

Inspection of a good school: South Somerset Partnership School

Dampier Street, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 4EN

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 October 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. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at South Somerset Partnership School have a positive view of school after often previously negative experiences and poor attendance. They feel safe. This is as a result of strong and trusting relationships between staff and pupils. Staff are consistent in their expectations of pupils. Pupils respond positively to these because they trust and have confidence in staff.

The school prioritises pupils' social and emotional development. This ensures that pupils are ready to learn. Learning in school and beyond the classroom environment focuses on developing pupils' resilience and ability to manage challenge and change. It increases their awareness of life in modern Britain; their understanding of diversity and tolerance of others. However, the academic curriculum is not yet fully effective, so that pupils learn well enough. Older pupils, especially those in key stage 4, experience a more successful academic offer.

Pupils value the difference that the school has made to them. Parents and carers agree that the school has made a notable impact. Their children now want to come to school. This is because they feel understood. The school, across all of its sites, is generally a calm and purposeful place to be.

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

The school wants the best for pupils. This starts from the point of induction. The school has designed a carefully considered approach to ensure each pupil's start is successful. High importance is placed on knowing pupils well. There is a robust assessment process in place to gain information about pupils' academic ability, as well as their social and emotional skills. Staff use much of this information effectively to ensure pupils' needs are

identified quickly and the right support is put in place. Additionally, it enables the school to be vigilant to any concerns that may suggest a pupil is at risk of harm.

While pupils' social and emotional needs are met well, the school knows that the academic provision in place does not match the vision for pupils to achieve well. The school knows that pupils are now in the best mindset to learn, and that the curriculum needs to be strengthened to make this happen. The school has not identified the most important knowledge it wants pupils to learn. For some pupils, this means they do not secure key knowledge well enough to build new learning successfully and remember more over time. This does not always prepare them well for re-integration into their next school placement or their next stage.

The school does not have a fully accurate view of how well pupils learn across the curriculum. The assurances of how well the curriculum is delivered are not in place. Consequently, the school does not always know what is working well and what to improve to make the most impact. As a result, pupils do not learn as well as they could. There are subjects where this is more successful, for example in personal, social and health education (PSHE). Within this subject, there are strong links with the school's focus on meeting pupil's social and emotional needs. There is a clear sequence of learning as well as the ability to be responsive to safeguarding or behaviour concerns that arise.

The school has taken some steps to raise the profile of reading. This includes the 'Year of the Book'. However, there is not a clear strategy in place for the teaching of reading. The school's expectations for reading in the curriculum are not established well enough across the different sites and age ranges. Consequently, some pupils do not learn to become increasingly confident and fluent readers.

Pupils' wider development contributes well to their readiness to learn. Leaders ensure that opportunities for older pupils, such as work experience and college visits, increase their knowledge of the world of work. The school has worked to build a network of employers for pupils to meet and engage with over events, such as breakfasts and at careers fairs. Pupils, particularly those in key stage 4, are encouraged to be aspirational about their future and are prepared well for their next stage.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not assure itself of how well the curriculum is delivered in some subjects. There is not a firm or accurate view of how well pupils learn the essential subject content. The school does not always know what is working well and what to improve to make the most impact. As a result, pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school needs to be more robust in checking the impact of their actions and

decisions, so that there is an accurate view of the quality of the curriculum in all subjects.

- The school has not identified the most important knowledge it wants pupils to learn, no matter how long they are on roll. As a result, pupils do not build their knowledge well enough. The school needs to review the curriculum design to ensure that important knowledge is identified and clearly sequenced to support pupils to know and remember more over time.
- The strategy for prioritising reading is not established fully. What is in place is not followed consistently. As a result, pupils lack the strategies needed to be successful, confident readers and do not develop enjoyment of reading. The school needs to be clear on the expectations for reading, ensure that staff know these and have sufficient knowledge to increase pupils' ability and perception of reading.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2014.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years,

looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	134697
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10288168
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	
Headteacher	Jo Simons
Website	www.ssps.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school context changes continuously. Since the last inspection, the school typically has increased numbers of pupils in the primary phase and key stage 3 in addition to those pupils in key stage 4.
- Pupil places are commissioned through the local authority.
- The school caters for pupils on short-term and long-term placements. Pupils attend full-time and part-time, depending on the commissioning arrangements made with the local authority.
- The school is split over four sites.
- All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Some have an education, health and care plan. Pupils needs vary and include medical needs, autism and social, emotional and mental health concerns.
- The school makes use of three unregistered alternative providers. Inspectors spoke with these providers as well as pupils who access them to make the necessary checks on safeguarding and suitability of provision.
- The school did not have any pupils in early years and key stage 1 on roll during the inspection.

- 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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and other senior leaders. In addition, an inspector met with members of the management committee, including the chair and the local authority strategic manager for inclusion transformation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: Reading, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. In addition, inspectors sampled individual pupils to gather evidence about the quality of education.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school sites.
- Inspectors analysed school documentation, including leaders' evaluations and plans for improvement. Inspectors scrutinised a range of policies and procedures, including those that relate to the curriculum, SEND, safeguarding and admissions.
- Inspectors gathered the views of parents face to face and through telephone calls in addition to responses to Ofsted Parent View and the free-text comments. Inspectors evaluated responses to Ofsted's staff survey and pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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