

Inspection of a good school: The Trafalgar School at Downton

Breamore Road, Downton, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP5 3HN

Inspection dates: 3–4 March 2020

Outcome

The Trafalgar School at Downton continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

The curriculum is broad, and within many subjects the organisation of the learning has been considered carefully. However, there is not enough thought about how the curriculum should be taught. The focus of the learning is sometimes vague, so pupils do activities without being able to articulate what they are learning. As a result, pupils are not remembering enough over time.

Pupils enjoy school and there is a harmonious atmosphere around the site. There is very little disruption to learning. When it does happen, however, it is because of weaker teaching.

Adults care about pupils, especially the most vulnerable, and make sure they are safe. Pupils say there is very little bullying and, if it does occur, staff deal with it swiftly. Pupils have a strong understanding of right and wrong. They know about fundamental British values and why they are important. There are many trips and visits for the pupils. Leaders make sure that every pupil can attend if they wish.

The school is an important part of the community. Parents are very positive about the experiences that their children have. They like the welcoming environment and the nurture received by their children.

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

Leaders' expectations of the curriculum are not high enough, especially for the most able pupils. Some subject curriculums are not challenging pupils and helping them to develop deeper knowledge. An exception to this is art. The curriculum stretches pupils' understanding so that they can build on prior learning very effectively. In English, the literature curriculum includes demanding texts from Year 7. However, until recently, pupils in key stage 3 did not have their understanding of texts developed sufficiently. Some

pupils were not able to develop and structure responses in any depth. They were not learning about the use of language as a way to convey meaning. As a result, pupils' understanding of the English language curriculum is weaker, especially in key stage 4.

When teachers check pupils' understanding of the curriculum, there are some occasions when teachers fail to make sure that pupils have fully understood their errors. Consequently, pupils continue to make mistakes. This stops them from developing their learning effectively. Leaders are not ensuring that pupils are building a suitable body of knowledge that will support them remembering more over time.

There is little difference between the curriculum understanding of disadvantaged pupils and their peers. When differences do occur, leaders are not analysing why this happens specifically enough. In addition, there are too many pupils, mainly the disadvantaged, who do not attend school regularly. These pupils are missing valuable learning. Leaders are working with the attendance officer of the multi-academy trust (MAT) to improve this situation. Better communication is starting to happen when a pupil is absent but, so far, this applies to Year 8 and 11 only.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive carefully planned and considered support in their learning. The special educational needs coordinator has good relationships with parents and keeps them up to date with the progress their children are making. She informs staff weekly of any necessary updates so that teachers can make reasonable adjustments.

The new lead for personal, social, health and economic education has developed an effective curriculum. It provides pupils with the essential aspects to make them effective citizens. Pupils receive suitable guidance on future career paths from Year 10. Younger pupils receive an appropriate introduction to careers.

There are many new members of the governing body who are developing a clear understanding of their role. They show a commitment to making improvements in their areas of responsibility. The chair, who is relatively new too, has a secure grasp of the weaknesses of the school. MAT leaders are working closely with the school to secure improvements.

In discussion with the headteacher, we agreed that more stringent accountability of leaders and teachers, so that the teaching of the curriculum improves, may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The administration of staff recruitment is very secure.

There has been a useful audit by the MAT of the site and health and safety priorities. School leaders have undertaken a risk assessment of actions needed until funding is

secured to complete the works. Leaders are not always as vigilant as they should be about ensuring that actions happen routinely.

Staff are quick to notice any signs of concern regarding vulnerable pupils. They understand the requirement to inform safeguarding leaders immediately so that necessary steps can be taken to protect pupils.

Leaders work well with local agencies, such as the police, to make sure pupils receive the right messages and stay safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' scrutiny of the work of the school is not sharp enough. The lack of thoroughness delays the impact of improving teaching so that pupils, especially the most able, learn more. Leaders must tighten up the processes for monitoring teaching and learning with some urgency.
- There is inconsistency in the quality of education pupils receive. This leads to some misconceptions and shallow understanding of the curriculum in some subjects. Leaders must eradicate these differences and ensure that the curriculum is ambitious and delivered well within, and between, subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, The Trafalgar School at Downton, to be good on 20–21 March 2014.

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

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| Unique reference number | 144389 |
| Local authority | Wiltshire |
| Inspection number | 10122360 |
| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 747 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trust |
| Chair of trust | Neil Owen |
| Headteacher | Stewart Roderick |
| Website | www.trafalgarschool.com |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The Trafalgar School at Downton is part of the Magna Learning Partnership MAT. There are four secondary schools, a sixth form college and a primary school in the MAT.
- The school uses the following alternative providers: The WASP Centre and Wiltshire College and University Centre.

Information about this inspection

- We visited lessons with school leaders
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils in groups and informally.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and curriculum leaders, teachers, governors, the CEO of the MAT and a trustee. I made a telephone call to the MAT school improvement adviser.
- Documentary and other types of information were evaluated, including evidence relating to safeguarding.

- We took account of the responses and comments on the online Parent View survey, staff survey and pupil survey. I received an email and a letter from parents.
- We did deep dives in English, science, art and modern languages.

Inspection team

Kathy Maddocks, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stuart Ingram

Ofsted Inspector

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