

The King Alfred School

Burnham Road, Highbridge, Somerset, TA9 3EE

Inspection dates

2–3 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement has improved rapidly since the previous inspection and is now good.
- GCSE results in this school are good, especially in English and mathematics. This is because of good teaching. Pupils enjoy their lessons where they experience an interesting variety of activities.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They show great respect to one another and to adults. Their behaviour is exemplary both in lessons and around the school, and they feel safe.
- The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have been strongly focused on improving the school and through their relentless drive and ambition have been successful, particularly in improving teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The sixth form is improving rapidly and is now good. It now provides a wider range of courses which meet the needs of its students.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. This is because of the strong support they receive from teachers and learning assistants.
- The issues highlighted in the previous inspection report have been addressed successfully.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough consistency in teaching for it to be judged as outstanding.
- More-able pupils are not always achieving as well as they could.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, of which 10 were jointly observed with a member of the school’s leadership team. Inspectors visited other learning activities and scrutinised samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors held meetings with four groups of pupils, school senior leaders, middle managers, a representative of the local authority, and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- A variety of school documentation was examined, including minutes of the governing body, school self-evaluation, departmental plans, behaviour and attendance logs, records relating to safeguarding and those relating to the management of performance of staff.
- Inspectors looked at records showing the development of skills in reading and heard the reading of a number of Year 8 pupils who had received additional support in their literacy..
- Inspectors took account of a questionnaire completed by 78 staff, together with 72 responses submitted by parents and carers to the online website Parent View.

Inspection team

Sean Thornton, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Fran Ashworth	Additional inspector
Marcia Headon	Additional inspector
Marion Hobbs	Additional inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school serves the towns of Highbridge, Burnham-on-Sea and surrounding rural areas.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school contains low numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the age of 16.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the overall quality of teaching to obtain greater consistency in good or outstanding classroom practice by:
 - ensuring the use of open, demanding questions which challenge pupils' thinking and which probe understanding
 - ensuring that the pace of lessons, while kept brisk, allows time for pupils to reflect on the gains made during the lesson
 - developing the use of numeracy skills across the curriculum
 - increasing the use of progress measures, as well as attainment data, when tracking the achievement of pupils.
- Ensure that higher ability pupils achieve their full potential by:
 - setting work which is sufficiently challenging in all subjects so as to enable pupils to attain the highest grades.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Results in GCSE examinations have improved substantially from 2010. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics was above the national average in 2011. Unvalidated results for 2012 indicate that this upward trend is continuing. Over the past three years an above average percentage of pupils have gained five A* to C grades.
- Pupils make good progress overall, including in the core subjects of English and mathematics, when their starting points are considered. Observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection clearly indicate that this good progress is embedded and set to continue. The published results for 2011 show that in many subjects boys make even greater progress than girls. As a result pupils are well prepared for their future education, training or employment.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium also make good progress. The additional funding has been used very effectively to provide extension and out of school learning activities, including summer schools, as well as increasing the support available in the school. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils. This is a result of the good targeted support being provided by the teaching assistants.
- As a result of raising expectations, the achievement of more-able pupils increased markedly, as seen in the unvalidated 2012 results. However, these pupils do not all achieve as well as they should and the percentage of A and A* grades is below the national average in some subjects.
- The students who continue into the school's sixth form have GCSE results that are below the national average for school sixth forms. These students make good progress from their varied starting points and pass rates at A Level are high. The percentage of students continuing to follow courses from Year 12 into Year 13 is above the national average.
- Many pupils enter the school with weak skills in reading. Through a wide range of precisely targeted strategies these pupils make good progress, and some make rapid progress to catch up with their peers very quickly.
- Almost all parents and carers responding to the online questionnaire believe that their children are making good progress; a view supported by the inspection team.

The quality of teaching is good

- The overall quality of teaching is good and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Pupils' good progress is evidence of the impact of good teaching over time.
- Work is generally set at the right level for pupils. Lesson objectives set out expectations and teachers guide pupils as to the grades or levels to which they should be aspiring.
- In many lessons teachers use particularly skilful questioning to probe understanding, develop thinking further and ensure learning; the use of counter questions is particularly effective in some sixth form lessons. Where learning is slower teachers use less demanding and challenging questioning and employ closed questions too frequently.
- Teachers show good subject knowledge. They set high expectations and show enthusiasm for their subjects and pupils respond keenly to the tasks provided for them. Pupils gain knowledge and understanding through a carefully structured variety of activities, including role play sequencing and discussion. In a Year 10 travel and tourism lesson the teacher engaged the pupils by acting as different customers demanding a wide range of holidays. This elicited some very good thoughtful responses to the different scenarios.
- Pupils are articulate and eager to discuss their ideas and their work. In a Year 9 science lesson pupils discussed aspects of pollution and conservation in a mature and thoughtful way. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson the pupils' lively discussions of concepts involved in

their work led to a deep understanding.

- Good pace is a feature of many successful lessons. However, in a small minority of lessons, where this was less effective, the pace was too rapid and pupils needed more time to pause in their work and reflect on their learning.
- Literacy has been a focus for the school and this concerted priority is beginning to bear fruit in pupils' written work and in their ability to carry out independent research. The development of pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum is less well developed.
- Teachers use assessment very effectively to modify their teaching to match the needs of learners. They constantly check for pupils' understanding during lessons using a variety of means including the pupils' own self-assessment. Pupils know how to improve their work and are guided by the system of 'What Works Well' and 'Even Better If', which they all understand.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and continues to improve. Class sizes are generally small and teachers take advantage of this in offering personal interventions and challenge at every opportunity. In a sixth form history lesson observed students assessed one another's short interpretations of the attitudes to rights in the south of America after the civil war, which enhanced their understanding of how to answer an evaluative question.
- Teaching assistants display a range of skills; they work hard and provide very valuable support for those pupils who need it. Sixth form students are supported by a learning mentor who is effective in enhancing their learning and progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' outstanding behaviour makes a strong contribution to their progress. They display commitment and excellent attitudes to learning. This enables their teachers to direct their energies to their teaching, taking imaginative approaches to their lessons. In the questionnaire staff confirm that pupils' behaviour has improved and that there are virtually no incidents of disruption in lessons.
- Pupils show courtesy and respect to one another and to all adults as they move around the school. They are punctual for their lessons, moving purposefully between the different parts of this large school site. A sense of calm cooperation pervades the school.
- Pupils feel safe in school at all times and the curriculum supports them well in learning how to stay safe. They have a very good understanding of e-safety.
- Pupils report that incidents of all types of bullying, including cyber bullying, are rare and are dealt with swiftly; this view is supported fully by parents, carers and staff and is confirmed by the school's own records. The school has appointed full-time non-teaching staff to work with vulnerable pupils and their families to ensure the welfare and safety of these pupils. Year 11 pupils agreed that 'here, there is always someone to talk to when personal problems arise'.
- Pupils' attendance continues to improve and is now at broadly average levels for secondary schools. The school has taken robust action to reduce the number of pupils who take holidays during term-time and is continuing to place a focus on raising attendance.
- The frequency of permanent exclusions is low; only one was recorded in the published data for 2011 to 2012 and this is typical for the school. The number of fixed-term exclusions during 2011 to 2012 was above the national average because of a determination by the school to deal firmly with a small group of older pupils who were challenging the school.
- Sixth form students display mature good manners and act as excellent role models for younger pupils.

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders have taken effective action to raise pupils' achievement and standards of teaching. The headteacher's commitment and drive to improve all aspects of the school are shared by staff and managers so that there is consistency among them. Despite reaching high standards of attainment in 2011, the school realised that some higher ability pupils were

underachieving; it has taken actions to address this issue and in 2012 the progress of these pupils is already improving. The school promotes equality strongly.

- There is regular monitoring and evaluation of pupils' achievement, including for those in the sixth form. However, the school's tracking information is more focused on attainment data than pupils' progress.
- Systems for the evaluation of teaching and its impact on learning are good. Senior leaders are accurate in judging the quality of teaching and also in identifying what improvement is needed. During the school's 'Focus Weeks', all departments are observed using clear criteria and the results of these evaluations form the basis of parts of the school's development plan. A wide range of continuing professional development (CPD) is offered and this is effective in raising standards.
- The school has placed great emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning, including the introduction of a teaching and learning department to spread good practice. This has had a positive impact and has led to improvements in teaching and learning across the school. There has been a rigorous evaluation of the department's effectiveness and as a result a more structured coaching programme has been introduced.
- The system of performance management is robust. It has been updated to respond to changes in legislation. There is evidence that salary progression is taken seriously in the school and that it occurs only when merited by performance.
- The school's curriculum provides well for the needs and interests of its pupils and exceptionally good guidance and consultation are provided when pupils transfer between key stages. The school works hard to raise the aspirations not only of its pupils, but of their families, so that they realise that they 'can do it'. The sixth form curriculum has been broadened so that it now provides a wider variety of subjects, including vocational courses, so that the needs of students in this locality are met well and their achievement is enhanced.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, both in the curriculum and in the wider life of the school. It is fostered by visits abroad and also by the wide opportunities in music, sport, drama, school assemblies and through religious education lessons that give emphasis to other religions. The school is providing more opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of the cultures of other parts of their own country.
- All aspects of safeguarding are fully met. The governing body and senior leaders take their responsibility to keep pupils safe very seriously.
- The local authority rightly regards the school as good and improving. It has contributed to curriculum developments and has taken robust actions to support the school in its drive to raise attendance.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is developing a good strategic oversight of the school, especially through the reorganised committee structure, the regular visits of governors to the school and discussion with senior leaders. Governors have played a large role in the school's recent improvements.
 - In its meetings, governors hold senior leaders and other staff to account by asking challenging questions.
 - The governing body manages the finances of the school well; for example by ensuring the pupil premium is targeted and used effectively.
 - Governors manage the performance reviews of the headteacher efficiently, ensuring that agreed objectives align with the main areas identified in the school's planning.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	123879
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	406201

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,317
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs C Burnett
Headteacher	Mr A Owen
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 March 2011
Telephone number	01278 784881
Fax number	01278 782344
Email address	sch.514@educ.somerset.gov.uk

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