

Inspection of a good school: Ralph Allen School

Claverton Down Road, Combe Down, Bath, Somerset BA2 7AD

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 March 2024

Outcome

Ralph Allen School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Nathan Jenkins. The school is part of Palladian Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Donna Tandy, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ruth Balch.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They reflect the school's ethos in the way they talk about expectations, celebration, and traditions. The school has high expectations of pupils. The published outcomes across the curriculum are very positive.

The school plans a broad array of enrichment activities. It makes sure these engage all pupils. Staff seek feedback from pupils to ensure there is something for everyone. For example, pupils speak excitedly about the annual sixth-form review. School productions, such as the 'Sound of Music' engage the whole school community. Many pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. In the sixth form, students continue to contribute actively to school life, as mentors or through their participation in clubs.

In lessons, pupils focus actively on their learning. At social times, pupils interact well. A few younger pupils say bullying sometimes happens, but all agree it is promptly dealt with when reported. Older pupils speak confidently about the positive behaviours in school. Pupils say they feel safe. Recent changes to the way pupils' behaviour is managed have sharpened expectations. As a result, pupils with behaviour needs are better supported.

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

Over time, the school has developed an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. Teachers are passionate about the subjects they teach. Sixth-form students are offered a broad range of subjects. Students have high aspirations. Many students follow subjects that lead them to university courses.

Curriculum planning in most subjects ensures pupils learn rich and detailed knowledge. The school enhances this through trips and visits. However, in some parts of the curriculum, the detailed knowledge the school wants pupils to know is less well defined.

Staff expect pupils to work hard. Teachers check that pupils have understood what they have learnt. Through 'SAIL' lessons, pupils review and improve their work. This helps them to remember what they have been taught. They know what they need to do to improve.

Adaptations to the curriculum for pupils with additional needs have not always supported pupils well in the past. The school is focused on ensuring that adaptations are better implemented. It has improved the information teachers are given about how to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, teachers are now more knowledgeable and so they help pupils with their learning effectively.

The school has a broad curriculum for wider reading. However, this lacks rigour. The ambition for developing pupils as readers is not well understood among pupils. The school checks how well pupils can read. For pupils in the early stages of learning to read, reading programmes support them to get better. However, the focus on a culture of reading is not sharp.

The headteacher joined the school this academic year, along with new members of the senior team. Supported by trust leaders, they have a renewed focus on supporting pupils with a wide range of needs. For example, The Ralph Allen Achievement Centre (TRAAC) provides additional support to pupils. Consequently, pupils are now getting the help they need to succeed.

A comprehensive careers programme starts in Year 7. Pupils are well informed at each step. Pupils with SEND are well supported when making their work experience placements. Pupils are ambitious about their future plans. They have lots of exposure to the breadth and range of careers and higher education. For example, past students visit and talk about their experiences. In the sixth form, students are well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils learn a thoughtful and well implemented personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Alongside this, they learn about philosophy and ethics and experience a wide and empathetic view of life. Specialists teach pupils about relationships and sex education. Consequently, pupils feel confident to talk about the broad issues in this curriculum.

Pupils share their views through the school council. They feel listened to. The school has recently enhanced this to ensure more pupils contribute their views. The newly elected senior student body leads this work.

The work of the trust and the school is well integrated. Staff are well supported to train and share expertise trust wide. Staff are positive about this. Governors have a range of

expertise. They are well equipped to carry out their statutory duties. Parents speak highly about the ethos 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)

- The school's planning for the wider reading curriculum lacks coherence. As a result, there is a lack of precision about how to develop pupils as confident readers. The school and the trust need to ensure the expectations for teaching reading are clear and in place.

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 February 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](#)' 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	138522
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset Council
Inspection number	10298008
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	1379
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	236
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ruth Bach
CEO	Donna Tandy
Headteacher	Nathan Jenkins
Website	www.ralphallenschool.com
Date of previous inspection	March 2018

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Palladian Academy Trust.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2023.
- The school uses eight alternative providers. One is registered and seven are unregistered.
- 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

- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and geography. 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.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and teachers.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing body, trust leaders and trustees.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also viewed the responses to the pupil survey and the responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Rachel Hesketh, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Tim Redding	Ofsted Inspector
Malcolm Willis	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024