very regular meetings about their progress and behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Almost all pupils in each phase make good progress.
- Performance in the Year 1 phonics screening check is now in line with national figures and has improved year on year since 2013.
- Pupils in key stage 1 continue to make good progress in reading and mathematics. This is a result of good teaching which motivates and challenges them. While progress in writing has been slower, it continues to improve.
- Across key stage 2, pupils make good progress, although this is less strong in Year 5. Senior leaders are aware of this and are taking action to address weaknesses.
- In 2015, standards at the end of key stage 2 were below average. Work seen in books, discussions with pupils and the school's own data show that the majority of the current Year 6 pupils are on track to meet the standards that are expected of them. This shows the positive impact that good teaching and high expectations are having. Leaders acknowledge that there is still work to do to improve pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar so that it is as good as the other areas of the curriculum.
- Across the secondary phase, most pupils in most subjects are making good progress. In the very small number of subjects, such as science, where progress is not as strong, leaders are increasingly clear about the reasons that lie behind this and are beginning to take action to tackle any shortcomings.
- Pupils throughout the school are confidently able to identify gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding in English and mathematics. Leaders are clear that the next priority is to ensure that the most able pupils are routinely challenged in their work to achieve the very highest grades.
- Pupil premium is being used effectively to close the achievement gaps across the phases. These pupils, particularly, benefit from the teachers' good subject knowledge which is well used to meet their needs. They benefit from a wide range of trips, visits and extra-curricular activities which enhance their experience and help them to improve their attainment.
- While pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities continue to make progress, this is not as good as their peers. While pupils who speak English as an additional language improve their vocabulary, fluency and mastery of the language, some of them struggle to write well which holds back their progress. For both of these groups, the support pupils receive in class does not always help them achieve as highly as they might.
- Occasionally, leaders have entered pupils for GCSE examinations earlier than at the end of Year 11. They have a clear rationale for this and it has helped pupils learn from their experience, which they apply to other areas of the curriculum. As a result, pupils' attainment is better.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning, careers advice and experience of working with employers and the sponsor college mean they are very well prepared for the next step in their education, training or employment.
- The very small number of pupils who attend alternative provision follow bespoke programmes of study which meet their needs. Pupils continue in education and make good progress as a result of these carefully planned programmes.

Early years provision

is good

- Children make good progress across the early years. Almost all children join the school with levels of development which are below those typical for their age, particularly in reading. As a result of the good teaching they receive, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is in line with national figures. Pupils are well prepared to move into Year 1.
- The early years leader has a very comprehensive understanding of the strengths of the provision. In addition, she is acutely aware of what is needed to improve the range of resources and increase the breadth of opportunities for children to make even better progress.
- Teachers check pupils' knowledge and understanding continuously. Their observations help them to identify the children's progress and address the areas of their learning which require further development.
- Leaders successfully prioritise funding, including the pupil premium, so that gaps in achievement between different groups of children do not increase. This investment is targeted effectively and allows children to make large strides in their learning at the very earliest stages so that they do not fall behind.
- Children's writing is improving as a result of the focus staff have on the development of early writing skills. This is helping children to improve their formation of letters and write simple sentences.

- The indoor and outdoor areas are vibrant and stimulate children's learning. The theme of 'the beach' allowed children in the Reception Year to engage in a wide range of activities which explored what it is like at the seaside and what people do there. The ice cream shop was very popular. However, staff do not always check that children's learning is developing through these sessions. Pupils can usually describe what they are doing but sometimes are not encouraged to talk about what they have learned.
- Children behave well. They show respect for one another and for the adults who work with them. They are very polite and are keen to involve others in their activities.
- Safeguarding arrangements in the early years are effective. Children know who they can talk to and say they feel safe and well cared for. Staff are appropriately trained, including in paediatric first aid.
- All statutory welfare requirements are met. The site is secure and leaders have given much thought to keeping pupils safe. For example, children are clear about the risks they might face from strangers and the importance of fire safety.
- Staff work hard to engage parents in their child's learning. They give families activities to complete at home and encourage the children to read with parents. 'Stay and play' sessions are helping parents to understand more about how they can help their children.

School details

Unique reference number	138375
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10012374

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,227
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair of the trust	Mike Robbins
Chair of the local governing body	Carole Chevalley
Executive headteacher	Peter Elliott
Telephone number	01278 727 327
Website	www.bridgwatercollegeacademy.org
Email address	sch.501@educ.somerset.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 May 2014

Information about this school

- Bridgwater College Academy is a larger-than-average, sponsored academy which opened in 2012. It provides nursery, primary and secondary education on one site.
- Bridgwater College Trust is the responsible body, which is sponsored by Bridgwater College. The multi-academy trust operates four schools across Somerset.
- The executive headteacher is also responsible for West Somerset College, Minehead.
- Most pupils are White British, although there is a growing number of pupils from a diverse range of other nationalities. Approximately one in 10 pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is significantly higher than in most schools nationally; almost half the pupils are eligible. The pupil premium is funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for children looked after.
- The school receives additional funding for a small number of pupils in Year 7 who had not achieved Level 4 in reading and/or mathematics at the end of primary school.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities is twice that seen nationally. A very small number of pupils have education, health and care plans or statements of special educational need.
- A very high proportion of pupils join or leave the school other than at the normal times.
- At the time of inspection, a very small number of pupils from the secondary phase were undertaking their studies off-site at The Bridge School, Sedgemoor.
- The early years has four Reception classes of four- and five-year-olds who attend full-time, and a part-time Nursery class for children aged three and four.
- In 2015, the school met the government's primary and secondary floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website. The website lacks information about the impact of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding and the effectiveness of the provision for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 43 lessons across all the school's age groups. Most lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work in detail and heard younger pupils read.
- Meetings were held with members of the local governing body and the chair of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, newly qualified teachers and other groups of staff.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break, lunchtimes and at the end of the school day.
- Members of the inspection team reviewed key documents including the school's self-evaluation, its current action plan, records of attendance and behaviour, risk assessments and information relating to pupils' safety and academic progress.
- Inspectors took account of 97 parental responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire).
- One inspector held a telephone conversation with the local authority's designated safeguarding officer.

Inspection team

Iain Freeland, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lee Northern	Her Majesty's Inspector
Katherine Powell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Inge Fey	Ofsted Inspector
Lisa Rowe	Ofsted Inspector

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