

# Inspection of Backwell School

Station Road, Backwell, Bristol BS48 3BX

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Inspection dates: 28–29 January 2020

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The previous 'outstanding' judgement reflected the school's overall effectiveness in May 2013 under the relevant inspection framework at that time.

The new judgement of 'good' reflects the current inspection framework as well as any changes at the school since the last inspection.

The school has not been inspected for six years, which is longer than the five-year maximum interval between inspections. Changes in school effectiveness may have happened at any point in that period. The long time between inspections is because the law changed in 2011; it made outstanding schools exempt from routine inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Backwell is a school that has many strengths. Pupils say that it is a positive place to be. They feel safe and well looked after.

Pupils understand the expectations that teachers have of them. Both staff and pupils say that the recent changes to the way behaviour is managed have had a positive effect. However, because there is now greater clarity, pupils notice more when teachers do not follow this new approach.

Pupils respect and understand diversity. They talk about such issues in a sensible and considered way. Pupils say that the school does not tolerate bullying. Staff are available to talk to if they have any concerns.

Overall, pupils achieve well by the end of Year 11. However, leaders are aware of the subjects that are not as strong and have plans in place to tackle this.

Leaders balance their ambition for high academic standards with an emphasis on developing pupils' personal development. Staff want pupils to develop resilience and respect. The strong and varied extra-curricular programme makes a major contribution, encouraging pupils to participate and become resilient to challenge. Pupils also use their effective learning in music outside of the classroom to take part in accomplished musical performances.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders have responded to the dip in the progress that pupils made at key stage 4 in 2019 positively and with resolve. They have used this as an opportunity to take stock of what they do well and how they can improve further.

Pupils follow a broad curriculum in key stage 3 and have a wide choice of subjects in key stage 4. Many pupils continue to study the suite of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. Leaders equally value creative subjects. In key stage 5, students have an extensive choice of subjects and, where necessary, partner with other schools.

Subject leaders have the knowledge to plan what pupils need to learn. Where this is stronger, pupils successfully expand the scope of their knowledge. Teaching guides pupils to think back to what they already know to help them. In history, pupils learn to think and write like historians. For example, pupils can talk with confidence about child labour during the industrial revolution. They understand the implications of the increased movement from the countryside to the towns and the growth of factories. Using this strong supporting knowledge, pupils can make perceptive comments about the reliability of historical sources.

However, in some areas of the curriculum, leaders' plans are not so clear or well organised. While pupils happily complete the activities that are set for them, they

are not able to connect their learning to what they have done before. At times, pupils move on before they have fully grasped an aspect of their learning.

Leaders now expect more of subject leaders. However, not all subject leaders have the necessary skills to drive improvement with confidence and rigour. This is also true in the sixth form, where students do not make strong enough progress on A-level courses. There is now a greater focus on this phase to encourage students to read more widely and organise their notes more effectively.

Leaders have strengthened the support in place for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The new special educational needs coordinator is an effective advocate for the needs of such pupils. She supports teachers to help them plan more astutely for the needs of both pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. There is already some strong practice emerging, but this is not as widespread as it needs to be. This is a view echoed by a minority of parents who responded to Parent View.

Typically, pupils behave and concentrate well in lessons. The relationships that exist between pupils and staff are warm and good humoured. Classrooms are places where pupils can discuss ideas, consider current affairs and reflect on advice about how to stay healthy. Yet, at times, teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils. Where this is so, pupils' work is often unfinished or completed in a cursory way.

Leaders organise high-quality events where pupils can find out about the options open to them in further education or training. Students in the sixth form receive good advice about how to apply to university. Consequently, many students receive offers from highly competitive universities.

Trust leaders and governors work positively with school leaders. Governors are well informed and ask questions of school leaders. At times, however, they do not probe deeply enough or share their insight widely enough within the governing body.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders train staff to be vigilant for the signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. Staff are aware of the dangers that pupils might encounter outside school. They help pupils to be alert to these. For example, pupils learn about the dangers of knife crime and 'county lines'. Staff know that if they are in doubt, 'Just report it.'

Leaders have improved systems to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Staff work positively with parents, informing them of the number of sessions missed and emphasising how this will have an impact on pupils' learning.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is disparity in how well subject leaders drive improvement in their areas of responsibility. Consequently, pupils do not make as strong progress in some subjects as they do in others, including in the sixth form. Senior leaders need to ensure that all subject leaders have the skill and expertise to have a consistent impact on improving standards.
- Not all subject leaders have fully planned what pupils will learn and when. As a result, pupils do not securely develop their knowledge and understanding in some subjects. Leaders need to continue to share strong practice so that there is a well-constructed curriculum across all subjects.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not adapt their plans when it would benefit pupils to do so. This means that some pupils do not understand fully before they move on, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. Teachers need to check carefully what pupils can do and remember and support them to apply this confidently later.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136722
<b>Local authority</b>	North Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	10133450
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1734
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	347
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Adele Haysom
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jon Nunes
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.backwellschool.net">www.backwellschool.net</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22–23 May 2013

## Information about this school

- In January 2018, Backwell School joined the Lighthouse Schools Partnership multi-academy trust. The trust consists of three secondary schools and 20 primary schools.
- The school uses alternative provision provided by the hospital school and the local authority alternative provider.

## Information about this inspection

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- Inspectors met with the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer. Inspectors also met with senior leaders, pastoral leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and a group of staff.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, modern foreign languages, music and science. Inspectors discussed the curriculum design with leaders, carried out lesson visits, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers from the lessons visited.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding, checked the schools' single central record and scrutinised policies relating to safeguarding and pupils' behaviour. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed a sample of case files.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Inspectors spoke with pupils, both formally and informally, to discuss their views about their school.
- Inspectors considered 211 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

### **Inspection team**

Sarah McGinnis, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gill Hickling	Ofsted Inspector
Julia Chapman	Ofsted Inspector
Non Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Frances Gormley	Ofsted Inspector

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