

Inspection of a good school: The Cottesloe School

Aylesbury Road, Wing, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 0NY

Inspection dates:

9 and 10 November 2021

Outcome

The Cottesloe School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Senior leaders are ambitious for Cottesloe pupils. They expect them to 'Prepare, Aspire, Succeed', and pupils rise to the challenge. Many pupils participate in a host of extra-curricular activities and clubs, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, the Year 7 residential trip and the gardening club. These help pupils to develop the school's '6Cs': cooperation, collaboration, critical thinking, creative thinking, coaching and challenge.

Pastoral care is a strength of the school. One parent who responded to the survey said, 'The pastoral care at The Cottesloe is simply wonderful.' Pupils feel safe and have great faith in the staff to help them with any difficulties they may face. The 'TEAM Hub' is a safe haven for vulnerable pupils, where specialist staff offer guidance, reassurance and support. Teddy, the well-being dog, is a great favourite. Sixth-form 'Well-being Ambassadors' enjoy their role helping younger pupils.

The school is a warm and friendly place. Many pupils and staff describe it as a 'big family'. Pupils and staff treat each other with respect and courtesy. Around the building and in lessons, pupils behave very well. They are eager to learn, work hard and achieve well.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision for moving the school even further forwards. He is supported by talented and committed staff. Staff are very proud to work at the school. They feel valued because leaders consider their workload. Pupils and staff work harmoniously together and there is a great sense of collegiality. Pupils appreciate how hard staff work for them, and they respond by being attentive and engaged learners. Governors, many of whom are quite new to their roles, know the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are growing in confidence but are not yet asking sufficiently probing questions of some curriculum leaders.

Across subjects, leaders have thought hard about what they want pupils to learn and in what order. In some subjects, such as English, mathematics, geography and languages,

teaching plans have clear learning goals. Teachers understand how to build pupils' knowledge and skills in a logical way towards those learning goals. However, in history, leaders have not clearly identified the important knowledge pupils need to learn and remember.

Teachers are very skilled and have strong subject knowledge in all areas of the curriculum. They know their pupils well and help them to make connections with things they have learned before. For example, in English, pupils used their knowledge of 'Animal Farm' to identify techniques used by the writer to interest the reader. This connecting of knowledge helps pupils to know more and remember more. In lessons, many teachers assess pupils' understanding by asking probing questions. However, sometimes teachers do not check carefully enough that pupils have grasped key ideas before they move on.

The school has strong systems in place to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have high ambition for these pupils. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) provides teachers with well-considered strategies to help them adapt their planning for pupils with SEND. As a result, many pupils with SEND achieve well. However, some teachers do not use this information effectively enough to help all pupils with SEND make good progress through the curriculum.

In Years 7 to 9, pupils follow a wide and varied programme which prepares them well for key stage 4. Year 10 pathways focus on meeting the needs of pupils of different abilities. Increasing numbers are following courses which lead to the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) because more pupils are studying a language than ever before. In the sixth form, students benefit from a wide range of academic and vocational courses, including some unusual ones, such as criminology.

Sixth-form students are excellent role models for younger pupils. Year 11 pupils receive timely advice and guidance about post-16 courses and most choose to stay on in the Cottesloe sixth form. They are well taught and supported, and consequently achieve well. Students are very well prepared for when they leave school and gain the qualifications they need for their chosen destinations.

Teachers encourage pupils to read widely and often. There are specialist staff on hand to help those who need extra support. Sixth-formers enjoy helping younger pupils with their reading.

Leaders place great emphasis on preparing pupils for the wider world. Pupils benefit from an imaginative personal, social and health education programme. For example, during the inspection, pupils went to see the London show 'Wicked' to reinforce work they have been doing on positive relationships. Staff constantly review the programme and quickly adjust it to respond to current local or national issues.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff know what to do if they think a pupil might be at risk of harm. The school's safeguarding team is highly trained, and pupils can go to the TEAM Hub at any time to get help. Pupils know they will be listened to. Staff have formed strong links with the police and other agencies to make sure pupils get the support they need quickly.

Leaders make sure that all required safeguarding checks are done on staff. Governors check regularly to make sure the school's safeguarding practice is effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some lessons, pupils struggle to start their work. This is because they have not fully understood key ideas. Leaders should ensure that teachers check carefully that pupils have grasped key concepts before moving on.
- Some pupils with SEND are not achieving as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that staff make best use of the information the SENCo provides to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with SEND so that they are supported to do as well as they can.
- Many governors are relatively new to their role. They are not yet sufficiently knowledgeable about the impact of the curriculum in all subject areas, especially the foundation subjects. Leaders should ensure that governors have opportunities to develop their knowledge of subject areas so that they are better able to support and challenge subject leaders.

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 outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2016.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

Unique reference number	110533
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10203124
Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Foundation Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1107
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Kitchen
Headteacher	Simon Jones
Website	www.cottesloe.bucks.sch.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 July 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post for approximately two years.
- The chair of governors has been in post for approximately one year.
- The school uses alternative provision for a very small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, pupils and sixth-formers, the chair of the governing body and three other governors, and a representative of the local authority. An inspector had a telephone call with a member of staff at the alternative provider.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, modern foreign languages, mathematics and humanities. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and visited lessons in some other subjects.
- Through discussions with leaders, governors, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. They also viewed the school website and policies. They looked at records related to safeguarding, including checks on adults working at the school.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including early career teachers, about behaviour and their workload in school.
- Inspectors considered 85 responses to the Ofsted staff survey, 261 responses to Ofsted Parent View and 352 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. Inspectors also considered one letter from a parent handed to the inspection team during the inspection.

Inspection team

Paula Sargent, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lizzie Jeanes

Ofsted Inspector

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