

Inspection of Whitstone

Charlton Road, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 5PF

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 April 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Whitstone is described by many as a 'happy community school'. Pupils say there is a respectful culture in school. Pupils identify strongly with the 'RESPECT' values that inform many aspects of school life. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. They are confident and respectful when talking to one another. There are good relationships between pupils and adults.

Pupils say that bullying is rare. They are confident that when it is reported it is taken seriously and dealt with quickly. Pupils know how to report concerns, and feel safe at school. They learn how to stay safe online and how to keep themselves safe.

There are many opportunities for pupils to be leaders. There are student leaders, sports leaders and peer mentors. Pupils feel that leaders listen to the student council and, as a result, they see changes in the school. Pupils say that mental well-being is taken seriously. There are many wider opportunities to attend clubs or participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. A 'late' bus runs so that all pupils can participate.

Leaders are focused on raising aspirations and developing community engagement. Pupils understand that there are high expectations and are proud of their school.

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

There is a well-planned curriculum in place. Leaders and teachers have a clear understanding of the curriculum. Leaders work with primary schools and post-16 colleges to understand what pupils should learn. This means there is a five-year journey for learning. Curriculum choices at key stage 4 are planned to ensure more pupils can follow the English Baccalaureate pathway. There are many vocational courses. These have been planned to provide pupils with the training for entering local professions. Leaders are growing the range of subjects offered. They are continuing to provide a wider range of qualifications. As a result, there is a focus on developing subject knowledge through regular staff training.

Teachers model learning and ensure pupils revisit the important knowledge they need to remember. They use assessment to understand what pupils have learned. Feedback is clear so that pupils know what they need to do to improve. However, there are not always high expectations about pupils' work.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported in lessons. There are some ongoing changes to SEND provision. Leaders are now developing this to ensure it is effective and efficient. Nevertheless, there is plenty of support and information for teachers to support pupils with SEND.

Leaders have invested in a wider reading curriculum. The library is well resourced. There are many opportunities for pupils to read and develop their fluency. Leaders have appointed teachers to support pupils with extra mathematics and English.

Leaders are planning additional help for pupils who are in the early stages of reading. However, this needs to be refined to ensure that all pupils receive the programme of reading they need.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Lessons are calm and orderly. Pupils, parents and staff all say that this has been a positive change. There are now clear systems in place to manage behaviour. Leaders also check pupils' attendance and act quickly when it falls. Leaders work closely with alternative providers when they need to use them. As a result, short-term placements are used to support pupils effectively. Pupils are well supported by a strong pastoral team.

Pupils have the opportunity to attend a wide range of enrichment activities and clubs. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is planned to meet gaps in pupils' knowledge, especially as a result of the pandemic. However, the teaching of PSHE is not as informed as it sometimes needs to be. Not all staff have received sufficient training in this subject. Pupils learn about relationships through the RESPECT programme. Individual differences are embraced. One pupil told inspectors, 'Everyone is equal here.' There is a well-planned careers programme that begins in Year 8. Leaders have worked with post-16 providers to ensure pupils make well-informed choices. Pupils are informed about careers related to the subjects they learn.

Governance is strong. Leaders work well with the community. Stakeholders comment positively on the improvements to the school over the last two years.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding systems are robust. There are effective systems for reporting. Staff receive the training they need. A team of specialists works strategically to follow up on reported concerns. Leaders understand the safeguarding risks that pupils face and seek to use this knowledge swiftly to intervene when pupils are at risk. There are clear processes in place to act to promote pupils' well-being.

Leaders work effectively with pupils and families to understand difficulties. This ensures vulnerable pupils are supported well. Pupils and staff say that mental well-being is a focus in the school. Welfare 'listeners' are available to support pupils and staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The impact of the wider reading curriculum for pupils in key stage 3 is not fully understood. Leaders need to evaluate this to ensure that pupils in the early stages of reading receive both timely and appropriate phonics intervention.
- Planning for pupils with SEND is not always as precise as it needs to be. This means resources are not well directed and support is not as effective as it could be. Leaders need to ensure that pupils with SEND benefit from carefully targeted resources and receive effective support that enables them to achieve well.
- The PSHE curriculum is not always implemented well. This is because teachers do not always have the training or sufficient subject knowledge to deliver some subject matter. Leaders should ensure that there is adequate training for staff to deliver the resourced programme effectively.

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	137192
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10227958
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	536
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Philip Eavis
Headteacher	Guy Swallow
Website	www.whitstoneschool.org/
Date of previous inspection	9 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a single academy trust. Since the last inspection, a new headteacher started in January 2020.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider, Tor School, and one unregistered alternative provider, REACH Youth (SW).
- The school meets the requirement of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives into English, mathematics, physical education and modern foreign languages. In each subject, inspectors visited lessons,

scrutinised pupils' work and held discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils in both key stages. Inspectors also visited tutor times.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. They also held meetings with the designated leader for safeguarding, curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspector met teachers who are at an early point in their teaching careers.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils formally and informally around the school site and in both key stages.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including policies, plans and record-keeping for safeguarding, behaviour management, attendance, careers education, advice and guidance, and relationships and sex education and health education.
- The lead inspector reviewed and considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils. They also considered free-text responses and letters received during the visit.

Inspection team

Rachel Hesketh, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David New

Ofsted Inspector

Mark Lees

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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