

Inspection of Wootton Upper School

Hall End Road, Wootton, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK43 9HT

Inspection dates:	5 and 6 November 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The head of school is Carrie McMorn. This school is a member of the Wootton Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the executive headteacher, Mark Lehain, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ian Sibbald.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are keen to learn at Wootton Upper School. They take part in lessons and work hard. There are clear routines, including morning line-up and equipment checks. These help pupils start the day and lessons purposefully. Pupils have benefitted from changes in the culture of behaviour. This means that pupils can increasingly focus on their learning in lessons and learn more. Most pupils treat others with kindness and respect.

The school offers a range of opportunities for pupils to broaden their interests and develop their confidence. Pupils can take part in a range of clubs including sports and games. Many pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's awards scheme. There is an annual school musical production.

Pupils experience a range of opportunities to research careers, including using information technology to find out about the world of work. This enables them to make informed choices about their next steps. They learn about potential dangers such as county lines and how to stay safe on the internet. Pupils know how to report concerns if they feel unsafe.

The school offers a broad, ambitious curriculum for all pupils. Pupils increasingly produce good quality work across a range of subjects.

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

The curriculum at Wootton Upper School builds upon the knowledge that pupils have gained at middle school. The curriculum identifies the important knowledge that pupils need. Once pupils have securely grasped content and concepts, teachers then move them onto new learning. Pupils have regular opportunities to recall their knowledge of previous topics. This helps them to know and remember more.

The school has successfully made improvements to how well staff teach each subject. Lessons now follow a consistent agreed 'stepping stones' structure. After new knowledge has been introduced, pupils have opportunities to apply what they have learned. In most lessons, teachers regularly check what pupils know. They use these checks to address any gaps in knowledge or misunderstandings and adjust their teaching to help pupils learn what they need to help them successfully move on in their learning.

Staff know the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They choose to use 'pupil passports' to ensure that work meets pupils' needs. This increasingly helps all pupils access the curriculum. Historic published outcomes do not reflect how well-prepared current pupils are for public examinations. In a few subjects the curriculum is not as well implemented, for example, when activities are not adapted to meet pupils' needs. As a result, in these instances, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

The school promotes the importance of reading for pupils. Pupils encounter a diverse range of well-chosen texts in English lessons. They do literacy tasks in form time. Many

pupils make good use of the well-stocked library. The school checks how well pupils can read. Trained staff help weaker readers become more fluent and accurate.

The school has high expectations of how pupils should behave. If pupils find it hard to manage their behaviour, pastoral leaders work with them so that they can improve. Pupils increasingly behave and attend well.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe and healthy as part of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. They are effectively prepared for life after school when they learn about personal finance and a range of different careers. Pupils meet and take part in mock interviews with a range of employers.

Trustees have supported the school to improve behaviour and address the weaknesses in the school's curriculum. The school has provided much training and support for staff to enable them to carry out their roles. As a result, staff turnover has reduced. The school seeks the views of pupils and parents to inform its work. Leaders have communicated with parents and carers about the recent changes that have been made. However, leaders are aware that they have not ensured that some stakeholders understand the decisions that are made so they are confident in the leadership of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the curriculum is not implemented as well as it should be. As a result, pupils do not know more and remember more of what they have been taught. The school needs to ensure that staff are confident to be able to implement the curriculum consistently well.
- Some parents and pupils do not feel that the school communicates clearly with them about the changes made in school. This has affected their confidence in how the school is led. The school should review how it communicates with stakeholders and seeks their views, to ensure that parents better understand and feel more informed about the changes being made at the school.

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	137522
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10323711
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	890
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ian Sibbald
Headteacher	Carrie McMorn (Head of School)
Website	www.wootton.beds.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 April 2023

Information about this school

- Wootton Upper School is one of two schools in the Wootton Academy Trust.
- The executive headteacher has led the trust since June 2024.
- The school currently uses seven registered and four 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. 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 judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, art and design, geography, and physical education (PE). For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and visited a range of lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders including the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with trustees, and the chair of the local governing body.
- An inspector met with early career teachers and staff involved in their induction.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school. They met with groups of pupils to discuss behaviour in the school.
- 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 scrutinised a range of records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector considered the 159 responses, and 141 free-text responses received during the inspection to Ofsted Parent View. He also considered the 77 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 67 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Steve Woodley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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