

Inspection of Devizes School

The Green, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 3AG

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The executive headteacher of this school is David Cooper. This school is part of The White Horse Federation, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Dan Nicholls, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ninna Gibson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Devizes School are polite, considerate and respectful. They are familiar with the school's values of courage, pride and resilience. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm. Pupils are happy and feel safe at school.

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum for pupils. Staff have high expectations, and pupils respond well to these. Pupils are successful in public examinations. Sixth-form students are positive about their experience. They feel well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils respect those from different backgrounds. They are actively encouraged at the school to treat everyone equally. Bullying rarely happens, and staff address it if it occurs. The school is calm and orderly. Lessons are free of disruption. Pupils appreciate the wide range of awards available to them. They understand and value the consistent approach to behaviour.

Pupils are beginning to feel a stronger sense of identity within their house teams. They enjoy participating in house competitions, such as sports and environmental competitions. Pupils are offered a broad range of opportunities beyond the classroom. The school makes sure these are accessible to all. These include extra-curricular clubs such as debating, netball and gardening. Sixth-form students run some of these clubs. The school's recent production included pupils from all key stages working together.

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

The curriculum is thoughtfully sequenced so that knowledge and skills build over time. It is ambitious for all pupils. Subject areas have carefully considered what pupils should know and remember. They have also considered the coherent order in which to teach the content. The school knows that not all curriculum areas are as well developed as others. Where this is the case, there are plans to improve them.

Teaching staff have strong subject knowledge. They inspire pupils and sixth-form students with their passion for the subject. They present and model information precisely. Lessons include activities that help pupils recall and apply their learning. The school's checks on pupils' learning are generally effective. This helps pupils identify gaps in their understanding. As a result, pupils learn more and remember more of what they are taught. Pupils produce high-quality work. This is reflected in published outcomes which are above the national average.

Those pupils who need help with their reading are provided with additional support. Consequently, they become increasingly fluent and confident readers. The school recognises that it needs to check the impact of these interventions more closely to ensure pupils are benefiting as intended.

Effective systems are in place to accurately identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They follow the same curriculum as their peers. Staff receive detailed information and strategies to help meet pupils' needs. They

take this into account when arranging their classroom seating plans. However, teaching and the curriculum are not always well adapted to meet the needs of some pupils. Where this is the case, pupils with SEND do not learn the full curriculum as well as they might.

The school has made improvements to pupils' behaviour. The atmosphere in lessons and around the school is calm and purposeful. All staff apply the school's behaviour and rewards system consistently. However, some pupils have struggled to adapt to the school's increased expectations. This has led to a high number of suspensions. As a result, these pupils miss important learning. This impacts the school's most vulnerable pupils.

Most pupils understand the importance of attending school each day. Pupils typically enjoy coming to school and would recommend it. The school and the trust know that attendance needs to increase. Staff identify and support pupils whose attendance is lower than it should be. Despite this, a minority of pupils do not attend school often enough. The number of disadvantaged pupils or those with SEND who are persistently absent from school is too high. As a result, this leads to gaps in their learning.

The school's personal development programme is thorough. Pupils learn about pertinent themes such as healthy relationships and online safety. They also learn about tolerance and respecting those who are different from themselves. In the sixth form, students benefit from a strong pastoral programme. It includes careers guidance, support and advice. Pupils value the range of educational trips and visits. These enrich the curriculum and help to raise pupils' aspirations. Staff ensure that these opportunities are accessible to all pupils.

A new local governance committee is in place. This provides support and challenge to the school. The trust works proactively with the school, offering guidance and expertise. The school has made efforts to keep parents informed about the changes it is making. Not all parents are aware of the positive impact these actions are having. Staff, including early career teachers, are proud to be part of the school. They value the support of leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, miss out on valuable learning because they are either suspended or do not attend school often enough. This means that they have gaps in their learning. The school needs to work closely with these pupils and their families to improve pupils' attendance and to help them reduce suspensions.
- Teaching and the curriculum are not always consistently well adapted to meet the needs of some pupils with SEND. Consequently, these pupils do not learn the curriculum as well as they might. The school needs to ensure that the information

available to staff is used fully and with greater impact to meet the needs of all pupils with SEND.

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	138630
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10344641
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	996
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	120
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ninna Gibson
CEO of the trust	Dan Nicholls
Headteacher	David Cooper
Website	www.devizesschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school is part of The White Horse Federation.
- The school uses four registered alternative provisions and two unregistered provisions.
- David Cooper is the executive headteacher of the school. Ben Cave is the associate headteacher.
- 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- An inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust, a trustee and members of the local governing committee.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils.
- An inspector spoke to some of the alternative provisions used by the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: design and technology, English, geography, modern foreign languages and science. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- 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 observed pupils’ behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times. They considered pupils’ views about behaviour and bullying in school. They also spoke with staff about their workload, well-being and pupils’ behaviour.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s pupil survey and Ofsted’s staff survey. They also considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text messages.

Inspection team

Frances Bywater, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Stuart Ingram	Ofsted Inspector
Teresa Hill	Ofsted Inspector
Alun Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Collins	Ofsted Inspector

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