

Wallingford School

St George's Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 8HH

Inspection dates

14–16 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are driven by their clear sense of moral purpose. They strive to provide an environment that enables all pupils to flourish and feel valued and safe. Everyone working in the school is deeply committed to this ethos.
- Leaders understand the strengths of the school extremely well, and know which aspects could be even better. They take very effective action to address relative weaknesses, which leads to constant improvement.
- Pupils learn very well because teaching meets their needs closely. Teachers use their knowledge and skills highly effectively to structure learning that enables pupils to make increasingly good progress over time.
- Pupils achieve very well by the end of Year 11 across a broad range of subjects. The majority of pupils make very good progress across their subjects over the course of their five years at the school.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are the absolute focus of everyone in the school. As a result, pupils feel safe and develop the skills and confidence they will need to reach their increasingly high aspirations.
- The 16 to 19 study programme provides effectively for students via a broad range of academic and applied qualifications. Subsequently, students are prepared very well for their next steps.
- The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is reducing over time.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities now attend school more regularly than in the past. They make accelerated progress and achieve well by the end of Year 11.
- Disadvantaged pupils now make more rapid progress, which is helping them to catch up with their peers nationally in some subjects.
- Some disadvantaged pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should or make as rapid progress across the wider curriculum as their peers in school. Leaders remain focused on improving attendance and wider achievement for disadvantaged pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate and sustain improvements to disadvantaged pupils' attendance, so that they attend school as regularly as their peers.
- Ensure that all groups of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make consistently rapid progress across a broad range of subjects and year groups.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium is recommended, in order to evaluate how effectively it is supporting the improvement of attendance for disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher's commitment to providing the best care and opportunities for young people in the local community is unwavering. He skilfully inspires his highly motivated leadership team to strengthen and improve the school further. Everyone connected to the school shares his vision and works relentlessly together, aspiring to make the school the very best that it can be.
- Staff are determined to deliver consistently effective teaching that enables all pupils to make rapid progress. They are supported well through high-quality training that meets their individual development needs closely. Leaders and governors hold staff rigorously to account for the difference their work is making to pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders across the school are highly effective in their roles. Senior and middle leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and heads of house, understand their role in school improvement extremely well. Their actions contribute very positively to the quality of provision and care evident throughout the school. As a result, the vast majority of pupils feel safe and valued at school, and achieve very well.
- Leaders and teachers understand pupils' strengths and aspirations, and use careers information and guidance highly effectively to steer pupils towards appropriate next steps. Pupils access a broad and varied curriculum that meets their individual needs very carefully. As a result, increasing proportions of pupils move on to access high-quality work, training and further study, including places at prestigious universities where appropriate.
- Leaders have evolved the house system so that it now encompasses a wealth of opportunities to demonstrate and celebrate pupils' academic, sporting, artistic and social skills. The taught curriculum is complemented extremely well by a large number of extra-curricular clubs and activities that encourage all pupils to engage and participate, regardless of their ability. Pupils value these opportunities and experiences, which help them grow rapidly in confidence as well as developing fully their wider skills.
- Leaders ensure that funding for pupils who join the school needing to catch up in literacy and numeracy is used extremely well. Very well-trained teaching assistants provide highly effective additional support that enables these pupils to make rapid progress. As a result, most pupils catch up with their peers quickly.
- Pupils are prepared highly effectively for life beyond school. They understand clearly the values and attributes that will enable them to be successful citizens in future Britain. Their learning as part of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme equips them well to make educated choices about pertinent issues. Leaders recognise that there is scope to develop this aspect of the curriculum even further.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding very well to raise standards of achievement for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders' actions are diminishing the differences in achievement for disadvantaged pupils in the school very quickly compared with other pupils nationally. Currently, improvements to disadvantaged pupils' attendance are not as

significant or sustained as improvements to their achievement. Leaders remain acutely focused on this priority, with notable success evident for some pupils but further work to do with others.

Governance of the school

- Governors are dedicated to the school and have a clear commitment to its pupil-centred ethos. They understand the school's many strengths and its priorities for ongoing improvement. Their regular meetings with school leaders ensure that they are very well informed about the school's work.
- Governors know how well pupils currently in the school are achieving, because they understand the comprehensive performance information school leaders routinely share with them. They use this knowledge extremely effectively to challenge school leaders about areas where the school could be even better. They are relentless in their pursuit of the best-quality provision for pupils.
- Governors understand their responsibilities fully, and carry them out with diligence. They undertake helpful training to support them in their work, such as safer recruitment and safeguarding training. This enables them to hold school leaders very effectively to account for the school's performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective. The safety and welfare of pupils is the driving force behind the work of everyone involved in the school. As a result, pupils say that they feel very safe and extremely well cared for.
- Leaders and governors make sure that safeguarding systems are rigorous and understood by all. They make meticulous checks on adults who come into school to work with pupils, and keep detailed records which governors check frequently.
- Staff receive regular safeguarding and child protection training, which enables them to carry out their duties with high levels of vigilance. They act promptly and diligently where concerns arise about a pupil's welfare. Leaders work closely and effectively with experts from beyond the school to identify and implement additional support for pupils whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The quality of teaching is excellent throughout the school. Consequently, pupils demonstrate consistently highly positive attitudes towards their studies. They are very keen to learn, and engage actively with work in lessons. Their very positive relationships with their teachers support their effective learning over time.
- Teachers know their subjects and pupils extremely well. They use this knowledge to plan learning that builds very successfully over time. As a result, lesson time is structured carefully and activities match different pupils' prior learning needs very well.

- Pupils feel challenged by their learning and work together closely to support each other. The pride they take in their work is evident in their books and their thoughtful and mature contributions to activities in lessons. When work is difficult, they look for ways to solve problems and are resilient against failure.
- Teachers use assessment highly effectively to move learning on. Across the school, teachers use feedback consistently and precisely to identify specific next steps in learning, which pupils act on routinely. Consequently, pupils learn very well over time.
- Pupils and teachers use technical language routinely to strengthen the quality of learning. Teachers' highly effective questioning challenges pupils' thinking and probes and develops their understanding. Pupils ask pertinent questions to clarify their own thoughts and take responsibility for their own learning.
- Other adults in school provide helpful and effective support to pupils who need to catch up with their literacy and numeracy. Leaders have ensured that teaching assistants have the skills they need to make them effective in their roles. As a result of carefully directed extra help, pupils who arrive with low starting points in English and mathematics make rapid progress. This enables them to catch up very quickly with their peers.
- Leaders know that changes to assessments at national level have made it important to check that teachers are assessing consistently against the criteria. They have made sure teachers are appropriately trained, and take prompt action to support teachers where necessary. As a result, leaders and teachers have a highly accurate understanding of how well pupils are achieving and what they need to do to improve further.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Staff place the nurture and care of all pupils at the heart of their work. As a result, pupils are exceptionally well cared for.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision as part of their learning. Leaders match provision sensitively and closely to the social, emotional and mental health needs of individual pupils. As a result, they access their academic learning more successfully than in the past.
- Pupils have an extremely well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Visiting speakers and assemblies complement very effectively what pupils learn in lessons and during the tutor programme. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of dangers linked to social media and the risks of activities such as sexting. They know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet, and what to do if they are concerned about something they read online.
- The headteacher works proactively alongside his staff to help sort out unpleasant behaviour between pupils on the limited occasions when it happens. This demonstrates the highly positive culture in the school and the extremely caring ethos that is evident

throughout. Pupils report that bullying is rare and parents say that if it occurs, it is dealt with effectively by staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves very well around school, interacting respectfully with other pupils and adults that they meet. In lessons, they work cooperatively with each other and their teachers, which helps them to make the most of learning time.
- Pupils attend school regularly and arrive punctually at their lessons. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities now attend school more regularly than they did in the past. This is because leaders' work to support them and their families has been effective.
- Pupils who use alternative provision attend extremely well. School leaders work closely with colleagues from alternative providers to remove potential barriers to attendance and to monitor closely how pupils are getting on. Where appropriate, school staff provide additional support to ensure pupils arrive safely at the alternative venues.
- The 'flexible learning centre unit' provides very effective care and support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The centre provides a safe and welcoming place for all who need it, as well as a useful space to reflect and learn away from lessons. This complements the school's effective behaviour management approach, which has significantly reduced the proportion of pupils being excluded from school.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not attend school as regularly as other pupils in school or nationally. Leaders' actions to address this issue have made a positive difference, but have not yet led to a sustained and significant improvement to these pupils' attendance. Leaders recognise this as an ongoing focus of their work.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils arrive at the school with prior attainment which is typically just above the national average. By the end of Year 11, they make very good progress overall and achieve well across a broad range of subjects. Pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 are on track to make good progress and achieve similarly strong outcomes by the end of key stage 4.
- Pupils completing Year 11 in 2016 made very strong progress in English, science and humanities. In particular, pupils who were middle or high prior attainers on entry to Year 7 made consistently rapid progress across these subjects, and achieved above their peers nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make very good progress throughout their five years at the school, as a result of highly effective teaching and very carefully planned support. Many make better progress than their peers in school by the end of Year 11.
- The most able pupils flourish as a result of the high-quality provision they experience. Their learning in lessons is complemented effectively by the 'gifted programme', which raises pupils' aspirations and develops their thinking and reasoning. As a result, the

most able pupils typically make very strong progress, especially in English, mathematics, science and humanities.

- Pupils are prepared well for their next stages in education. High proportions of pupils move on to post-16 education, employment or training. Staff support pupils where needed to ensure they make appropriately aspirational choices and to aid their smooth transition into life beyond Year 11.
- At key stage 3, pupils' work in lessons and books supports leaders' assertions that pupils make good progress across the majority of their subjects, especially in mathematics and design and technology.
- Pupils develop and use their literacy and numeracy skills well. They write with consistent fluency and sophistication across a range of subjects. Although they apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum, they do not always use mathematical reasoning as effectively as they could in other subject areas.
- Historically, pupils have not made as rapid progress in mathematics as they have in other subjects, particularly from low starting points or if they have additional needs. Pupils currently in the school are now making much stronger progress, with very high proportions in Years 7 and 8 making better than expected progress.
- Leaders recognise that the progress of some groups of pupils across key stage 3 is not consistently rapid across a wide range of subjects. For example, middle prior-attaining pupils are not making as rapid progress in modern foreign languages as they are in most other subjects. Leaders know where pockets of relative underperformance exist, and are taking appropriate action to move learning on more quickly.
- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils' progress was not as strong as that of other pupils in school. Overall, disadvantaged pupils achieved below their peers nationally. Disadvantaged pupils currently in school are making much better progress in a number of subjects, as a result of effective support that leaders have put in place. They are not currently achieving consistently well across the broad range of subjects they study in all year groups.
- Although outcomes are very good, they are not currently outstanding. Consistently excellent teaching has not led to correspondingly sustained achievement over time for all groups of pupils across the wider curriculum.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The 16 to 19 study programmes accommodate 230 students, most of whom were at the school in Year 11. Students joining the school in Year 12 are welcomed equally. The sixth form offers a complementary range of academic and applied qualifications that meet the needs and aspirations of learners well.
- Leadership of the 16 to 19 study programme is effective. Leaders evaluate accurately the quality of provision, and act decisively to address areas of underperformance and relative weakness. Subsequently, the 16 to 19 curriculum meets students' needs increasingly well.
- Leaders use careers information and guidance carefully and rigorously to ensure students follow courses which are most appropriate to their needs and aspirations. A

recent review has removed less effective courses from the range on offer to students. As a result, all students are retained on their courses from Year 12 into Year 13, and then take up sustained employment, education or training.

- Students achieve well across a range of A-level qualifications. The proportion of students achieving A* to B grades by the end of key stage 5 is consistently high, and students currently in Year 13 are achieving at an even higher standard.
- In subjects where students have not achieved as well in the past, outcomes are improving as a result of leaders' focus on raising standards. This includes outcomes for the small number of students who follow vocational courses and who have typically made less rapid progress in the past.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is consistently good. Students understand their learning journey well, because teaching is structured effectively. This enables students to take responsibility for their own learning and develop study skills that equip them well for the future. Teachers support students effectively through high-quality verbal and written feedback that results in good progress over time.
- Leaders ensure that the 16 to 19 study programmes provide rich opportunities for wider learning and development. Students learn about important issues linked to current affairs and physical and emotional health, with debate encouraged to develop thinking and reasoning.
- Students attend well and use their time in school productively to support their wider study and the life of the school. Students act as highly positive role models for pupils in Years 7 to 11, working alongside younger pupils with their learning, and on projects, such as one currently linked to promoting good mental health.
- Students who did not achieve a grade C at GCSE in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11 are supported well in improving their understanding of these subjects. In 2016, most students made good progress in English, with half of them achieving at least a C grade. Students made weaker progress in mathematics, with only a small proportion improving their level of attainment and none reaching the threshold equivalent to a C grade.

School details

Unique reference number	137357
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10024678

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.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,165
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	230
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Mr Ian Domville
Headteacher	Mr Wyll Willis
Telephone number	01491 837115
Website	http://www.wallingfordschool.com/
Email address	head.4140@wallingfordschool.com
Date of previous inspection	22–23 November 2012

Information about this school

- Wallingford School is larger than the average mixed secondary academy. It became an academy in September 2011 and is currently the only school in the Wallingford Schools Academy Trust. It has a sixth form which currently has 230 pupils on roll.
- Just over a tenth of pupils are known to be supported by the pupil premium, which is less than half the national average. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups is well below that seen typically, as is the percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

- Less than 10% of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is lower than is seen typically in other schools. The percentage of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is also well below average.
- The school is a strategic partner in the Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance. It is currently providing support to Brightwell CofE Primary School.
- There is a nursery school on site, which is run independently to Wallingford School. It provides nursery and pre-school places for 26 children.
- Where appropriate, school leaders work with Meadowbrook College, Path Hill Outdoors and Trax to make alternative provision for individual pupils who need additional support beyond the school curriculum.
- The school meets the government's floor standards for what pupils should achieve by the end of Year 11.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection began as a short inspection of a good school led by an Ofsted inspector. The inspection converted to become a full inspection led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. Five additional Ofsted Inspectors joined the team on the final day.
- Inspectors visited lessons across a wide range of subjects, to look at learning and talk to pupils about their work. Some of these visits were carried out alongside members of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors also attended an assembly and three tutor sessions at the start of the day.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including pupil performance information, behaviour and attendance records, leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, policies and information on the school's website and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and groups of staff, pupils and governors. An inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also reviewed governor records and visit reports from the local authority and other visitors from outside the school.
- Inspectors carried out a scrutiny of work from a sample of pupils in Years 8, 10 and 12, alongside middle leaders. They also looked at pupils' work during visits to lessons.
- Inspectors considered 161 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, including 146 free text responses. They also took into account survey responses from 56 pupils and 85 staff, and two letters sent in by parents.

Inspection team

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Alison Robb-Webb	Ofsted Inspector
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Gerard Strong	Ofsted Inspector
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Suzanne Richards	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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