

# The Bath Studio School

Frome Road, Bath, Somerset BA2 5RF

## Inspection dates

26–27 April 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's work is over-generous. They are not sufficiently self-critical.
- Work and teaching activities are not sufficiently well matched to the varying needs of pupils in key stage 4. As a result, the most able pupils are not appropriately stretched and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not receive enough academic support.
- The support provided by governors, the multi-academy trust and other external partners has not resulted in school leaders raising achievement sufficiently in key stage 4.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions is well above average.
- While staff are working hard to reduce absence, it is still too high. Too many pupils are persistently absent.
- Some staff do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve at key stage 4.
- Pupils do not make enough progress from their starting points in some subjects, particularly English and mathematics, during their time in key stage 4.
- Some pupils do not exhibit positive attitudes to learning in key stage 4. They cooperate and follow teachers' instructions but do not show enthusiasm for learning in some subjects.

### The school has the following strengths

- Certain subjects at key stage 4, such as science and photography, are taught well. As a result, pupils engage with their learning and achieve good outcomes.
- Pupils in the school are looked after well. The open culture and 'family feel' of the school mean that pupils are known as individuals and provided with the pastoral support they need.
- Provision for students in the sixth form is good. Students are taught well, enjoy their experience and achieve good academic outcomes.
- Pupils behave in a calm, mature fashion. They respect each other and their environment. Pupils have consideration for each other's views and are tolerant of difference.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of leadership by ensuring that:
  - leaders have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - leaders at all levels are objective and appropriately self-critical in their view of the school's weaknesses
  - leaders and governors use performance information more effectively to fully understand the achievement of different groups of pupils and tackle areas of weakness
  - governors, multi-academy trust representatives and other external partners provide sufficient support and challenge to senior leaders to promote rapid and substantial improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement at key stage 4 by ensuring that:
  - teachers plan activities that meet the different needs of pupils and engage them in their learning
  - all teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - all pupils take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Improve the quality of behaviour by ensuring that:
  - staff use all means at their disposal to improve the attendance of persistent absentees
  - effective action is taken to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Although leaders are aware of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, they have not been sufficiently self-critical of key weaknesses. Leaders' assessment of the quality of some aspects of the school's work has been over-generous. This has undermined the pace of improvement.
- Leaders have not taken full advantage of detailed performance information at a whole-school level to identify and tackle key areas of underachievement for different groups of pupils in key stage 4.
- Support from the multi-academy trust and other external providers has not resulted in school leaders improving the achievement of pupils in key stage 4 swiftly enough, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The school has faced recent challenges which have had an impact on its efforts to raise achievement. These include changes in staffing and large numbers of pupils joining the school with a variety of differing needs. These issues have had a proportionately greater impact because of the small size of the school.
- The monitoring of the quality of teaching is not linked sufficiently to the progress that pupils make. This means that, in some cases, there is a mismatch between the positive judgements made of teaching and the less positive pupil outcomes that are a result of teaching.
- As a studio school, pupils follow a curriculum that is different from curricula normally offered in mainstream schools. The curriculum places an emphasis on digital creative-media courses, including, for example, photography, games development and music technology. The curriculum is effective in enabling pupils to study courses that would otherwise not be available to them in a mainstream school.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is directed effectively towards providing support for pupils' emotional, behavioural and social needs. For example, the school works well with professionals from the Aspire Academy who are trained in assisting pupils with these needs. Partnerships with external health agencies also support pupils in this regard. Funding is less effectively directed at improving the academic outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. For example, although a revision club has been put in place alongside additional English and mathematics sessions, disadvantaged pupils' progress is variable.
- The principal has, since the school's opening in 2014, nurtured a culture in which pupils feel safe and valued. He rightly takes a high degree of pride in the 'family feel' of the school because pupils are known and respected as individuals.
- The open culture of the school, its 'niche' identity and the professional school environment encourage pupils to develop important attributes. For example, they learn to work in a mature way with each other, develop self-sufficiency and adopt a business-

like approach to their studies. This is particularly true for students in the sixth form.

- Nearly all parents who responded to the online Parent View survey agreed that the school is well led and would recommend the school, although the number of respondents was small.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum and the effective use of the school environment provide opportunities to develop aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social education. For example, the open-plan communal work stations used by pupils encourage them to collaborate and share ideas.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors do not have a detailed enough understanding of the academic performance of different groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. This limits their ability to provide effective challenge to school leaders about the ongoing progress of different groups of pupils.
- Governors do not sufficiently evaluate or question aspects of the school's work. For example, they are keen advocates of the school's curriculum because it underpins the school's identity. However, they do not question the suitability of the curriculum for all pupils in the school.
- Governors bring a range of experience, knowledge and skills to their work. They are highly passionate in their support of the school's unique identity and what it can offer to pupils in the local area. They provide useful links between employers, businesses and other supportive organisations, and are very supportive of the principal.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school takes its safeguarding responsibilities seriously because safeguarding permeates the culture of the school. As the designated safeguarding lead told the lead inspector, 'Safeguarding runs through the school like writing through a stick of rock.' All staff receive the necessary child-protection training; registers are kept to ensure that staff who miss whole-staff training events are 'mopped up'. Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are all in place, well organised and up to date. Staff know the procedures to follow should they have concerns about pupils. These referrals are kept well and closely monitored to ensure that the right action is taken by the right people.
- Nearly all of the pupils spoken with reported that they feel safe because of the inclusive, welcoming culture of the school. They also feel safe because there are members of staff they are happy to speak to should they have concerns. Nearly all parents who responded to the online Parent View survey agree that their child feels safe in school.
- Site security is effective. Electronic passes provide entry to school buildings and external spaces, such as the car park. These are monitored closely by staff. If pupils go outside during breaks, these areas are self-contained and not accessible to the public.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve in key stage 4. This is particularly true in English and mathematics. As a result, pupils are not challenged to try their hardest and do their best.
- Work and learning activities are sometimes not adapted sufficiently well to the needs of pupils. For example, pupils frequently complete the same work at the same time and with the same resources, which does not allow for pupils with varying needs to make the progress of which they are capable. As a result, the most able pupils are not stretched to deepen their thinking. Correspondingly, pupils who require high levels of support are unable to access their learning in ways that allow them to maximise their progress.
- Where pupils enjoy their learning, as in subjects such as photography, science, and information and creative technologies, this is because activities are engaging and suitably challenging.
- Some pupils do not take enough pride in the presentation of their work. Space is not always well used so that work is not arranged in a coherent, ordered fashion. Some folders are torn and 'dog-eared' while others are covered in graffiti. This is because some teachers' and pupils' expectations of their work are not high enough.
- Teachers cultivate positive relationships with pupils. As a result, mutual respect characterises classrooms, which helps pupils to feel safe and comfortable in the learning environment.
- Teachers understand their subjects well so that they are able to bring a strong degree of subject knowledge to bear in the activities and work tasks that are set.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils join the school with a wide range of complex emotional, behavioural and social needs. In many cases, their experience at previous schools has not been positive. As a result, staff utilise support from external partners and from within the multi-academy trust to provide services that meet these pupils' pastoral needs. For example, staff work closely with a family support team and the educational welfare officer to support pupils' attendance.
- Staff model and support the values that underpin the school's culture. As a result, pupils are subject to and, in turn help shape, these positive influences. This means that pupils are tolerant of each other and accepting of difference. The school culture is helping some pupils, who lack confidence, to become more self-assured.
- Pupils are calm, quiet and considerate as they move around the school site. They respect their environment so that the building is still as pristine as when it opened. There is no graffiti and very little litter around the school site.

- The school environment aims to encourage pupils to see learning as a dynamic and exciting process. Displays and inspirational quotations from important figures present these positive messages through the medium of the school's specific context. As such, they promote innovation, entrepreneurship and technology.
- The creative aspects of the school's curriculum provide good opportunities for pupils to develop investigative, exploratory skills with links to the world of work.
- Most of the pupils who spoke to the lead inspector said there was very little bullying and, if it did occur, it was dealt with effectively. All the parents who responded to Parent View also agree that bullying is dealt with effectively.
- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision benefit from this support. They are provided with additional courses that suit their interests and meet their needs. These courses complement pupils' experiences at The Bath Studio School. Alternative provision includes a local military college and 'Rocksteady', which teach pupils the skills required for a range of trades.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are variable in key stage 4. Although pupils are cooperative, follow instructions and were not observed to misbehave, their engagement is passive in certain subjects. They lack an interest in discovering new things and taking their learning forward. Where there is a lack of inquisitiveness and engagement it is because teaching does not stimulate or motivate pupils enough.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because attendance for different groups of pupils is too low and too many pupils are persistently absent. Staff are fully aware of this issue and the importance of attendance. Consequently, they are working hard to address this problem. Staff use a variety of means to tackle absence. These include working with the education welfare officer, regular morning phone calls to parents and sending a minibus to collect pupils from home. However, although the attendance of some pupils has improved, absence across the school is still too high.
- Although there have been no permanent exclusions from school, the number of fixed-term exclusions is well above average. Although last year showed a decrease in the number of exclusions, they have risen again this year.
- The presentation of pupils' dress is variable. The school does not have a uniform; pupils are required to dress in a suitably professional and business-like way. Many pupils, particularly boys, look very smart because they wear suits and ties. Other pupils are not as well presented, however. The principal is aware of this issue and taking action to address it.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- In 2016, the overall progress made by Year 11 pupils in English and mathematics was not good enough. This was also the case for low-attaining pupils and girls. However, pupils' overall progress in all their subjects combined was in line with the national

average.

- In 2016, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils, including lower-attaining pupils, was not good enough. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities that required an education, health and care plan achieved in line with pupils nationally. However, the progress of other pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and required support was below average.
- The schools' own progress-tracking information and work in pupils' books show that pupils are not making sufficient progress, particularly in English and mathematics. The work of some disadvantaged pupils shows that they are making comparable progress with their peers. However, the school's tracking information and other pupils' work indicate that, as a group, these pupils are not making sufficient progress.
- Current progress information indicates that the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are not being challenged to make the progress of which they are capable. In mathematics, not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to develop greater reasoning, fluency and problem-solving skills. These skills are necessary to prepare pupils for the new, more challenging, curriculum. Pupils are not routinely prompted to reflect on mathematical concepts, to consider the merits and suitability of different methods and to prove or disprove their working.
- In 2016, pupils' progress and attainment in science were in line with the achievement of other pupils nationally. Current pupils' science work is of a good quality. Pupils take pride in their work and show engagement with interesting activities. Tasks are effectively and coherently structured so that prior learning is reinforced and pupils can consolidate their understanding. They use feedback to improve their work and their books show that they are making good progress.
- Pupils are making stronger progress in subjects that have a greater practical and vocational emphasis, such as photography, and BTEC National Diploma courses. These courses include information communication technology and business. The work of pupils studying photography is of a high standard.
- Pupils are knowledgeable in their understanding of technology and modern media in the context of the workplace. They are adept at manipulating these technologies for business and communication purposes. This is because of the school's distinctive ethos and its focus on prioritising employability and establishing links and networks to support this. It is also because pupils are able to take advantage of specialist technical resources, such as the on-site music production suite. Furthermore, pupils attending off-site alternative provision also achieve well because courses meet their needs.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Students who join the sixth form without having achieved a GCSE grade C or above in English or mathematics at key stage 4 make good progress towards securing these qualifications. Last year, for example, most students secured a grade C in English. The number of students who improved their grade in English and mathematics in 2016 was well above the national average.

- Sixth form students receive good-quality teaching. They feel well supported by teachers, who recognise their individual needs and provide effective one-to-one support. This support establishes strong relationships between students and teachers so that discussions about work are focused squarely on improvement. This enables students to make better progress. For example, this support enables the most able students in information and creative technologies to move on at a faster pace and use more complex website-design software.
- Students benefit from after-school clubs which provide them with further support so that they make better progress in their different subjects over time. For example, students can attend sessions after school to work on assignments and prepare for examinations with support from the teacher.
- The school offers study programmes in areas linked to the creative industries sector. Consequently, students particularly value the employability skills they gain through work experience, employer visits and the business dress code of the sixth form. Independent and team-working skills are developed well in lessons. Most students benefit from a range of work experience opportunities, for example with Somerset FM Radio. However, the school does not ensure that all students have the opportunity to gain a work placement in a vocationally relevant area.
- Most students are highly confident, courteous and well behaved. Moreover, students are articulate and willing to share their views. One student who spoke to the lead inspector talked knowledgeably and enthusiastically about a computer game he had designed, built and road tested. He clearly enjoyed talking about the work and did so in a calm, measured and mature fashion.
- Students are aware of risks to their own safety and know how to keep themselves and others safe. Students feel safe and show respect for each other.
- Students receive a well-planned programme of careers advice and guidance. They are clear about their intended destinations and feel well supported in making these decisions. As a result, retention rates are high because students complete their courses. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- The progress of students who completed academic level 3 qualifications in 2016, such as A levels, was in line with national averages. Current students are also making similarly good progress. However, the progress made by students following applied courses was below average in 2016. Current students are making better progress because they have been set higher targets and teachers have higher expectations of their progress.
- Enrichment opportunities such as sport activities are limited due to small group sizes. Students report that they would like a broader range of activities to be offered.



## School details

Unique reference number	140944
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	10024903

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

Type of school	Other secondary
School category	Academy studio school
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	126
Appropriate authority	Wellsway Multi-Academy Trust
Chair	Marlene Morley
Principal	Colin Cattanach
Telephone number	01225 831933
Website	<a href="http://www.thebathstudioschool.org.uk">www.thebathstudioschool.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@thebathstudioschool.org.uk">info@thebathstudioschool.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about additional funding for disadvantaged pupils on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about additional funding for disadvantaged pupils.
- The school opened in September 2014. The principal has been in post since this time.
- The school met the government's current floor standards in 2016, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is part of the Wellsway Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school shares its site with the Aspire Academy, a small special school for pupils aged from four to 16. This school is also led by the principal.

- The Bath Studio School is a small studio school that offers digital creative media and business courses alongside more traditional subjects.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision off the school site. Providers include Rocksteady training in Bristol and the Motivational Preparation College for Training (Military College) in Bristol.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background.
- The number of girls in the school is much lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who receive support is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well above the national average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, the lead inspector jointly so with the principal.
- Meetings were held with the principal, the safeguarding lead, representatives of the governing body, the chief executive of the multi-academy trust and the key stage 5 coordinator. Inspectors also met with the inclusion leader from the multi-academy trust and coordinators for mathematics and English.
- Inspectors had discussions with pupils, a parent and a representative from the Department for Education.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, governing body minutes, progress information, reports from external consultants and records of the monitoring of teaching. In addition, information relating to attendance, exclusions and behaviour was scrutinised. Safeguarding records were also reviewed.
- A small number of responses to the Parent View online survey were taken into consideration.

## Inspection team

Steve Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christine Lacey

Ofsted Inspector

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