

Inspection of a good school: Wedmore First School Academy

Blackford Road, Wedmore, Somerset BS28 4BS

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 March 2024

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.

The headteacher of this school is Shelley Kent. This school is part of Wessex Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Gavin Ball and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Brian Kirkup.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their time at Wedmore. They feel safe and secure. Staff care for pupils well. In the nursery, children show impressive perseverance and concentration when working independently. Pupils interact well at social times. In class, they behave well. Pupils eagerly discuss their thoughts and ideas in lessons. Bullying is rare.

However, the school has been through a turbulent period. There have been many changes, including in staffing. Much of the curriculum is in transition. The quality of education has suffered as a result of the turbulence. However, new leadership has given a fresh and clear direction to the school. The tide is beginning to turn. Staff and parents acknowledge this. They are optimistic about the future.

The school is in the process of further enhancing pupils' wider development offer. Pupils pursue their sporting interests through several different clubs. They go on trips to places such as a local recycling plant and Bristol Museum to enhance their academic learning.

Pupils show tolerant attitudes to people that are different to them. However, the school knows there is more to do to promote knowledge of faiths and cultures different to their own to help prepare them for life in modern Britain.

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

On taking up her post, the headteacher rightly prioritised the embedding of a new early reading curriculum and stabilising the staff team. In a short space of time, she has ensured that Wedmore is a happy place to work. The staff hold her in high esteem. Communication between the school and parents is much improved. Parents feel leaders genuinely listen to them.

The school and trust recognise they are in the early stages of much needed improvements to the curriculum. Where this work is more advanced, the curriculum is detailed and ambitious. For example, in mathematics, the curriculum details the small steps that pupils need to learn. Consequently, they develop a sound knowledge of most new concepts. Pupils use mathematical vocabulary accurately. Due to low outcomes in the 2023 multiplication tables check, the school has also further revised its curriculum thinking. Pupils now learn their times tables more securely.

However, in some subjects the specific knowledge pupils need to learn from the Nursery Year to Year 4, has not been identified. Too much is left open to interpretation by teachers. In some areas such as writing, the order in which pupils learn new knowledge has not been carefully considered. While pupils have frequent opportunities to write at length, they do not build on their previous learning well enough.

The changes to leadership, staffing and curriculum in recent years have also meant that curriculum implementation has suffered. Teachers too often give pupils work that is low-level or that does not build on what pupils have previously learned. Some sequences of learning do not link together well. As a result, pupils' recall in some subjects, such as history, is weak. Leaders know that teachers' training in the delivery of the curriculum is an area for development. However, practice is stronger in the early years. Children complete activities which are purposeful and take into account what they can already do.

The school has raised the profile of reading. It has refreshed and restocked its library. Children in the early years begin to learn the phonics code straightaway when they join. Pupils learn to read quicker than in the past. Fewer now fall behind. However, those pupils that do are swiftly identified. This includes older pupils who have gaps because of historic weaknesses in the reading curriculum. Well-trained staff help them to catch up quickly.

The school has revised its approach to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It now has clearer review cycles for their individual plans. This ensures that pupils get the appropriate support they need. They learn the same curriculum content as their classmates.

Pupils know how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They have a strong knowledge of how to keep safe online. Pupils say everyone at Wedmore is treated equally. The school council have a real voice in the school. For example, by making suggestions of how to improve the school library or improvements to playtimes. The school has close links with its community, such as holding events in the local church throughout the year.

Local governors and the trust are realistic about the position the school is in. Difficult decisions have not been shied away from. Governors ensure that the well-being of all staff is a priority, including the newly appointed leadership team. They support and challenge the school as appropriate.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school has not identified the most important knowledge it wants pupils to know and remember from the Nursery Year to Year 4. In some areas, it has not given enough consideration to the order pupils learn new content. As a result, pupils are not able to build their knowledge well over time. The trust should identify the precise knowledge it wants pupils to learn, and in what order, from the Nursery Year to Year 4 and then check how well pupils are learning this.
- In some subjects, teachers set tasks for pupils that do not build well on prior learning. Consequently, pupils do not develop a secure understanding or recall what they have been taught. The trust needs to ensure that teachers are supported to set work for pupils across all subjects that sufficiently deepens their knowledge.
- The personal development curriculum is in a developing stage. It currently does not provide pupils with opportunities to learn about different cultures and faiths to their own. This means that pupils are not well prepared for some aspects of life in modern Britain. The trust needs to ensure that the curriculum enables pupils to develop a secure understanding of different cultures and faiths to their own.

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 June 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	136841
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10313272
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	183
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Brian Kirkup
CEO	Gavin Ball
Headteacher	Shelley Kent
Website	www.wedmorefirstschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Wessex Learning Trust.
- The school has a nursery which admits children from 2-years-old.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The headteacher took up her post in December 2023. The deputy headteacher was also appointed shortly before the inspection.

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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, groups of pupils, groups of staff, the CEO and deputy CEO of the multi-academy trust, the chair of the multi-academy trust and representatives from the local governing body. He also held a telephone call with an alternative provider.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- The inspector considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Jason Edge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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