

# Inspection of a good school: The Commonweal School

The Mall, Old Town, Swindon, Wiltshire SN1 4JE

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Inspection dates:

13 and 14 June 2023

## **Outcome**

The Commonweal School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Commonweal School is an inclusive and happy community. The meaning of the school's name, 'for the good of all', is seen through all areas of school life. The school provides a high standard of education, as well as a caring and nurturing ethos. Staff know pupils as individuals. They support, challenge and encourage pupils to be the best version of themselves. This leads pupils to work hard and be ambitious in their plans for the future.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The school values, including responsibility and cooperation, are modelled by staff and lived out by pupils. For example, pupils show positive attitudes to their learning and work supportively with their peers. Pupils are kind and courteous to staff and to each other. They enjoy coming to school and are proud to attend Commonweal.

Pupils benefit from an extensive range of enriching opportunities beyond the academic curriculum. For example, pupils participate in performing arts and sports clubs, as well as overseas residentials. Throughout their time at school, pupils visit universities and local employers. Many students in the sixth form take on leadership roles, such as tutoring younger pupils or working with children in local primary schools.

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

Pupils follow a broad and rich curriculum. Leaders are ambitious for more pupils to follow the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects when they reach key stage 4. The proportion of pupils doing this has increased each year and continues to grow.

Pupils in the school's specialist resource provision attend the majority of lessons with their peers. Subject leaders make adaptations to the curriculum and provide suitable support so that pupils follow the curriculum successfully. For example, in physical education, equipment has been modified and the curriculum organised to allow a greater level of independent choice for pupils. Staff know the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. They use their training and the information provided by leaders to support and challenge pupils in their learning.

Subject leaders are clear about the knowledge they want pupils to learn. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge. They carefully plan assessments to check what pupils have learned over time. They use this information to adjust what they teach next and address any misconceptions that pupils have. Current pupils demonstrate a very strong retention of knowledge from the curriculum in their written work and verbal responses.

The school's reading programme introduces pupils to an interesting range of texts, dealing with complex themes. Additionally, leaders have a sharp focus on those pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read so that they catch up with their peers quickly.

Students in the sixth form access a wide range of courses and qualifications. Many students choose to stay at the school for their post-16 education. A significant number from other local secondary schools also join the sixth form. The sixth form is vibrant and welcoming. Students benefit from high-quality teaching. They take part in regular opportunities to enhance their wider personal development.

Behaviour around the school site is calm. Many pupils choose to be physically active during social times. Some choose other activities, such as a game of chess. When pupils do not meet leaders' high expectations, clear sanctions are applied by staff. Pupils also receive support and education, if necessary, to modify their future behaviour. Pupils agree that the system is clear and fair.

The wider development of pupils is a strength of the school. Pupils learn about the diverse community they belong to. They appreciate difference and say derogatory language of any kind is rare and not tolerated. Through the curriculum for social and global studies, pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of topics such as how to form healthy relationships, knife crime and how to look after their mental health. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, receive extensive advice and guidance to help prepare them for their next stage in education or employment.

Leaders have a strong moral intent. They make decisions in the best interests of pupils at the school. They are reflective in their practice and review the success of any changes that are made regularly and thoughtfully. Leaders involve staff in these decisions. As a result, staff feel informed and say their opinions are valued. Leaders consider the well-being of staff and strive to reduce unnecessary burden on their workload.

Governors share the passion of senior leaders. They know the school well. They support and challenge leaders towards achieving common goals. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the provision the school provides.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff and governors receive regular and appropriate safeguarding training. Leaders adapt this for the needs of the school and wider community. Staff are confident in how to raise a concern about a pupil. When they do, leaders take swift and effective action to keep pupils safe. This includes working positively with external agencies, as necessary.

Leaders do not shy away from talking to pupils about safeguarding issues. For example, issues such as child-on-child sexual abuse, cyber-bullying, and misogyny are discussed with pupils. Pupils appreciate this openness. Pupils feel safe at school. They have trusted adults they can talk to about any worries.

## 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 on 28 and 29 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

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|---|--|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 137190   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Swindon  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10269198   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | Secondary<br>Comprehensive   |
| <b>School category</b>                            | Academy converter  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                        | 11 to 19   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                           | Mixed  |
| <b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>        | 1,408  |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 304  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                      | Board of trustees  |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                             | Dr Jokie Bakker  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                | Charles Drew   |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.commonweal.co.uk">www.commonweal.co.uk</a>     |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                | 28 and 29 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers.
- 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 discussions with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders and a group of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. 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.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader to consider how well the school identifies pupils who are at risk and engages with external services. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff survey and responses to the survey for pupils.

## Inspection team

Kelly Olive, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Frances Bywater

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Gary Lewis

Ofsted Inspector

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