

Inspection of Pathways Learning Centre

Overndale Road, Downend, Bristol, South Gloucestershire BS16 2RQ

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils describe Pathways Learning Centre as 'a family'. Pupils start at different points in their education and throughout the school year. Despite this, they agree that everyone is welcoming. They quickly feel part of the school. Pupils say staff are respectful and they feel valued. For many, this is one of the first positive experiences of education that they can remember. The impact of this is evident in pupils' highly positive attitudes to their learning and the strong relationships between staff and pupils.

Everyone has high expectations of behaviour. Pupils respond and behave exceptionally well. Staff are calm, empathetic and unintrusive when supporting pupils who may be experiencing challenges. Pupils agree that staff support them well. They trust adults and will share concerns and worries if they want help. Staff model positive relationships. As a result, pupils are respectful and tolerant of each other. They are fully accepting of the diverse needs of their peers.

Pupils' wider development is thoroughly considered by leaders. Pupils are prepared very well for the next stage in their education. Leaders prioritise pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Parents are positive about the impact the school has. They appreciate how staff treat pupils as individuals with specific needs.

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

Leaders' ambition for all pupils is high. Staff across the different provisions share this ambition. Leaders ensure that the alternative providers used also meet these high expectations. An effective induction process has been designed for pupils. It gives staff precise and accurate knowledge of each individual pupil. They use this to provide a bespoke and engaging education. Pupils are taught by teachers in their area of expertise. This ensures that they cover the breadth of the national curriculum. However, leaders have not ensured that teachers understand pupils' prior learning well enough. This is still in development. As a result, pupils do not practise, consolidate and apply new learning as successfully as they could.

Leaders prioritise reading. Pupils were keen to demonstrate this. Leaders continue to develop the curriculum for reading, particularly for pupils who have fallen behind. In English, the curriculum includes texts that engage pupils while increasing their awareness of the world around them. Pupils work towards qualifications in a range of subjects. These are appropriate and relevant for the next stage of their education. However, teachers are not fully secure in the knowledge of what pupils should know by the end of each stage. The sequences of learning do not help them with this. Consequently, this weakens pupils' ability to secure new learning as well as they could.

The personal development of pupils is a strength of the school. It brings together the shared, ambitious vision to achieve the best possible outcomes for each pupil.

Staff are highly committed to increase understanding of neurodiversity. This empowers everyone to recognise and respect the uniqueness of each individual. Staff support pupils to become resilient and self-aware young people who are well prepared for their next stage. Staff provide pupils with relevant and unbiased careers guidance. Pupils have the opportunity to look into a range of employment options and post-16 destinations. The successful transition programme to post-16 ensures that the number of pupils not in education, employment or training remains low.

Staff respond with sensitivity to any pupil who may be struggling. They build relationships with pupils to ensure that they are ready to learn. There is a comprehensive and responsive programme of professional development. Consequently, staff have the necessary skills to support pupils in challenging situations. They know the best approach to use to support pupils to regulate and re-engage with their learning.

The school's role in strengthening the profile of pupil referral unit practice and awareness is commendable. There is high praise for the way the school works in partnership with others to reach the best possible outcomes for pupils who have been or are at risk of permanent exclusion.

The management committee shares the ambition of school leaders. Leaders provide them with relevant information regarding the provision for pupils. Members of the management committee use this, along with the range of expertise they have, to challenge leaders and hold them to account well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Keeping pupils safe is a high priority for all staff. Leaders use daily briefings to ensure that staff are well informed about pertinent safeguarding concerns. Leaders make sure that regular training responds to current challenges and information they receive. Staff know the procedures to follow when reporting concerns.

Leaders work in partnership with other agencies to make sure that they secure the most appropriate support for pupils. Safer recruitment processes are well established. Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of staff. Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They talk confidently about risk awareness, consent and managing their online behaviour safely.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Although teachers have secure subject knowledge in their areas of expertise, there is not a consistent enough structure and sequence to the curriculum. It does not help teachers to sequence learning as successfully as they could. As a result, some pupils do not secure new learning as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that the specific knowledge they want pupils to learn is clearly identified and sequenced so that pupils can practise, consolidate and apply new learning more successfully.

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.

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	131626
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10211985
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138 (92 dual roll and 46 single roll pupils)
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	
Headteacher	Louise Leader
Website	www.pathwayslearningcentre.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2019

Information about this school

- The school takes pupils through different referral routes. These include pupils who have been permanently excluded once, pupils who have been permanently excluded twice, pupils at risk of exclusion, and pupils who have significant medical and mental health needs. Pupil placements can be short and long term.
- The number of pupils on roll changes significantly over the course of a year.
- All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school currently uses eight unregistered alternative providers.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded 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 met with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, senior and middle leaders and members of the management committee, including the chair. In addition, an inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector listened to pupils read.
- An inspector visited and spoke with a sample of the alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors considered how well the school protects pupils and keeps them safe.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- Inspectors analysed school documentation, including leaders' evaluations. Inspectors scrutinised a range of policies and procedures, including those that relate to the curriculum and behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the 13 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 14 free-text response,s along with the one response to the pupil online survey and 17 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Leanne Thirlby, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Hilary Goddard

Ofsted Inspector

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