

Inspection of Sexey's School

Cole Road, Bruton, Somerset BA10 0DF

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

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	Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at Sexey's School. They are happy and safe. Staff know them well as individuals. Pupils recognise and appreciate this. The school has high academic expectations of all pupils. Staff start from the position that all pupils can succeed. Pupils who sometimes find learning harder than others largely get the help they need. As a result, pupils learn well and go on to succeed in their public examinations.

Staff also have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils are polite to each other and to adults. They conduct themselves around the school calmly and maturely. If bullying occurs, pupils are confident that adults will help them sort it out.

Sexey's has a very wide array of extra-curricular activities, which pupils enjoy. These range from competitive sports teams in every year to a growing chess club. Pupils participate in all levels of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the Ten Tors event on Dartmoor. Whatever a pupil's interests, there will be opportunities to further them at Sexey's. Older pupils and students in the sixth form take on leadership roles. Prefects play an important role in the smooth running of the school and act as mentors for younger pupils.

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

Since the school was judged inadequate in 2019, leaders at all levels have worked very successfully to improve the school. They have an ambitious vision for the curriculum, a clear rationale for the way it is designed and have developed a shared view of the best way to teach it.

Trustees and trust leaders have a strong understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders understand what the trust can bring to Sexey's and what Sexey's brings to the trust, such as sixth-form provision. Trustees have clear mechanisms for assuring themselves of the standard of education provided by the school. Governors, too, have a good understanding of their roles. Strong professional expertise adds considerable capacity to governors' oversight.

The curriculum is well conceived and sequenced to promote cumulative learning. Consequently, pupils learn more, remember more and can do more. Pupils acquire new knowledge with relative ease as the curriculum has given them a secure grounding on which to build. Teaching is typically based on strong subject expertise. Teachers use assessment well to evaluate what pupils have learned and what they need to learn next. Pupils respond well to the teaching they receive and have positive attitudes to their education.

In the core curriculum of English, mathematics and science, as well as some other subjects, such as art, pupils are learning well. In some areas of the curriculum,

however, implementation is not as strong and pupils do not learn quite so well. Leaders have identified this themselves and have plans to tackle it.

The English baccalaureate is at the heart of the school's academically rigorous curriculum, with nine out of ten pupils going on to acquire qualifications in this range of subjects. In the sixth form there is an impressive range of courses for students to choose from. The sixth form is growing. Students achieve well and move on successfully to the next stage of their education or into employment.

Reading is a central feature of school life. Those pupils who are at an early stage of reading or need some additional help with it get the support they need. Leaders understand that the ability to read is the gateway to the rest of the curriculum and no pupils are unable to follow the curriculum because they cannot read well enough.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are known well by leaders and other staff. Their needs are accurately identified and carefully planned for. Leaders are as ambitious for these pupils as they are for all. In the classroom, these pupils often receive good support, although this is not always the case. This can mean that, at times, they do not learn as well as they could. A minority of parents of pupils with SEND remain concerned about the quality of the support their children receive. Leaders are aware of what needs to be done to make improvements and are tackling these. Although relatively small in number, leaders and staff go to considerable lengths to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are included in the full life of the school.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of school life. This can be seen in the effective implementation of a well-constructed personal, health, social and relationship education programme. Pupils typically appreciate the help this curriculum gives them to grow as individuals. Careers education is very effective, including in the sixth form. Pupils understand the pathways available to them from early on. Pupils in Year 10 and students in Y12 all do work experience. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has developed a strong culture of safeguarding. There are well-established procedures to identify and help pupils at risk of harm. Leaders clearly understand the contextual risks in the community, such as criminal exploitation or county lines. The high-quality work of the pastoral team supports this culture of safeguarding well.

The procedures to report concerns are well established, understood by staff and used appropriately. Recruitment practices are robust and well recorded. Leaders have a good understanding of thresholds when making referrals to an external agency.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The implementation of the curriculum is stronger in some areas than others. This can mean that in some subjects pupils do not learn as well as they do, for example, in core subjects such as English, mathematics or science. Leaders should ensure that the quality of education is equally strong across the curriculum, so that pupils learn well in all parts of it.
- In some parts of the curriculum, the ambitious vision for pupils with SEND is not being fully realised due to inconsistencies in the quality of implementation. This means that some pupils with SEND can have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should continue with their work to improve the quality of the implementation of the curriculum for these pupils.

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	137313
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10216087
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	652
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	115
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Rob Brown
Headteacher	Helen Cullen
Website	http://www.sexeyes.somerset.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	21 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Sexey's School joined the Quantock Education Trust on 1 October 2021. It now has a local governing committee that reports to the board of trustees. Quantock Education Trust has one other secondary school and two primary schools.
- The school has boarding provision. When it was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2021, the boarding provision was judged to be good.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection was in October 2022, when it was graded good.
- The school uses two registered 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 inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- 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 spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders, curriculum and pastoral leaders, members of the local governing committee, the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art, history and design and technology. 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 spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's work on safeguarding by talking to pupils and staff and looking at records.
- In making their judgements, inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the outcomes of our pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Stephen Lee, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Mike Foley	Ofsted Inspector
Gill Hickling	Ofsted Inspector
Victoria Griffin	His Majesty's Inspector

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