

Inspection of Bridgwater College Academy

Parkway, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 4QY

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Beginning in the Nursery, leaders and staff nurture relationships with children, their families and the community. As a large, all-through campus, pupils move well between the sites. Older pupils understand how to model their behaviours for younger pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils learn about unkindness and bullying. They are confident that when it happens, leaders respond and manage it well. As a result, pupils are and feel safe.

Pupils understand the expectations for behaviour that leaders have recently introduced. These are appropriate to the different age groups. However, a small number of pupils struggle to meet the high expectations of leaders. Some older pupils do not go to all their lessons, or they do not arrive promptly for the start of the lesson. Leaders are responsive in managing these pupils and getting them to where they need to be.

In Nursery and Reception, children relish their space to play and explore. A thoughtful range of activities encourages children to be purposeful. They enjoy developing their interactions with adults. Older pupils value leadership roles, such as representatives on the school council.

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

Leaders have planned a broad and ambitious curriculum. In some subjects, such as physical education, learning coherently builds through from Reception to key stage 4. However, in some areas or phases of the curriculum, teachers have less clarity about the detailed content of the curriculum. This means they do not identify the small steps of knowledge pupils need to continue their learning. As a result, some pupils wait for the answers or make wrong assumptions about their learning. Teachers set highly ambitious work. However, when pupils have not grasped what they need, the work is not completed.

In Reception, teachers make sure children have high-quality interactions to develop their language. This prepares children well for their formal learning. In classes for older pupils, most pupils engage and focus on their learning. Using clear routines, teachers check pupils' understanding throughout the lesson. However, they do not always recognise when some pupils do not have the basic knowledge they need. When this happens, pupils disengage from their learning. This occurs more often with older pupils.

Leaders ensure that reading is central to the curriculum. Pupils in the early stages of learning to read follow a well-planned phonics programme. Leaders train staff to ensure precision in teaching pupils to read. When pupils need support, timely extra help provides what they need. As pupils progress through the school, they continue to receive support for reading, as needed.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They ensure that teachers have clear information about the pupils they teach. Pupils who attend the Polden specialist base receive bespoke, well-planned support to ensure they fully access the curriculum in an appropriate way. Newly appointed special educational needs coordinators in the primary and secondary phase of the school check the planned support for pupils. However, leaders sometimes rely on classroom expectations, the 'BCA Basics', to make sure pupils with SEND receive the support they need. This does not always meet the needs of all pupils. This means some older pupils do not receive the concise support they need when they need it.

Leaders have planned a well-sequenced personal, social and health education curriculum in the primary phase. This is more recently planned for pupils in key stages 3 and 4. As a result, pupils say some of the content has been pitched at too young a level. Leaders have refined this to make sure the curriculum content is age-appropriate. Leaders plan a range of enrichment opportunities for pupils. Younger pupils engage more fully. Leaders plan events and visiting speakers in order to engage more older pupils in having enriching and new experiences. Leaders recognise the need to develop this more. There is a well-planned careers programme. Through events such as careers fairs and interviews, pupils receive the support and guidance they need to plan for the next stages of their education.

Teachers feel that leaders support them well. They are considerate of workload. Teachers appreciate the time they spend working with colleagues across the phases and within the trust to share and develop their expertise. Through training, trust leaders support leadership at every level. Members of the governing body have a good knowledge of the school priorities and provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know their community well. They take time to get to know pupils and their families. As a result, they understand their needs. Staff receive up-to-date training. They are confident in identifying issues and reporting concerns.

Leaders ensure that members of the safeguarding team work within all phases of the school. Their pink lanyard identifies them to pupils. Pupils are confident that they have someone they can talk to if they have a concern.

Working with external agencies, leaders act promptly to identify help for vulnerable pupils. Leaders appoint professionals to the trust, such as counsellors, to increase support.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Although there is an ambitious top-level curriculum in place, there is inconsistency in the implementation of the curriculum. The important knowledge pupils need is not clearly or progressively planned in some subjects and phases. As a result, pupils struggle to complete tasks. Leaders need to explicitly identify and plan the small steps of component knowledge pupils need to build their learning over time.
- In some subjects and phases, teachers do not check pupils' understanding effectively. Although the processes for checking are in place, teachers do not identify misconceptions that prevent pupils from sustaining their learning. As a result, too many pupils do not keep up with the learning. Leaders need to ensure that teachers check that pupils have secured the fundamental knowledge they need so they can move on successfully to the next stage of their learning.

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	138375
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10256612
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,514
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andy Berry
Principal	Zoe Stucki
Website	www.bridgwatercollegeacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	4 and 5 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is sponsored by Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust. There are seven schools within the trust.
- The school hosts an inclusive specialist provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder or significant language and communication needs.
- The school's nursery admits children from three years of age.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider and four unregistered alternative providers. Two providers are part of the trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement 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.

- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of work.
- Inspectors viewed a range of school documentation, including reports, reviews, minutes of the local governing body and the school's improvement and self-evaluation plans.
- Inspectors met and spoke with pupils in the primary phase and in the secondary phase of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead inspector scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and safeguarding trust lead to review safeguarding procedures, evaluations and cases. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

Inspection team

Rachel Hesketh, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Tonya Hill	Ofsted Inspector
Tom Hill	Ofsted Inspector
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