

# Sir Bernard Lovell Academy

North Street, Oldland Common, Bristol BS30 8TS

Inspection dates 28 February–1 March 2018

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

# Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

#### This is a school that requires improvement

- Although improving, outcomes are not yet good. Pupils' are not making the progress they should, particularly in key stage 4.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and the most able do not achieve as highly as they should. Teaching does not consistently meet the needs of these pupils.
- Although the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is rising, there remains a significant legacy of underachievement for this group.
- There is too much variability in the quality of teaching within and between subjects. Staff are not making effective enough use of data and assessment information to improve learning.

- Too much teaching does not provide enough challenge. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils, including in the sixth form.
- Leaders are not yet having enough impact on the quality of teaching. Middle leaders in particular do not have the skills and experience they need to improve teaching more rapidly.
- The quality of advice and guidance is inconsistent, including into the sixth form.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Outcomes, teaching and the curriculum are not yet good. Enrichment and the provision for students' personal development are too weak.
- Improvements to behaviour are not yet having a strong enough impact on pupils' attitudes to learning.

#### The school has the following strengths

- Following a period of underperformance, important and sustained actions are being taken to improve the school.
- The principal is providing effective and determined leadership which has secured strong support throughout the school.
- Important steps have been taken to improve leadership capacity at all levels. The governing body is making a more effective contribution.
- Achievement is rising in many subjects. This is a result of improvements to teaching and the curriculum, particularly in key stage 3.
- Pupils' attainment in English is at least in line with standards nationally and is rising further.
- Behaviour is improving. There is a much better climate for learning throughout the school.
   Leaders are working to improve attendance and reduce the use of exclusion as a sanction.



# **Full report**

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

- Improve pupils' outcomes, including in the sixth form, by:
  - reducing the variability in teaching quality within and between subjects
  - ensuring that teaching provides challenging learning for all groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and the most able
  - making sure that teaching consistently meets the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management by:
  - further developing the capacity of leaders at all levels to drive improvement,
    particularly leaders of subject areas and in the sixth form
  - developing and implementing a systematic and rigorous programme for improving the quality of teaching throughout the school
  - improving the use of data and assessment information to improve teaching and raise achievement.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - making sure that pupils in all year groups, including the sixth form, receive highquality advice and guidance about their options and choices at each stage of their education
  - further reducing the use of exclusion and improving the attendance of all groups of pupils
  - making better use of improvements to the climate for learning so that pupils' behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning.
- Increase the impact of study programmes in the sixth form by:
  - improving students' skills for life, work and further study, including through the provision of appropriate enrichment and work-related experiences for all students
  - strengthening further the curriculum and course choices provided through collaborative arrangements within the trust.



# **Inspection judgements**

#### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

**Requires improvement** 

- Following a period of significant underperformance, the school is now set on a clear and secure path of improvement. Key to this has been strengthening the impact of leadership, governance and the trust, including through the appointment of the current principal.
- However, leaders, governors and the trust have not yet ensured that outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are all good.
- The sixth form requires improvement. In addition, improvements to leadership throughout the school are not yet fully established.
- Nevertheless, leaders have successfully brought about important improvements to pupils' behaviour and the climate for learning. Levels of attainment are also rising in most subjects. There have been significant improvements to relationships, clarity of purpose and staff morale throughout the school. The online survey for staff indicated well-founded support for the actions being taken. Almost all of those responding to the survey felt proud to be a member of staff and were motivated strongly to play their part in improving the school.
- There is widespread and fully warranted confidence in the principal in particular to lead these improvements. He has a convincing and well-evidenced vision for improvement, rooted in an honest appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There is a strong focus on building long-term, sustainable improvements, rather than seeking short-term gains which may not be sustained.
- An example of this is the renewed expectations on staff through a focus on the Teachers' Standards, including by identifying and tackling the weakest teaching. Along with improvements to behaviour, this is helping to raise pupils' achievement, particularly in key stage 3. Following a detailed review of the quality of provision across the school, leaders have accurately identified where teaching needs to be improved. However, plans for a systematic approach to staff training and development are only in their early stages. Consequently, the impact of the leadership of teaching requires improvement.
- Nevertheless, important action has been taken to improve capacity and accountability throughout the school. The principal in particular has taken a lead in modelling a more rigorous and systematic approach to line management. A more consistent approach to setting appraisal targets for staff is also in place. The leadership of behaviour is effective and has a strong focus on impact and sustainable improvement.
- Data and assessment information is not used as effectively as it could be. Leaders have rightly worked hard to ensure that staff at all levels have access to the information they need to help pupils to succeed. However, staff and middle leaders in particular are not yet using this information consistently well to improve teaching and raise attainment more quickly.
- The principal rightly recognises the need to continue to improve the impact of leadership and management throughout the school. He is reviewing the skills and



capacity of leaders at all levels, including governance, to speed up school improvement.

- For example, the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders have been clarified and there has been much-needed investment in training to develop their confidence in self-evaluation, monitoring and action planning. Nevertheless, many middle leaders lack the skills and experience they need to lead improvements to teaching, particularly in the foundation subjects. This limits improvements to teaching and leadership in the sixth form too.
- Since the inspection of the predecessor school, the curriculum has gone through a period of significant change. Leaders are successfully developing a more challenging curriculum, particularly in key stage 3. The curriculum is now better matched to staff expertise and pupils' aspirations and abilities. However, leaders also recognise that the extra-curricular, enrichment and tutorial programme requires further improvement and greater coherence with the rest of the curriculum.
- The use of additional funding provided to the school is also improving. There is now more effective oversight of the impact of funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding. Leaders check that the additional support the funding provides is having the impact intended. As a result, the rates of progress of these pupils are rising, in line with other pupils in the school. However, further improvements to outcomes for these pupils are still needed.
- The school development plan sets out the key priorities for the school, along with the actions being taken. However, it does not show clearly enough whether these actions are leading to improvement, or whether the rate of improvement is in line with leaders', governors' and the trust's expectations.
- The trust has provided valuable support and challenge for improvement. Trust officers have a realistic and well-founded view of the school's effectiveness, based on a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. In particular, the trust has taken important action to secure effective leadership and governance, including through governor training and by supporting interim leadership arrangements. The trust is also providing additional funding to increase capacity at senior leadership level. The support provided through the trust for English, mathematics and science has also had a positive impact on leadership and achievement in these subjects.

#### Governance of the school

- The governing body (known as the academy governance committee) is developing its roles. In the period following the last inspection of the predecessor school, governors did not hold leaders sufficiently to account for improvement.
- However, with the support of the trust, governors are now providing more effective scrutiny and challenge. They rightly recognise that they need to strengthen their roles further. They are actively finding out more about the work of the school through, for example, seeking the views of staff and pupils. They understand, in broad terms, the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the priorities for improvement but are less clear about how much progress is being made in improving teaching and pupils' outcomes.



■ While there is scope for improvements to communication within the trust, governors have welcomed opportunities to learn from local governance in other schools. This aspect has recently been strengthened through the establishment of a forum for the chairs of governing bodies across the trust.

## **Safeguarding**

- Leaders, governors and the trust have ensured that arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Arrangements to ensure the suitability and safe recruitment of staff are fully in place. Staff training is up to date and of good quality. Any concerns about pupils are carefully recorded and, when needed, liaison with partner agencies is timely and thorough. Leaders are introducing a new electronic system to improve further the effectiveness of the recording and retrieval of concerns.
- The governing body and the trust maintain an effective oversight of safeguarding arrangements. For example, the trust has commissioned external reviews of the effectiveness of safeguarding and ensures that any areas for development identified are tackled promptly. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are confident that they have adults they can turn to if they have any worries or concerns, including about their well-being and welfare.

#### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Requires improvement** 

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. This is because there is too much variability in the quality and impact of teaching within and between subject areas.
- Leaders are beginning to take effective steps to tackle this variability. Weak teaching is being tackled robustly, and leaders have made clear their expectations about behaviour, the quality of pupils' work and ensuring a positive climate for learning. For example, following a period of slower progress in science, improvements to leadership and teaching in this subject are helping to raise standards and pupils' achievement. Pupils' views also reflect these improvements.
- In the past, concerns about behaviour had often resulted in teaching planned with a view to maintaining classroom order, rather than to move on pupils' learning. As behaviour has improved, the extent to which teaching provides engaging and challenging experiences for pupils has also begun to improve, but it continues to vary. Sometimes, teaching does not pick up effectively or promptly enough on pupils' misconceptions and errors, either in class or in feedback.
- Some teaching, especially in key stage 4, does not demand enough from pupils, including the most able. Sometimes, pupils are content not to participate or contribute in lessons. As a result, the extent to which teaching is effective in deepening learning and speeding up progress varies across the school. Around one third of pupils responding to the online survey felt that their lessons were not challenging enough.
- This variation is particularly apparent between key stage 3 and key stage 4. In key stage 4, approaches to teaching are more typically a consequence of a considerable



legacy of long-term underachievement of older pupils. This often results in teaching which focuses on short-term gains in skills required for GCSE examinations, rather than emphasising deeper and more substantial learning over the longer term. In key stage 3, teaching is more effective in taking account of what pupils already know, understand and can do.

- Leaders have made important improvements to the information available to staff about the pupils they teach. However, the extent to which teaching makes use of this information to plan learning varies considerably. For example, while teaching often takes account of how pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities should be included in lessons, it takes less account of what these pupils need to do to improve and make faster progress.
- However, there are also some very effective approaches to using assessment to move on pupils' learning. For example, in mathematics, information from assessments is helping to improve learning and to develop the curriculum. Pupils in key stage 4 are able to access material to support their revision for examinations which matches the planned programme of teaching. By contrast, some teaching in mathematics provides pupils with methods and techniques in ways which they do not fully understand.
- In English, expectations of pupils' work are typically high, and pupils respond well. Work is usually neat and tidy, and pupils say they enjoy their work. The curriculum in key stage 3 in English provides a good range of contexts and opportunities for writing and pupils are developing their skills well.
- Most of the time, teaching provides feedback to pupils about their learning and progress. However, the impact of this feedback varies. For example, teachers' questioning does not probe understanding well enough, and pupils are not typically expected to think through, reason and justify their responses. This means that pupils' skills of evaluation and analysis are not developed consistently well, particularly in key stage 4.
- Leaders are reviewing how well homework is used to develop learning. Nearly half of parents and carers responding to the online survey noted dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of homework in their written comments to inspectors.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement** 

## Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Provision for pupils' personal development and welfare varies in quality and lacks coherence. The impact of the tutorial programme, assemblies and through the curriculum is too dependent on the confidence and enthusiasm of individual members of staff. Pupils say that they would like more information and guidance, particularly in key stage 4.
- Nevertheless, pupils understand how they can get help and support for their health and welfare, including if they have worries affecting their social and emotional well-being. For example, the support provided for vulnerable pupils who have SEN and/or



- disabilities is strong and includes advice and counselling services. Individual plans for children looked after are of good quality and are reviewed regularly.
- However, half of the pupils who responded to the online survey said that they very rarely or never take part in extra-curricular activities. Similarly, students in the sixth form are making too little contribution to the life of the school.
- Leaders are taking action to ensure that provision for pupils' personal development and welfare improves, including by checking how pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is currently provided. They recognise that the role of the form tutor is having too little impact on pupils' personal development, behaviour and attendance.
- Pupils in Year 11 value the good-quality advice and guidance they receive about their future options and choices. Similarly, students in the sixth form are well informed about the employment, training and education routes, including apprenticeships, available to them when they leave school.
- However, younger pupils say they would like more information about the range of options available to them, particularly about sixth form choices. Leaders recognise that advice and guidance is not timely enough to have a strong impact on pupils' understanding of the options available to them after Year 11. One third of pupils who responded to the online survey felt that the advice and support they receive could be more helpful and comprehensive.

#### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Over the last 12 months, behaviour at the school has improved considerably. The introduction of the 'ready to learn' initiative has greatly reduced instances of poor behaviour. Pupils agree that behaviour in school is much better than it was in the past, although they say that their learning is still sometimes affected by low-level disruption in lessons.
- Leaders acknowledge that there is more to do before pupils' behaviour has a strong impact on learning. Teaching is not typically taking advantaged of improvements to pupils' behaviour to challenge pupils to achieve more highly. For example, pupils are not typically expected to think deeply about, or to reason and justify, their contributions to class discussions.
- Pupils say bullying is rare but that it does happen, although they have confidence that staff in school will resolve it. They say that there are lots of adults in school to whom they can turn if they have worries or concerns.
- Consideration is given to pupils whose special educational needs may impact on their behaviour and on referrals to isolation. However, some pupils and parents believe that inconsistencies in the use of 'ready to learn' occasionally causes difficulties and resentment. Although the number of fixed-term exclusions from school, and referrals to the 'isolation' facility, are reducing, the use of exclusion remains higher than leaders would like.
- Attendance is below average and is improving only slowly. Levels of persistent absence for some groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, remain higher than leaders



would like.

- Recent changes to how absence from school is tackled have increased the capacity of leaders to bring about improvements. However, leaders recognise that more could be done to improve attendance. For example, form tutors are having too little impact on improving pupils' attendance at school.
- Inspectors investigated possible 'off-rolling' (when pupils may be removed from a school roll prior to taking examinations) between Years 9 and 10. However, this decline in pupil numbers between key stages was due to pupils making positive choices about joining the studio school in the same multi-academy trust.
- A small number of pupils access alternative provision, mainly for behavioural reasons. Suitable checks are made by staff from the school on these pupils' welfare and wellbeing. However, these checks do not place as much emphasis on whether pupils are making enough progress in their learning.

# **Outcomes for pupils**

**Requires improvement** 

- Pupils join the school with broadly average attainment overall. Although pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is rising, it remains slightly below average overall. In addition, attainment remains lower for disadvantaged pupils than for other pupils in the school and nationally. Therefore, outcomes for pupils requires improvement.
- Until 2017, achievement at the school was below the government's minimum 'floor' target. Too many pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, were not achieving as well as they should. Achievement at the school was affected by a considerable legacy of poor progress in the past, mostly stemming from the period when the predecessor school was judged to require special measures.
- This legacy continues to affect pupils in key stage 4 in particular. For these pupils, a good deal of teaching is focused on helping them to catch up on gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding. This often reduces the level of challenge provided, particularly for the most able pupils.
- However, pupils' progress across a range of subjects is speeding up, particularly in key stage 3. This is a direct result of improvements to the overall quality of teaching, combined with a much better climate for learning in most lessons. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving a 'standard pass' in both GCSE English and mathematics at the end of Year 11 rose in comparison with the previous year and was in line with other schools nationally.
- The school's current assessment information shows further improvements in most subjects and for different groups of pupils. In particular, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is rising and differences in attainment between this group and other pupils in the school and nationally are narrowing.
- As a result of typically stronger teaching in English, pupils' progress is in line with other schools in this subject, and it is improving further. Pupils typically write well in English, although the quality of their written work elsewhere across the curriculum is more variable. Outcomes are improving in mathematics and science also, but not as quickly.
- Teaching does not consistently meet their needs for the most able and for pupils who



have SEN and/or disabilities, which is slowing rates of progress. The most able could achieve more highly, especially in key stage 4. For example, often the most able pupils are expected to complete the same work at the same rate as other pupils and are not given enough work which deepens their learning.

■ Pupils do not yet develop their skills of reasoning, justifying and explaining well enough, particularly through speaking and listening. Their skills in articulating their responses and thinking through their answers are often weak. Not enough teaching develops this well enough.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

**Requires improvement** 

- The quality of teaching and the curriculum, the impact of advice and guidance, and students' achievement in the sixth form all require improvement. While the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes are largely met, the contribution of enrichment and extra-curricular provision to students' personal development and skills for work, life and study is too weak.
- Students typically join the sixth form with levels of attainment that are usually below average overall when compared with other sixth forms nationally. This is particularly the case for students following academic programmes. Only a minority of the most able pupils join the sixth form from Year 11.
- For students who completed their courses in 2017, value-added measures showed they had made better progress than students had in the previous year. However, some students following mainly vocational courses did not complete their courses successfully. Although many of these students transferred to other institutions or began apprenticeships, weaker retention on vocational courses was not fully reflected in these value-added scores.
- By contrast, although few students need to follow resit course in GCSE English and/or mathematics, those that do typically achieve at least as well as similar students do nationally.
- Leaders rightly recognise that good-quality advice and guidance for students about the sixth form has not been provided soon enough. As a result, students are not always recruited to academic programmes to which they are well suited. Sometimes this leads to difficulties in students staying on courses and achieving well.
- Nevertheless, students feel that the advice and guidance they receive about their options after the sixth form is helpful and suitably comprehensive. This includes information about routes into employment, training and onto apprenticeships. All students who completed their courses in 2017 went on to positive destinations, including a rising proportion of students choosing courses in higher education.
- Relationships in the sixth form are typically strong. The small numbers on many courses mean students receive a good deal of individual attention and support. However, as in the main school, the overall quality of teaching varies between different subjects. Not enough teaching is challenging enough to raise the aspirations and attainment of students capable of achieving more highly.
- Leadership in the sixth form requires improvement. Information from the checks on teaching quality in the sixth form are not used well enough to improve teaching more



rapidly.

- Students choose from courses in the sixth form that are mostly academic programmes. These are provided in conjunction with two other secondary schools in the trust. Staff and students feel that this curriculum arrangement is not working as well as it should. Students express some frustration with moving between schools and not feeling part of a sixth-form community. As a result, leaders have plans to improve the curriculum at this school and to encourage more students to consider sixth-form studies.
- Enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities for students in the sixth form are too limited. The programme of work experience and work-related learning is not sufficiently comprehensive or detailed. Students feel that their tutorial time is not used well enough to support their personal development and skills for work, life and further study. Too few sixth-form students make a meaningful contribution to the life of the school.



## **School details**

Unique reference number 141665

Local authority South Gloucestershire

Inspection number 10037178

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

Type of school Secondary Comprehensive

School category Academy sponsor-led

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 994

Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study

programmes

100

Appropriate authority Board of trustees

Chair (acting) Bernadette White

Principal Dean Anderson

Telephone number 01454868020

Website http://www.sbllearning.org.uk/

Email address sblovell@sblonline.org.uk

Date of previous inspection Not previously inspected

#### Information about this school

- The school is a member of the Wellsway multi-academy trust (WMAT). WMAT comprises 10 schools, including four secondary schools, five primary schools and one special school. This school joined the trust on 1 April 2015. This inspection is the first inspection of the school since it became an academy and joined WMAT. In addition to the board of trustees, governance of the school is provided by a local governing body known as the academy governance committee.
- Prior to joining the trust, the predecessor school known as Sir Bernard Lovell School
   was last inspected in February 2014, when it was judged to require special measures.
- The school makes use of alternative provision at the 'Pathways Learning Centre' in



South Gloucestershire.

- The sixth form provision at the school is provided in conjunction with two other secondary schools in the trust Wellsway School and IKB Academy. The school also receives support for school improvement from other schools within the trust.
- The school meets the current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress by the end of key stage 4.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors looked at learning in a range of lessons throughout the school. They talked to pupils about their experiences of school, about behaviour and about their progress. In their visits to lessons, inspectors looked at pupils' work and talked to them about their learning. Many of these lessons were observed jointly with members of the school's leadership team.
- Inspectors considered the school's self-evaluation, development planning and assessment information. Documentation about pupils' behaviour and attendance, and the minutes of meetings of the governing body (known as the academy governance committee) were looked at. Safeguarding records and documentation were also examined.
- The second day of the inspection was affected by adverse weather conditions. As a result, the school was closed to pupils for most of the school day. Inspectors ensured a wide range of lessons were visited during the first day of the inspection and that numerous opportunities were taken to seek the views of pupils about their school. During the second day of the inspection, inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, met with staff, school leaders and governors, and with the chief executive officer of the Wellsway multi-academy trust.
- The views of 71 staff and 193 pupils and students who responded to online surveys were also considered. Inspectors looked at the 108 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View.

## **Inspection team**

Lee Northern, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jenny Maraspin	Ofsted Inspector
Will Morgan	Ofsted Inspector
Carol Hannaford	Ofsted Inspector



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