

Inspection of a good school: Wexham School

Norway Drive, Slough, Berkshire SL2 5QP

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 May 2023

Outcome

Wexham School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Wexham School is a friendly and highly inclusive school. It welcomes pupils from a range of nationalities and backgrounds. Many pupils join the school for a fresh start after struggling in other secondary schools. The majority of pupils meet the high expectations that leaders set. There is a supportive and caring culture at the school. Pupils appreciate the relationships that they develop with staff. Pupils learn to respect one another.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit from a broad and ambitious curriculum. They particularly enjoy studying Spanish, following leaders' development of the modern foreign languages curriculum. Pupils' literacy skills are developing as a result of the determined focus on reading and writing across the whole curriculum.

The school is generally calm and purposeful. There is little disruption to lessons, and teachers address any poor behaviour consistently. Pupils are confident that if bullying happens, staff will deal with it right away. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe.

Pupils enjoy taking part in a wide range of clubs and school trips. Many of these are specifically organised to raise pupils' aspirations. For example, during the inspection, a group of disadvantaged pupils were excited to be visiting Oxford University.

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

Leaders and staff help pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding through a broad and ambitious curriculum. Large numbers of pupils join the school during key stages 3 and 4. Many of these pupils go on to achieve the GCSE qualifications that they need for the sixth form and future employment. The sixth form prepares students well for their next steps. Increasing numbers of students achieve high A-level grades and go to university. Pupils with SEND receive good support. Staff know the needs of these pupils well. They adapt learning when appropriate. Pupils who attend the resource base receive expert support, which helps them to access the whole curriculum.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum is well planned and delivered in most subjects. Curriculum leaders have carefully set out the important information that pupils will learn and when they should learn it. Staff use consistent lesson structures and routines to help pupils know and remember what they need to. Teachers plan activities that build on what pupils have already learned. This helps them to remember important knowledge over time. Despite significant improvements to the curriculum, pupils' stronger progress is not yet reflected in published results. In a small number of subjects, weaknesses in leadership and instability in staffing have meant that expectations have not been high enough. Where this occurs, pupils do not yet achieve as well as they should.

Leaders have recently introduced new ways of checking what pupils have learned. These approaches are being used more effectively in some subjects than in others. Sometimes, the tasks that teachers set to check pupils' understanding of the curriculum do not identify precisely enough the knowledge and skills that pupils need to improve their work. This leads to some pupils developing gaps in their learning.

Leaders are determined to raise pupils' literacy. Many pupils have very low levels of reading and writing when they join the school. Leaders carefully identify pupils who are struggling with reading. Specialist teaching for the weakest readers ensures that these pupils develop increasingly secure reading skills. Teachers use tutor time to promote a love of reading by reading together with their classes. These sessions help pupils to appreciate an ambitious and diverse range of literature. Leaders have developed a structured approach to the teaching of writing. This is implemented consistently, helping pupils to write more coherently in many subjects.

The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme is well planned and delivered. The material is age-appropriate and includes how to form healthy relationships, online safety and fundamental British values. Leaders continually keep the curriculum under review to ensure that it is relevant to pupils. Staff arrange many competitive activities through the well-established house system, such as the 'spelling bee'. Sixth-form students make a valuable contribution to the school. They help younger pupils in lessons and support them with their reading.

Leaders and governors want the best for pupils. They are driven by their vision to provide the best education for pupils in their local community. They have identified clear priorities to improve the school further. Staff feel valued and well supported by leaders. They appreciate the way that their well-being is taken seriously. The school has the confidence of parents. One parent, reflecting the views of many, commented: 'My child has told me his teachers have been amazing, treated him like family and made him confident in his learning abilities. We have recommended this school to many parents.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

As part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising numbers of pupils on roll, leaders have strengthened and reorganised the safeguarding team. Safeguarding leaders have an impressive knowledge of individual pupils and the risks that they may

face. There are robust procedures to ensure that vulnerable pupils are quickly identified and supported.

Staff know exactly what to do if they have concerns about pupils or members of staff. Leaders provide them with routine training and guidance during the weekly staff briefings. The PSHE curriculum provides pupils with the knowledge to assess risk and keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, particularly science, the intended curriculum is not always implemented effectively in the classroom. In these subjects, staff do not always have high enough expectations about what pupils are expected to know and be able to do. Leaders should ensure that they keep a careful oversight over how well the curriculum is being implemented and provide support so that it is of a consistently high standard in all subjects.
- Leaders are developing new approaches to assessment, which are not yet effectively embedded. Sometimes, teachers do not use assessment precisely enough to check that pupils are secure in their knowledge of the most important curriculum content. This means that when pupils learn new information in these curriculum subjects, they find it more difficult to build on their prior knowledge. Leaders should ensure that assessment is used consistently by teachers across all subjects to pinpoint what pupils know and can do, then ensure that new learning builds securely on this.

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	110078
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	10256494
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,110
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Harish Verma
Headteacher	Lawrence Smith
Website	www.wexhamschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The number of pupils on roll has increased considerably since the previous inspection.
- The school includes a resourced provision for pupils with autism. Currently, 20 pupils attend this provision.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- 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

- 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 held meetings with a range of leaders, including the headteacher and senior leaders. They also met with subject leaders, leaders of the sixth form, pastoral leaders, teaching staff and support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, mathematics and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed curriculum design with subject leaders, carried out lesson visits, scrutinised pupils' work, spoke to teachers and spoke to pupils from the lessons visited about their learning. In addition, the inspectors visited lessons in some other subjects.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding. They reviewed the school's single central record and met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss case studies of safeguarding referrals. Inspectors also spoke with pupils and staff.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views of members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff survey. The views of parents were taken into account from the 107 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and parents' free-text responses. Inspectors met with groups of pupils formally and informally to discuss their views of the school and considered the 54 responses to the Ofsted survey and the school's own pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Mark Bagust, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andy Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023