

Inspection of a good school: The Gryphon School

Bristol Road, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 4EQ

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 June 2023

Outcome

The Gryphon School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy learning at the Gryphon School. Most enjoy positive relationships with each other and with staff. Pupils know the school's mantra, 'respect me, respect you', well. They are encouraged to value difference and treat everyone equally. Most pupils do this well.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement. Most pupils live up to these. They typically behave well in lessons and around the school. On the occasions when any low-level disruption occurs, staff deal with it decisively. Most pupils and parents are confident that leaders tackle bullying well.

Pupils take part in many opportunities to nurture their talents, interests and abilities. They appreciate that leaders want them to succeed academically and 'experience life in its fullness'. For instance, pupils spoke excitedly about their participation in musical performances, such as the 'summer soir  e', and sporting competitions.

Pupils champion issues that are important to them, such as the environment and sustainability. They welcome the school's work to celebrate diversity, such as women in science and neurodiversity. Pupils say they are encouraged to take positions of responsibility. They relish these opportunities to lead their peers.

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

Pupils follow a broad and ambitious curriculum. Teaching supports pupils to gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the future. In art, for example, pupils learn how to produce high-quality work related to architecture or set design. Many pupils study towards the English Baccalaureate at key stage 4. Sixth-form study programmes are tailored carefully to pupils' individual needs and aspirations.

Leaders have sequenced the curriculum well. As a result, pupils build their learning on what they already know and can do. For instance, in history, pupils gain knowledge cumulatively of events that have shaped British identity. In most subjects, teaching focuses sharply on the important knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn to prepare them for what comes next. In science, for example, leaders have outlined carefully the concepts that are important for pupils to know across all the scientific disciplines. Throughout the curriculum, assessment is typically used well to check what pupils have learned and to remedy misconceptions.

Leaders have started to provide the right support for pupils still learning to read. Some of these pupils read books matched closely to sounds they are learning. This helps them to build their reading fluency. However, this early reading curriculum is in its infancy. As a result, some pupils are not gaining the strong foundation in reading they need to succeed across the curriculum. For those pupils who can read fluently, too many do not extend their confidence and enjoyment of reading.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are generally well known to staff. Leaders provide useful information to teachers to support their planning. Nevertheless, teaching does not meet some pupils' needs sufficiently. Consequently, some pupils with SEND do not follow the curriculum well enough.

Pupils learn about civic duty, such as the importance of helping others. They enjoy raising money for charities that are important to them, such as those which provide international aid and medical care. Sixth-form students mentor and tutor younger pupils. Pupils develop their characters and resilience through taking part in outdoor activities. They celebrate the achievement of others during events, such as the 'sports personality' awards.

Pupils learn about healthy relationships, including consent, in an age-appropriate way. Leaders place a strong emphasis on supporting pupils' mental health. Pupils learn how to look after their own well-being and how to support each other.

Pupils, including those in the sixth form, receive useful careers information, education, advice and guidance. Events such as the annual careers fair help pupils to encounter a range of employers. Pupils value opportunities to visit higher and further education providers. They learn about different options for training and employment, such as apprenticeships.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. Leaders provide teachers with professional development that enhances the delivery of the curriculum. Those newest to teaching are well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a culture of vigilance where 'no concern is too small.' As a result, staff have a strong understanding of how to identify and report concerns about

pupils. Leaders take effective action to help safeguard children, working with external safeguarding partners when required. There are effective arrangements for managing the safe recruitment of adults working in the school.

Pupils have a trusted adult they can talk to if they are worried. Pupils learn about personal safety, including keeping safe when online. Leaders have put in place appropriate policy and practice in relation to harmful sexual behaviour.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have started to prioritise reading, but this work is in its infancy. Pupils in the early stages of reading are not always supported well enough to improve their reading fluency. This hampers their learning across the curriculum. More widely, pupils do not read regularly to improve their confidence or enjoyment of reading. Leaders should ensure that the reading curriculum develops pupils' fluency, confidence and enjoyment of reading.
- Teaching is not adapted precisely enough for some pupils with SEND. Consequently, they do not follow the curriculum well. Leaders should ensure that the needs of all pupils with SEND are met consistently and effectively so that pupils learn successfully.

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 January 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](#)' 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.

School details

Unique reference number	138471
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10268697
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	1,571
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	375
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Morris
Headteacher	Nicki Edwards
Website	www.Gryphon.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 November 2017

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Sherborne Area Schools Trust.
- The school is a Church of England school and is part of the Diocese of Salisbury.
- The school received its last section 48 inspection in May 2022. This is an inspection of the school's religious character.
- The school uses two registered and one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the interim headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, curriculum leaders, members of the local governing body and a representative from the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead inspector scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and examined the school's safeguarding records. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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