

Inspection of a good school: Wheatley Park School

Holton, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX33 1QH

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 March 2022

Outcome

Wheatley Park School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

'The school always encourages us to aim high,' said one student, typical of many, to the lead inspector as she explained her desire to study at Oxbridge. Many students are successful in their aspirations to continue studying when they leave. The school's values of 'everyone learning, everyone caring' are at the heart of everything leaders plan.

Respectful relationships between staff and pupils are the basis of the care shown at this school. The majority of pupils respect the school environment and support each other well. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the senior student leadership team published the 'Pathogen Pamphlet', a newsletter that contained lockdown tips to keep positive, cooking ideas, fun facts and film recommendations.

This school community is a caring one. Trained members of staff support pupils when they need help. Older pupils take up positions of leadership to help others. Pupils feel safe and well cared for at Wheatley Park. The 'safe@school' anti-bullying strategy helps pupils understand what bullying is and where they can seek support if they feel they need to. Bullying is very rare, and most pupils feel that staff are effective at sorting it out.

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

Leaders and governors share the same vision and high expectations of themselves, the staff and the pupils. Together, leaders have developed a rigorous curriculum based on equipping pupils for the next stage of their education and developing values such as compassion, tolerance and respect.

Teachers use common techniques across subjects to help pupils learn. For example, pupils take part in quizzes at the start of lessons to check for understanding. Other techniques help pupils remember key information from previous lessons. Teachers build on this knowledge, weaving in new information and skills effectively so that pupils develop a better understanding. In English, pupils learn how to harness the power of language. They study a wide range of texts and learn new literary techniques. Mathematics teaching

is strong. It enables pupils to develop a secure understanding of key knowledge and concepts. Many students study mathematics in the sixth form.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects at key stage 3. Recent changes to the way pupils choose subjects to study in key stage 4 mean that some pupils in Year 9 have missed key learning in geography. Leaders are aware of this and have plans to rectify this in the future. The subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate are at the heart of the curriculum. The number of pupils opting for these subjects is increasing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils achieve well because they are supported effectively.

Subject leaders have devised curriculum plans that identify the knowledge and concepts pupils need to know to be successful. However, in a small number of subjects, leaders are aware that the curriculum is not yet as effective as it is, for example, in the core subjects. A strong culture of professional development for staff underpins the coherent delivery of the curriculum. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Assessment helps teachers know what pupils understand and can do. Teachers plan lessons well according to this information.

The behaviour of most pupils is good. Pupils are polite and respectful. Attitudes in most lessons are positive. On a very few occasions, pupils are not as committed to their learning as they could be. Students in the sixth form have very studious attitudes to learning and make a positive contribution to the school. They enjoy taking on positions of responsibility.

The curriculum to support pupils' wider development is strong. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum has been designed with the same degree of detail as other academic subjects. However, the teaching of PSHE is not as strong as leaders would like. Some staff do not possess as much expertise in PSHE as leaders would hope. However, the topics delivered by expert visiting speakers are well received by the pupils, especially in the sixth form. Pupils receive guidance about future options and careers education through PSHE lessons. They also have individual conversations with a specialist adviser. Pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 are well prepared for the next steps of their education.

The school offers a wide range of trips to enhance the curriculum. Many of these were postponed due to the pandemic. These usually provide memorable experiences for pupils, and leaders are determined to reinstate them as soon as possible. Extra-curricular clubs and activities offer pupils the opportunity to develop new skills and refine existing ones. Leaders are aware that not as many pupils take part in clubs as they would like.

Leadership is strong at all levels. Staff feel that their well-being is prioritised. They receive timely professional development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, including governors, are diligent in how they protect children from harm. Everyone understands their role in ensuring that pupils are well cared for. Staff receive timely training and know what to look out for that might indicate a pupil is at risk of harm. School procedures are easy to follow. Experienced leaders oversee pastoral care and safeguarding. They know when to refer to other agencies to offer support to families. Record-keeping is diligent. Recruitment processes are meticulously managed. Some pupils receive part or all of their education at alternative provisions. Leaders are diligent in their safeguarding checks of the alternative providers they use. They have regular contact with the pupils and staff at the alternative provision to monitor the attendance and progress of pupils placed there.

Pupils learn about keeping safe in assemblies and online safety lessons and through the PSHE curriculum. Recent improvements in site security have been welcomed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are aware that in some subjects, curriculum thinking is not as well-developed as in others. This means that the intended curriculum is not as methodically delivered as it is, for example, in the core subjects. Leaders must ensure that the curriculum in these subjects precisely maps out the necessary knowledge and skills pupils need to learn to be successful and curriculum implementation matches the school's own high standards.

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 second 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

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| Unique reference number | 140875 |
| Local authority | Oxfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10203121 |
| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| 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 | 1,113 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 223 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Kirsten Robinson |
| Headteacher | Tim Martin |
| Website | www.wheatleypark.org |
| Date of previous inspection | 14 June 2016 |

Information about this school

- The school is part of the River Learning Trust.
- The school uses three registered and five unregistered alternative providers.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The lead inspector also visited other lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders of the school, members of staff, pupils and parents.
- The lead inspector also met with members of the local governing body and spoke to the trust's chief executive officer and the director of secondary education.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documents and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks. Inspectors also talked to a range of parents, staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with staff, pupils and parents to gather their views. They considered 140 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 90 free-text comments. Inspectors also took into account 106 responses to the staff survey and 308 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Linda Culling, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jane Cartwright

Ofsted Inspector

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