

Inspection of Buckler's Mead School

1 St. Johns Road, Yeovil BA21 4NH

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Mark Lawrence. This school is part of The Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Alun Williams, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anthony Wells.

What is it like to attend this school?

Buckler's Mead is an inclusive school. The school is welcoming and pupils respect the differences in other people. Pupils are happy and feel safe in school.

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum for pupils. It is broad, balanced and reflects the school's aims to provide 'an inspiring education for all'. Staff have high expectations for pupils' academic learning. Pupils benefit from the curriculum and are well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils respond well to the school's 'sky high expectations'. They understand these expectations and think they are fair. Pupils behave considerately towards each other and to staff. Pupils display positive attitudes to their learning in lessons and try their best. At social times, pupils behave well and there is a calm atmosphere in the school. If bullying happens, pupils are confident that staff will deal with it quickly.

The school provides a broad range of experiences to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy a variety of clubs and activities. The school makes sure these are accessible to all. Pupils speak excitedly about termly concerts and the upcoming school musical. There are a raft of leadership opportunities, including being a prefect, ambassador or part of student voice. These positions allow pupils to support and represent their peers.

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. It is well-defined and has the English Baccalaureate suite of qualifications at its core. The curriculum ensures that the order of learning helps pupils. It lets them build on what they already know and connect to new ideas. The school has identified the important knowledge that pupils need to know and when to teach it. This helps teachers understand clearly what to teach and the order in which to teach it.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this to introduce new content in manageable steps. Teaching ensures that pupils review their learning. They do this through routine recap of the most important content. This helps pupils remember the most important information. However, sometimes the curriculum is not implemented as the school intends. For example, assessment is not always used effectively, and explanations are sometimes unclear. As a result, some pupils do not learn as well as they could.

Reading is a top priority. All pupils take part in the Read to Succeed programme, whereby they read carefully selected texts every day in tutor time. The school quickly identifies pupils who struggle with reading. These pupils receive effective support to help them read well. That said, pupils who are learning to read do not have books matched to the sounds they are learning. This means they do not practise the skills they are learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs accurately identified. Appropriate adaptations are made for learning in class or with personalised support. As a result, these pupils achieve well.

The school has made pupils' attendance a priority. Working closely with the trust, it analyses absence data and uses that information to implement strategies to improve attendance. Despite this, there are still some pupils who do not attend school regularly. The school continues to rightly focus on these pupils whose attendance needs to improve further. Pupils behave well in lessons and focus on their work. Teachers consistently apply rewards and sanctions to support positive behaviour. Routines for learning are well established.

Pupils benefit from strong careers provision. Pupils in Year 10 take part in work experience placements. The school has well-developed links to a variety of post-16 destinations. There is a very well-considered programme for pupils' personal development. It covers a wide range of areas, including physical and mental health. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and in the local community. They talk confidently about the importance of developing healthy relationships. Pupils have a strong understanding of the importance of fundamental British values.

The trust provides highly effective support to the school. They understand the school's strengths and areas for development well. They also hold the school to account effectively. Teachers and support staff value the opportunities for their professional growth. They also feel their workload and well-being are considered.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is some variability in the delivery of the curriculum. Assessment and explanations are not always used effectively. This means that sometimes pupils do not remember important knowledge and concepts. The school needs to ensure that the curriculum is implemented and taught consistently well so that pupils know more, remember more and achieve well across all subjects.
- Pupils receiving additional support with their reading do not have books matched closely to the sounds they are learning. This prevents these pupils from building their confidence and fluency further. The school should make sure that the books pupils read help them to practise the reading skills they have learned.

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	148830
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10322332
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	765
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anthony Wells
CEO of the trust	Alun Williams
Headteacher	Mark Lawrence
Website	www.bucklersmead.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision and three unregistered alternative provisions.
- 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 the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the chief executive officer (CEO) and deputy CEO of the multi-academy trust, trust leaders, members of the local governing body and one trustee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, 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, 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 spoke to some of the alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors took into account the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the responses to the surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Frances Bywater, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Stuart Smallwood	Ofsted Inspector
Lee Sargeant	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Schlick	Ofsted Inspector

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