

Inspection of a good school: Somervale School Specialist Media Arts College

Redfield Road, Midsomer Norton, Radstock, Somerset BA3 2JD

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 June 2022

Outcome

Somervale School Specialist Media Arts College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils come first in this happy, caring and accepting school. They think that they are well looked after by staff who know them well as individuals. Pupils know that staff are there to help and support them whenever needed.

Leaders have a clear vision for the school. They are ambitious for pupils' success. Pupils experience a well-developed curriculum in their subjects. Staff have high expectations of pupils. Pupils try their best in lessons and produce work of a high standard.

Teachers explain subject content clearly to pupils. They guide and support pupils so that they can complete their work successfully. Pupils who receive extra support achieve alongside their classmates.

Discrimination is not accepted. The school is a welcoming place where pupils feel comfortable to be themselves. Bullying is not tolerated. Pupils are confident that staff will deal with any concerns quickly and effectively.

Pupils take part in many opportunities that help them to develop their confidence and resilience. They learn important knowledge to help them become thinking citizens of the future. This also helps them to stay safe and to make well-thought-through decisions and choices.

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

Senior leaders have an ambitious vision for the school. They are supported by the trust effectively. This allows leaders to focus on making the correct improvements where needed. Staff recognise how the school has improved. They think that leaders support them well.

The school's curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. They receive all the teaching to which they are entitled. They also have a broad range of subjects to choose from in Years 10

and 11. The number of pupils choosing to take subjects that make them eligible for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is increasing. Recent improvements in modern foreign languages has helped with this. Leaders are expecting the uptake of EBacc subjects to increase further.

Pupils hit the ground running when they join the school. Work with primary partners has ensured this. Each subject has a clearly sequenced curriculum. Leaders have carefully planned the order in which knowledge and skills are taught to pupils. This allows pupils' learning to build over time.

Teachers present new information, linking it to previous lessons well. There is careful attention given to the key terms that pupils need to know so they can explain themselves clearly. This is a significant piece of work undertaken by leaders to improve pupils' literacy. Teachers provide support so that all pupils can take part in lessons. They are mindful that more able pupils need to be challenged.

Leaders and teachers have developed ways to help pupils remember important knowledge effectively. Pupils say that this helps them to remember what they are taught. Teachers routinely check what pupils know and can do. Where teachers do this well, they quickly help pupils to correct misconceptions and to know when they are ready for new learning.

Leaders consider the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities when planning their curriculum. They provide the right support to enable these pupils to do well. Subject leaders have supported teachers to plan lessons.

The behaviour of pupils is a strength of the school. The school is an orderly place where lessons are not disrupted. Pupils say that they enjoy attending school and like the fact that expectations of them in lessons are high. The quality and care taken by pupils over their presentation in books and folders are strengths of the school.

Pupils benefit from a well-planned personal, social, health, careers and citizenship curriculum throughout their time at the school. There is also a broad range of additional activities, including many clubs and educational visits. Pupils are welcoming and embrace difference in others.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture. Leaders know pupils well. There are clear systems to record and report safeguarding concerns so that pupils who need help are supported quickly. Leaders of safeguarding work with safeguarding partners effectively.

Staff and governors receive detailed and up-to-date training. Staff know how to report concerns. The school follows safer recruitment procedures and maintains detailed records. Leaders communicate with pupils to help their understanding of safeguarding risks. As a part of the teaching they receive, pupils are signposted to help if they need it. They know how to report concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment is not used consistently across all subjects. Some pupils spend too much time studying content that they already know. This slows their progress through the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that assessment is used effectively so that teachers accurately understand what pupils know in order to adapt learning accordingly.

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 a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2013.

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	136311
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset Council
Inspection number	10211047
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	601
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Claire Hudson
Headteacher	Joanna Postlethwaite
Website	www.somervaleschool.com
Date of previous inspection	29 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses no alternative provision.
- In 2009, Somervale School federated with Norton Hill School to form the Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership. The partnership now includes a total of 28 schools, including primary, secondary and special schools, and a studio school.
- The chief executive officer of the trust was formerly head of Somervale and of Norton Hill.
- There is one local governing body for Somervale School and Norton Hill School.
- There is a joint sixth form, the Midsomer Norton Sixth Form, with teaching on both sites, although students are on roll at one of the schools.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, and with the chief executive officer, a governor and a trustee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages. 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.
- Inspectors also visited a range of additional lessons in Year 10, spoke with pupils in this year group and scrutinised their work across a range of subjects. This was because there were no key stage 4 pupils attending the school on the first day of the inspection. Year 10 pupils were taking part in work off site for humanities coursework on the first day of the inspection.
- Inspectors undertook a range of activities to check the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, including meeting with the designated safeguarding lead, examining the school records and files, and talking with pupils, teachers, school leaders and governors.
- Inspectors met with other leaders to discuss pupils' wider development and with a range of teaching and non-teaching staff in order to listen to their views.
- The responses to Ofsted Parent View indicate that a large majority of parents and carers are positive about their child's education and care at the school.

Inspection team

Matthew Collins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

David New

Ofsted Inspector

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