

# Inspection of Robert Blake School

Hamp Avenue, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 6AW

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Inspection dates: 10 and 11 October 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

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

Robert Blake's values of aspire, achieve and celebrate are well known to staff and pupils. New arrivals to the school, including pupils who speak English as an additional language, are helped by staff and pupils to settle in quickly.

The school has raised its expectations for pupils. Pupils behave well. There are clear and consistent routines to manage pupils' conduct. Pupils understand these routines and feel they are fair. Pupils feel safe in school and say they have a trusted adult they can talk to. Leaders act decisively when pupils talk to adults about their worries.

The school is disappointed in the outcomes of public examinations. While the school has higher expectations for pupils' achievement, these are not yet realised. The curriculum and how it is assessed do not always help pupils to learn effectively.

Pupils in all year groups take part in a well-structured careers programme. Pupils enjoy wider opportunities. For example, they take up positions of responsibility in the student council and the school parliament. Pupils attend a range of clubs, which include music and sport.

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

The school has improved some areas identified in the school's previous inspection. This has resulted in a stronger curriculum. Pupils study a broad and balanced curriculum. Some subjects have carefully defined the essential knowledge that teachers expect pupils to remember. Where this work has been more successful, pupils study a well-planned and challenging curriculum. However, the curriculum is not yet implemented consistently well in all subjects. As a result, pupils do not always learn effectively.

The school has recently introduced a system to help pupils to recall prior knowledge. Where this is done more expertly, such as in mathematics, pupils can make links between new and older learning. However, assessment is not routinely used to identify where gaps exist in pupils' knowledge, or to correct their misconceptions. As a result, too many pupils do not build their learning on what they already know and can do.

Staff use 'what helps me as a learner' plans to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff have helpful guidance about how to meet pupils' needs. However, pupils with SEND experience the same variability in teaching as other pupils. As a result, pupils with SEND are not always supported well enough to learn effectively in some subjects.

The school has introduced a programme to improve reading for all pupils. This includes support with phonics, fluency or comprehension, depending on individual pupils' needs. The school is working hard to improve pupils' attitudes to reading, but

most pupils say that they rarely read for pleasure. As a result, the impact of reading intervention is not yet evident.

The school's behaviour policy is understood and used with effect. Staff have insisted on more consistent standards of conduct. Pupils have responded well to this. They now behave well in lessons and around the school. This has helped teachers and pupils to focus on learning. Pupils are punctual and typically follow routines well. Pupils have good attendance.

Pupils are supported in their wider development. They learn about healthy relationships in ways appropriate to their age. For example, older pupils demonstrate an appropriate understanding of consent. Pupils learn about democracy and how to be active citizens. They appreciate and value people's differences. Most pupils are polite and have respectful discussions with each other. Pupils have access to a wealth of information so that they can make informed choices about their next steps in education, training or employment.

The school has experienced challenges in recruiting staff in recent years. This has had an impact on the school's capacity for improvement. The school is outward looking and welcomes external support. Less experienced staff receive high-quality support and training. Governors and staff have a keen desire to improve outcomes. However, the school does not have a clear plan to address this priority.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Assessment is not used effectively to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning. As a result, misconceptions and gaps in learning persist. The school should ensure that assessment precisely identifies and addresses misconceptions and gaps in knowledge so that pupils develop secure knowledge and understanding.
- Some subject areas have not finalised their curriculum thinking. Consequently, pupils do not build the depth of knowledge and understanding that they need. The school needs to ensure that curriculums carefully identify the essential knowledge pupils need to learn so that pupils are supported to build detailed subject knowledge over time.
- Pupils' reading skills, as well as their love of reading, are not yet fully developed and embedded across the whole school. This means that some pupils do not improve their reading quickly enough, which hinders their learning across the curriculum. The school should identify and address weaknesses in reading quickly and ensure that pupils read more widely.
- The school needs to refine its plan to address its priority to improve pupils' outcomes. The quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils are not improving in

many subject areas. The school needs to ensure that it identifies and understands the actions required to address this priority and to improve pupils' outcomes.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123878
<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	10288162
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,067
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Tim Scott
<b>Headteacher</b>	Deb Loveridge
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.robertblake.org.uk">www.robertblake.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4 and 5 December 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school uses two registered alternative provisions and one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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.

- 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. 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 senior leaders and representatives of those responsible for governance.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and reviewed plans for support of pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, examined school records and discussed cases relevant to safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, history, mathematics and modern foreign languages. Inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff survey and responses to the survey for pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Frances Bywater, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Mike Foley	Ofsted Inspector
Tonya Hill	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Tong	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Williams	His Majesty's Inspector

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