

Inspection of a good school: Wootton Upper School

Hall End Road, Wootton, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK43 9HT

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 April 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils join the school at the start of Year 9. They are well looked after by staff and are safe and happy in school. There are adults to speak to if pupils have a worry or concern. Pupils treat each other respectfully, celebrating the differences between themselves and others.

Leaders have high ambitions for pupils, but these are not fully realised. Pupils receive an inconsistent experience in how well the curriculum is taught. Pupils do not get enough useful guidance to help them produce work of a high standard or learn important knowledge consistently well.

Pupils move around the site in a calm and orderly way. There are some pupils whose behaviour disturbs learning. Staff do not all deal with these incidents quickly, to minimise disruption to pupils' learning. Incidents of bullying are dealt with. However, pupils do want staff to deal with these incidents more swiftly.

Pupils value the many opportunities they have beyond the classroom. They enjoy taking part in clubs and trips. Enrichment days provide pupils with a variety of new opportunities, such as somersaulting and climbing activities, an Easter egg making session and visits to Bedford University. Pupils enjoy working together to develop team working and employability skills.

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

Leaders have designed the curriculum effectively. They have ensured that the key knowledge pupils should learn, and the order in which it is taught, is clearly identified in each subject.

Pupils experience a broad curriculum. Leaders are working to increase the scope of the curriculum by improving the provision for languages at key stage 3. The number of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate is low. Leaders plan to increase this by encouraging more pupils to study languages in key stage 4.

Teachers have secure knowledge in the subjects they teach. Pupils enjoy lessons when they are able to engage and explore learning. For example, in history, a 'blast from the past' activity at the start of each lesson helps pupils to remember previous learning. However, leaders have not ensured that teaching is consistently effective across the school. Teachers do not always check well enough what pupils have learned. This means that pupils have some misconceptions that are not addressed effectively. Teachers do not give pupils enough guidance about the quality of their work. This means that pupils do not always know how well they are doing and how to improve their work.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs accurately identified. Despite this, some staff do not make sure that pupils with SEND receive the adaptations they need to access the curriculum. Leaders have identified pupils who need to get better at reading. Pupils who need help with reading receive the right support. This supports them to read more accurately and fluently, which helps them to understand more of what they read, therefore ensuring they can access the full curriculum.

Pupil's learning is sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour. When disruption does occur, leaders have not ensured that staff are supported to use the behaviour system to quickly address it. Pupils benefit from high-quality pastoral support. Skilled staff support pupils well with wider needs such as mental health and well-being.

Pupils are tolerant and accepting of difference. They learn about this through a well-designed programme of personal, social and health education. Leaders have built strong relationships with universities, colleges and employers and use these to provide pupils with high-quality careers advice and guidance.

Leaders have enriched the curriculum with a wide range of clubs, trips and visits. These are planned to enhance the curriculum pupils follow. Pupils also take part in carefully thought out and planned enrichment days. These days include a variety of different activities linked to the school's 'stepping stones for excellence'. These opportunities help pupils develop into active citizens.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strength and areas for development. Staff are happy and feel well supported by leaders. Leaders have made changes to help staff manage their workload. Governors work well with the trust to provide a balance of support and effective challenge, which holds leaders to account effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive comprehensive training, so they know how to spot if a pupil is at risk of harm. There are clear systems in place to report any concerns effectively.

Leaders make sure that the required checks are made on all staff and recorded on the single central record.

Safeguarding records are detailed and demonstrate that appropriate actions are taken to keep pupils safe. Leaders work with many different organisations and agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the support they need.

Leaders plan age-appropriate lessons and opportunities to teach pupils how to keep safe. As a result, pupils have a good understanding about various issues, such as e-safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum content is taught and assessed consistently well. Some teachers do not check carefully what pupils know and understand or provide clear guidance to help pupils improve their work. This means some pupils do not remember important knowledge well enough, while others have misconceptions that are not addressed effectively. Leaders must ensure that teachers receive high-quality training and guidance to help them teach consistently well so that pupils remember and apply important knowledge.
- Pupils with SEND do not always benefit from the most appropriate adaptations to allow them to access the full curriculum. This means that they are not always learning as much as they could. Leaders must ensure that all staff are trained to meet the needs of pupils with SEND well. This will enable pupils with SEND to learn well.
- Leaders have made changes to the systems used to manage behaviour. These systems are not being consistently applied. As a result, too many lessons are being disrupted by the poor behaviour of pupils. Leaders need to ensure that staff are supported to manage behaviour so that pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

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	137522
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10268572
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	900
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Haddon
Executive Principal	Michael Gleeson
Website	www.wootton.beds.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, modern foreign languages and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils about learning and looked at a sample of pupil's work.
- The lead inspector held meetings with a range of leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and other members of the senior leadership team.

- The lead inspector scrutinised a range of school documents, including the school's behaviour and bullying logs.
- Inspectors met with a range of pupils from different year groups.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the trust and governing body, including the chair of the trust board.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the school's safeguarding leaders. Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding systems, processes and records. They spoke with pupils, staff, governors and trustees about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 172 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 167 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered 71 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and the 55 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Sue Pryor, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Alastair Ogle

Ofsted Inspector

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