

Inspection of Digitech Studio School

Tower Road North, Warmley, Bristol BS30 8XQ

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 November 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, staff and parents are proud of their unique school. Pupils say differences are not just accepted at Digitech, they are celebrated.

Pupils and staff respect one another. Staff know pupils well. Pupils feel safe in school. If they have a concern, they say they can speak with any member of staff. Should bullying occur, pupils are confident that staff would take it seriously.

Pupils behave well at social times. They also say they can get on with learning in class. If there is a disruption, pupils say staff deal with it well, so it does not affect their learning.

Pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers give them clear guidance and useful prompts to help them to complete work. However, some pupils do not always need this level of support. Students in the sixth form enjoy learning from experts to develop knowledge and skills for the creative industries. Students talk enthusiastically about their learning.

Pupils are encouraged to be active members of the school community. Many pupils have a strong interest in the world around them. Pupils are keen to discuss their views and they feel listened to. While pupils gain experience in their specialist areas, such as art and creative media, they would like more enrichment opportunities to develop interests and talents beyond this.

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

The headteacher has an ambitious vision for the school that is shared by staff, pupils and parents. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the positive impact the school has on their children. Curriculum leaders and early career teachers welcome the support they receive from the trust.

The curriculum is well planned and sequenced in many areas. Teachers explain subject content clearly to pupils. Many pupils understand and use important concepts accurately. Pupils ask and answer questions that help them to make sense of their learning. However, while pupils learn essential content for an examination, for example in English, they do not always learn wider knowledge that helps them to deepen their understanding of the subject. Teachers of post-16 courses have expert knowledge that is used well. This helps students to develop a clear and precise understanding of their subjects.

Teachers mostly use assessment well to find out what pupils know and can do. However, sometimes, teachers provide support and scaffolding to pupils who do not need this level of support. This does not help pupils to extend their knowledge or produce more sophisticated work.

Teachers know pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Leaders of SEND work together well to ensure students have a smooth transition onto new programmes of study when they join the school. Leaders make sure that staff use appropriate strategies to support these pupils, including students in the sixth form. As a result, many pupils with SEND are becoming increasingly independent in their learning. Students with SEND in the sixth form are supported to develop their social skills. They work well with their peers to develop their projects. Pupils with SEND speak positively about the help they receive that builds their confidence.

Pupils who need help with reading receive appropriate support. Some pupils are avid readers, but others read very little. Pupils understand the importance of reading, but they are not always confident or keen to do so. Leaders know that further encouragement and direction is needed so that pupils read more widely.

In the sixth form, leaders have developed strong partnerships with other providers. This is a strength of the school. There are high expectations of what students can achieve. This is reflected in the quality of their work. Students develop knowledge and skills that become more complex over time. For example, students produce graphic products of a high quality and create professional advertising to meet clients' needs. The post-16 study programme prepares students well for future learning and employment in the creative industries.

Pupils receive useful information and guidance about careers. Students in the sixth form learn about employability skills that prepare them for their next steps. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The personal development curriculum teaches pupils about current events, which develops their knowledge of wider society. Pupils in Year 10 acquire an understanding of different faiths and they engage in respectful discussions. However, older pupils have gaps in their knowledge. They would appreciate further knowledge of different religions and more useful relationships and sex education that is relevant to their needs.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe and they know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They are confident to identify and report concerns. Leaders act on concerns promptly. Leaders make sure staff and academy council members are well informed about safeguarding issues.

Leaders know pupils' needs well. They have developed strong relationships with external agencies to ensure that pupils and families get the support they need.

Leaders across the school's providers work well together so that valuable insights about local issues are shared.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teaching is structured to provide much support and guidance to pupils. However, not all pupils require this level of support. Sometimes, it limits pupils' ability to produce more sophisticated work. Leaders need to ensure that they carefully assess pupils' needs to ensure the curriculum is challenging enough for them.
- In some subjects, pupils are taught essential content that prepares them for examinations. However, sometimes, this does not provide a wide enough knowledge of the subject. Leaders need to consider how the curriculum can deepen and broaden pupils' subject knowledge.
- Older pupils have not learned sufficient knowledge about different religious beliefs, relationships and sex education. Therefore, they have some gaps in their knowledge. Leaders need to ensure that the personal development curriculum includes content about these important subjects. This will help pupils to be better informed with knowledge that meets their needs.

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	142079
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10200942
Type of school	Other secondary
School category	Academy studio school
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	545
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	379
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Olomolaiye
Principal	Lis Jolley
Website	http://digitechstudioschool.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	18 and 19 October 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Digitech Studio School is smaller than the average secondary school. Pupils typically join the school from other secondary schools in Year 10.
- The school specialises in creative and digital media.
- The school is part of the Cabot Learning Federation.
- The school works in partnership with boomsatsuma, and the Robins Foundation. Students in the sixth form follow courses at several sites across the City of Bristol. A smaller number of students follow post-16 courses at the school.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, academy council members, and representatives from Cabot Learning Federation.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: art and design, English, media and science. Deep dives were carried out in the school and at boomsatsuma sites, the Engine Shed and The Bottle Yard Studios. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leads from the school and boomsatsuma, examined records and discussed safeguarding cases. Meetings were also held with the school and boomsatsuma's special educational needs coordinators.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the views of staff and pupils in their online surveys.

Inspection team

Tracey Reynolds, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Roger Pilgrim	Ofsted Inspector
Will Morgan	Ofsted Inspector
Jerry Giles	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021