

Inspection of a good school: The Bridge School Sedgemoor

Westonzoyland Road, Bridgwater TA6 5HT

Inspection dates:

1 and 2 May 2024

Outcome

The Bridge School Sedgemoor continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' experiences of education are transformed at The Bridge School Sedgemoor. Most join the school following long periods of instability in education. Typically, they have developed embedded negative views about school and learning. However, from the moment they arrive, staff expertly get to know each pupil and their needs very quickly. Strong, positive relationships between staff and pupils are established. Pupils settle well and develop a sense of belonging. They experience success. As a result, pupils go on to attend better, achieve well and believe in themselves.

Staff share high expectations of pupils. They work committedly to manage sometimes complex pupil behaviour. Pupils reengage in their learning because they increasingly want to do their best. Discriminatory or unkind behaviours are consistently challenged. Staff manage pupils' behaviour effectively by utilising strong relationships. Collectively, this helps to ensure pupils develop improved attitudes to learning.

Preparation for the next stage of pupils' education is everyone's priority. Pupils benefit from personalised pathways into further education and employment. They receive useful and well considered careers advice that links to their needs and aspirations. Consequently, pupils typically move onto sustained education, employment or training.

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

The school has a carefully designed curriculum. It is particularly strong in providing for pupils' personal development. Pupils arrive often having had disjointed experiences of education. Many have a special educational need and/or disability (SEND). Most come with significant gaps in their learning and others for short periods of time. Whatever their route into the school and planned pathway through it, staff ensure pupils' needs are assessed straight away. This includes detailed assessments about pupils' behavioural needs, SEND and barriers to learning. Pupils' attitudes to learning improve quickly. Many reintegrate into mainstream education. Older pupils go on to attain useful qualifications.

The school has rightly been working on improving the academic curriculum. Some subjects are already strong and established. For example, the mathematics curriculum is carefully sequenced. Staff guide pupils to build on what they already know and can do. Similarly, pupils make strong progress in science and art, in which pupils learn new concepts and build knowledge systematically.

Some subjects are less effective. 'Big Questions' underpin projects that aim to capture pupils' interests and help them learn about key historical and geographical facts. This helps capture pupils' enthusiasm. However, the key concepts the school wants pupils to know and remember have not been consistently identified. This means that pupils learn about historical and geographical information, but they do not build up a secure understanding of historical or geographical concepts that will help them build their knowledge well across the curriculum.

Similarly, the school's reading curriculum is not yet fully effective. Reading is appropriately prioritised. Staff are skilled at supporting pupils to change their views of reading, which are often poor when they arrive. Most pupils make strong progress in their reading. The majority go on to apply reading across the curriculum and with success. There is an agreed approach to teaching early reading, which is supported by useful resources and daily lessons. However, too few staff have been trained to make the most of this agreed approach. This means some staff are less skilled at modelling new sounds and how to blend them. This limits the progress of the minority of pupils who are still in the earliest stages of reading.

Staff are motivated. The school utilises its partnership with specialist provision to provide targeted training for staff. This includes a focus on understanding the needs of pupils with SEND, as well as planning and teaching an effective specialist curriculum. As a result, staff feel valued and are increasingly confident and clear about how to promote learning. Staff skilfully use humour and their extensive knowledge of pupils' needs to capture pupils' interest.

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 has not identified the key concepts it wants pupils learn consistently across subjects. This means some sequences of work, particularly in the humanities, do not help pupils secure new knowledge because teachers are not able to identify where there are gaps. The school should identify precisely what they want pupils to learn and check how well pupils remember this across all subjects.
- The early reading curriculum needs further development. Not enough staff are reading experts and so there is variability in how pupils are supported to learn and apply their

phonics. The school needs to ensure more staff are reading experts so that pupils can learn their phonics with greater accuracy and speed.

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	134758
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10297965
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Chris Wright
Headteacher	Helen Farnell
Website	https://www.thebridgesedgemoor.org/
Date of previous inspection	20 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses four unregistered alternative providers.
- 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 ungraded inspection under section 8 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 leaders, including the executive headteacher, interim head of school and the partnership and safeguarding lead that works across the partnership.
- Inspectors spoke to an independent consultant who acts as a school improvement advisor to the school. They also met with four members of the management committee, including the chair. The management committee provides governance for the pupil referral unit.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. Inspectors also listened to some pupils read.
- 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 took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, free-text responses.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including documents relating to governance, leaders' evaluations, plans for school improvement and information about the school's curriculum.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dale Burr

His Majesty's Inspector

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