

Wellsway School

Chandag Road, Keynsham, Bristol BS31 1PH

Inspection dates

11–12 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leadership at different levels in the school is strong. Leaders have raised expectations of staff and pupils. Their actions are improving behaviour and the quality of teaching.
- The quality of teaching is typically good because of teachers' subject knowledge, questioning skills and the relationships they share with pupils.
- Rates of absence and exclusion for different groups of pupils are reducing.
- The curriculum meets the different needs and interests of pupils. A diverse range of courses and appropriate careers guidance support pupils in moving on to the next stage of their education successfully.
- Provision in the sixth form is good. Students are well taught and value their academic and pastoral experience.
- However, leadership of the sixth form is not sufficiently strategic to identify and remedy some weaknesses in a timely way. This hinders the progress made by some students.
- Pupils in different subjects and year groups are not consistently using advice from teachers to help them improve their work.
- The school is well supported by the multi-academy trust (MAT) to which it belongs. The support provided takes the form of shared resources and expertise.
- Most groups of pupils in different year groups, including those who are disadvantaged, are making good progress across the curriculum.
- Leaders are held to account effectively by governors, who provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge.
- Pupils generally behave well in lessons and around the school site. They are respectful towards each other and adults. However, some pupils lack enthusiasm for learning.
- Pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, benefit from support provided by the school to overcome social, emotional and behavioural issues.
- Some parents and carers, staff and pupils are not satisfied with aspects of the school's work.
- Some pupils, particularly lower-ability pupils, are not challenged sufficiently in their learning and do not take enough pride in their work. Consequently, this hampers the progress they make.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, by ensuring that leaders:
 - work more closely with the minority of parents, pupils and staff who are not satisfied with aspects of the school's work
 - develop the strategic aspect of leadership in the sixth form so that weaknesses in practice are more quickly remedied to enable all students to manage their learning effectively and make the progress of which they are capable.
- Improve the quality of teaching further and raise achievement, by ensuring that all pupils:
 - particularly those who are less able, are appropriately challenged and take pride in their work
 - develop a greater enthusiasm for learning
 - consistently use the advice they receive from teachers to help them improve their work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership at all levels continues to strengthen. The principal, since his appointment in 2016, has been determined and purposeful in his efforts to drive up the quality of teaching and behaviour. He has been well supported in this work by senior leaders and increasingly effective middle leaders.
- Leaders have high expectations of each other, the wider staff and pupils. They are strategic in their approach and ensure that their improvement work is informed by honest, rigorous self-evaluation. Leaders are clear about the school's areas for improvement.
- The effectiveness of middle leaders has improved since the previous short inspection. At that time, some leaders were not well established in post. Now, however, they are managing teams with confidence, working collaboratively and relishing the demands being made of them. Middle leaders understand and accept the need for them to be accountable for the progress of pupils. They have similarly high expectations of the staff in their teams.
- Middle leaders now play a greater role in leading teaching and supporting senior leaders in this work. In many areas of teachers' practice, this is resulting in greater consistency across the school. The management of teachers' performance is closely aligned to their professional development needs. A range of training opportunities are provided for staff at different stages of their career.
- The school benefits from being part of the Wellsway Multi Academy Trust. The trust provides leadership expertise, resourcing and financial support. It also creates opportunities for staff to share practice across schools and moderate their work and assessments. Trust leaders ensure that school leaders are held to account for their work and share their same high expectations. Trust leaders, alongside governors, monitor the school's work effectively through raising achievement visits (RAVs), which highlight the progress being made to tackle areas for improvement.
- The curriculum is well suited to pupils in the school. Pupils choose from a wide selection of courses that meet their needs. The proportion of pupils entered for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of courses is above the national average. Leaders continue to raise levels of entry in the conviction that the EBacc qualification will enhance life chances for most pupils. Older pupils report that they are largely happy with their option choices at key stage 4. Pupils also benefit from the wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities on offer.
- Leaders use additional funding well to support pupils who are disadvantaged, have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), or who need to catch up in English and mathematics when they join the school. Leaders evaluate the impact of spending strategies and adapt planning accordingly. The relatively small number of pupils in receipt of funding enables leaders to plan well-targeted, tailored support for them.
- During timetabled curriculum opportunities and extra-curricular activities, staff develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well. Pupils learn about other

countries and their cultures, global issues and British values, such as democracy. They participate in community events and charity fund-raising activities. Furthermore, the school's culture promotes tolerance and mutual respect; pupils are encouraged to work together and help each other. For example, 'vertical' tutor groups, consisting of pupils of different ages, encourage older pupils to mentor younger pupils.

- Some parents, staff and pupils are dissatisfied with aspects of the school's work. There have been many changes to systems, routines and culture in recent years. These have not been popular with everyone. However, these changes have been made with good reason to raise standards of behaviour, teaching and achievement. Nevertheless, leaders acknowledge that there is more work to do to explain why changes have been made and to work more closely with those members of the school community who are dissatisfied.

Governance of the school

- Governors are proactive and take a keen interest in the work of the school. They have a good understanding of areas for improvement and are knowledgeable about the achievement of different groups of pupils.
- Governors work closely with trust leaders, while retaining independence, to hold school leaders to account. They too are involved in RAVs, which provide them with a detailed insight into the work of the school. A constructive relationship exists between governors and school leaders, so that governors request, and receive, accurate, objective and comprehensive information. This is apparent in the high-quality minutes that record governors' meeting discussions.
- The chair of governors is also the nominated governor responsible for safeguarding. She takes this responsibility seriously and ensures that the academy governance group oversees the school's work to keep pupils safe. She works with designated school staff to conduct safeguarding audits and checks the single central record to ensure that it is up to date with information recording the suitability of staff to work with pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Designated safeguarding leaders know their responsibilities well. They have a clear, confident oversight of procedures, training requirements and ongoing child protection cases. Leaders ensure that staff undertake relevant training and are familiar with the latest child protection guidance. Leaders approach their work in a strategic way, reflecting on their practice. They routinely analyse information to identify significant trends or patterns in relation to pupils and the local issues that affect them. These insights are then used to refine and improve the support that is offered.
- Staff use the online referral system effectively to record any concerns they have about pupils. This system, introduced at the beginning of the academic year, has been highly beneficial for the storing, organisation and management of referrals. It helps leaders to track ongoing cases carefully and to take appropriate action to resolve issues. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the support they need.

- Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils are up to date and comprehensive. School staff, governors and trust representatives all take responsibility for checking this information.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers across the school in different subjects have good subject knowledge. This enables them to teach with confidence. Teachers quickly identify and correct pupils' misconceptions. Consequently, pupils are taught the key concepts, knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in their subjects at GCSE by the end of Year 11.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour and what they can achieve are rising. They are following the lead set by leaders and demanding more of pupils. The most able pupils, in particular, are routinely challenged to deepen their thinking.
- Teachers use questioning to good effect, in part because of their strong subject knowledge. They ask open questions in a spirit of enquiry that encourage pupils to consider different viewpoints and form their own opinions. Teachers frequently use pupils' responses as a 'springboard' to pose additional questions that deepen thinking further.
- Pupils benefit from positive relationships with staff. Classrooms are calm places where, for the most part, the atmosphere is studious and focused. This is because of the mutual respect that exists between staff and pupils. Pupils behave well; they are attentive to what staff and each other say, are punctual to lessons and settle to tasks quickly. However, some pupils' attitudes to learning are not such that they are 'hungry' to find out more. They lack intellectual curiosity and a deeper enthusiasm for learning.
- Although some pupils, notably higher-ability pupils, are being appropriately challenged in their learning, this is not universally the case. In some subjects, the tasks set for lower-ability pupils are too undemanding. This prevents them from making the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils do not always use the feedback they receive from teachers to improve their work. The school's policy is not always applied consistently, so that expectations of pupils, in this regard, vary within and across subjects. Where pupils are helped to identify their mistakes and edit their work, they make improvements to successive pieces of work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders are shaping the school's provision to ensure that pupils have a rounded school experience that promotes pastoral well-being and academic success equally. This is reflected in pupils' curriculum choices, the extra-curricular opportunities available to them, and the range of pastoral support available.

- The most vulnerable pupils with social, emotional and behavioural issues have access to a range of inclusion services. Trained staff provide counselling, mentoring and behaviour support. They also work closely with external agencies, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), to provide further support.
- The personal, social and health (PSH) education programme teaches pupils to look after their health. Consequently, pupils know how to stay safe online, are aware of knife crime and recognise the need to monitor their sugar intake, for example.
- Pupils are polite, personable and good humoured. They generally get on well together and are tolerant and accepting of difference. The school 'feels' harmonious to visitors. However, some pupils lack confidence and self-assurance. This is apparent during lessons when pupils are reluctant to fully immerse themselves in their learning.
- The school's records indicate that incidents of bullying are rare and that they are dealt with appropriately when they occur. Pupils who spoke with inspectors also confirmed this, as did other inspection evidence. However, this is not the perception of some pupils and parents who responded to surveys issued during the inspection.
- Pupils who access alternative provision receive appropriate support and follow the courses that best meet their needs. Inclusion staff monitor the progress of pupils who access on- and off-site alternative provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well around the school site. They move in an orderly way, respect each other's space and treat the environment well. Pupils' behaviour is appropriate during breaktimes and they are well supervised. Their learning is largely unaffected by low-level disruption.
- The attendance of pupils overall and for different groups is improving and compares favourably with the national average. Persistent absence is much lower than average overall and is falling for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. This is because staff monitor individual pupils' attendance closely and take swift, decisive action should it begin to fall. They rightly communicate the importance of good attendance to parents.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions has continued to fall over the last few years. This is because standards of behaviour continue to improve as the behaviour policy is consistently applied by staff. It is also because leaders have improved on-site provision for pupils with behavioural issues and offer alternatives to exclusion.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over the last few years, pupils' progress across their subjects at GCSE has been at least in line with the national average. Pupils' attainment has been above average over time.
- Pupils currently in the school are making good progress in their different subjects overall. There are minor variations between subjects and year groups but, overall,

pupils are acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in their various subjects by the time they complete GCSE courses.

- Disadvantaged pupils make comparable progress with their peers across the curriculum. Teachers have a good understanding of their needs and take account of these in their lesson planning and classroom management. Well-spent additional funding also ensures that pupils receive extra academic and pastoral support that help to raise their achievement.
- Most pupils with SEND make good progress from low starting points. The special educational needs coordinator provides effective leadership of this area. As a result, he and other staff are knowledgeable about pupils' specific needs and the barriers to learning they face. Staff put in place tailored support, drawing from the services and resources developed recently in school. Pupils are now more involved in the development of their individual learning plans so that they have some ownership of the process.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps. They receive good-quality careers guidance and information about the academic and vocational courses open to them once they leave Year 11. This work does, in fact, start earlier, so that some pupils make the choice to leave the school at the end of Year 9 in order to study more vocational courses at another school in the MAT.
- The work in pupils' books shows that higher-ability pupils are being challenged to deepen their thinking and extend their learning. In many cases, teachers' use of assessment, together with pupils' willingness to reflect on their work and correct misconceptions, lead to more pronounced gains in progress.
- However, there is insufficient challenge for less-able pupils in some areas. This is not attributable to subjects or year groups, but rather individual teachers. In these cases, the tasks set are too easy and are completed quickly and with little thought. Often, this goes together with poor presentation. Some of these pupils do not take pride in their work because they are not sufficiently interested in it.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders ensure that a wide variety of courses are available to students, both academic and vocational in nature. They have achieved this by enabling students to attend courses at different schools in the trust. Consequently, although some courses may not recruit high numbers of students, leaders are still able to offer a broad and varied curriculum.
- Students are well taught in the sixth form. Teachers' strong subject knowledge comes to the fore as it does in the lower school, along with their high expectations. Students speak positively about their relationships with staff. A robust system of monitoring and evaluation ensures that the standard of teaching remains high. Consequently, most students are making strong progress in most subjects.
- The school provides effective and strong careers advice to help students decide on their next step, whether this be university, apprenticeships or employment. Students appreciate the independent advice that they receive in Year 11, as well as that provided in the sixth form. For example, the most able students benefit from the

'competitive courses group' that starts in Year 11 and encourages students to have higher aspirations for their choices once they leave school. Some students report that they would appreciate more support to help them research university courses and apprenticeships independently.

- Students' transition into higher education, training or employment once they leave school is very positive. Most students go on to university. Moreover, in 2018, over 40% of students succeeded in achieving a place at a Russell Group university, a group of the country's leading universities.
- The school offers a good range of non-qualification activities, including enrichment and development tasks. These include work experience, external speakers and sporting activities.
- Attendance in the sixth form is high and is monitored carefully. Staff are considerate of the needs of students and ensure that their time when not in lessons is planned and used well. Punctuality is also generally good.
- Safeguarding in the sixth form is as effective as it is in the lower school. This is partly because staff receive the same training and use the same procedures for reporting concerns. It is also because students learn to be tolerant and accepting of other's views and are taught about pertinent health and safety issues in tutor time.
- Although leadership of the sixth form ensures that provision for students is good, it is not sufficiently strategic to ensure that some weaknesses in practice are identified and tackled quickly enough. Consequently, some assessment and support mechanisms do not work well enough to ensure that all students manage their learning as well as they should. This means that some students do not make the progress of which they are capable.

School details

Unique reference number	137523
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset Council
Inspection number	10053275

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,312
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	192
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Kate Reynolds
Principal	Matthew Woodville
Telephone number	0117 986 4751
Website	www.wellswayschool.com
Email address	enquiries@wellswayschool.com
Date of previous inspection	9 January 2018

Information about this school

- Wellsway School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is part of the Wellsway Multi Academy Trust. The trust was formed in January 2014. There are currently 13 schools in the trust, containing a mixture of secondary, primary, special and studio schools. Each school has an independent academy governance group. Governors hold school leaders to account for the quality of teaching and standards of achievement. The MAT takes responsibility for functions such as finance, premises and school improvement.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- Eight pupils attend alternative provision off the school site. Providers include City of Bristol College, Urban Pursuits, Wheels Project and the Pathways Learning Centre.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning and behaviour in lessons jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, designated safeguarding leads, governors, trust representatives, middle leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and coordinators for pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation. This included the school’s self-evaluation, progress information, minutes of governing body meetings, and RAV notes of visit. Inspectors also scrutinised curriculum documents, information pertaining to the monitoring of teaching, attendance and exclusion records, and information relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils’ work and observed pupils’ conduct around the school, during assembly, and at registration and breaktimes.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils.
- The lead inspector took account of 283 responses to the online Parent View survey with associated free-text comments, 31 responses to the pupil survey, completed by sixth-form students, and 103 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

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Duncan Millard	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Winterton	Ofsted Inspector
Benjamin Houghton	Ofsted Inspector
Suzanne Richards	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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