

The King Alfred School

Burnham Road, Highbridge, Somerset TA9 3EE

Inspection dates

26–27 April 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- For several years, GCSE examination results have been poor, including in English and mathematics. Leaders have not tackled these issues with sufficient urgency and have failed to halt the decline in standards.
- Leaders do not accurately monitor and evaluate the school's work. This has limited the effectiveness of actions taken to improve pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching.
- Pupils, including the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not make the progress of which they are capable. Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Teachers do not use information about what pupils already know and can do to plan effectively for the next steps of pupils' learning.
- Provision for pupils' personal development lacks attention to some aspects of risk that they may face in society.
- Governors are not well informed about the school's work and the progress pupils' make. They have not challenged the school's leaders to make the rapid improvements required.
- Leaders' strategies to ensure that disadvantaged pupils catch up quickly have not worked.
- Behaviour is inadequate, as evidenced by too many instances of low-level disruption in classrooms and by the lack of pride many pupils show in their work.
- The attendance of pupils overall is too low, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs. Leaders' actions to resolve these issues have not resulted in sufficient improvement.
- The quality of careers guidance in Years 7 to 11 is poor. Many pupils do not have the knowledge or understanding to make informed choices about their futures.

The school has the following strengths

- The recent changes to curriculum and teaching are beginning to make a positive impact on the progress that pupils make in key stage 3.
- Students in the sixth form show good attitudes towards their studies. The proportion of students who carry on to undergraduate study is high.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - strengthening the governing body so that it is well informed and able to challenge the school's leaders about the effectiveness of their actions
 - ensuring that systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school support leaders and governors to accurately check the impact of planned actions
 - ensuring compliance with the statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education
 - making sure that attendance initiatives are embedded and absence rates decrease
 - improving the curriculum provision to ensure that students can follow 16 to 19 programmes of study which meet their needs.
- Urgently take action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to improve outcomes for pupils across the curriculum by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve
 - providing pupils with learning tasks which are closely matched to their needs, particularly the most able pupils
 - ensuring that teachers have access to information about pupils' prior learning and needs, and use this information to plan activities that enable pupils to succeed
 - making sure that pupils complete tasks to a high standard
 - promoting good behaviour which engages all pupils in their learning
 - ensuring that pupils, including those in alternative provision, better understand the risks they may face in society, particularly the potential danger of extremist views and sexual exploitation.
- Ensure that pupils, especially those who have special education needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged:
 - improve their attendance
 - have any barriers to their learning identified and tackled to increase the rate at which they make academic progress.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium fund should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders and governors have not taken the rapid action required to tackle the underperformance of pupils. As a result, academic outcomes have remained well below national averages, with little sign of improvement.
- Leaders and governors have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness, including the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They do not have robust monitoring systems to evaluate their actions. In turn, the governing body is not well placed to challenge or support school leaders.
- The school has experienced difficulty in recruiting teachers in some curriculum areas. This, allied with a relatively high turnover of staff in some subjects, has resulted in pupils experiencing numerous changes of teacher, which they have found unsettling and which has, at times, been detrimental to their achievement.
- Until recently, the curriculum was not set up to enable enough pupils to achieve their full potential. Changes in subject choice and the teaching time allocated to subjects have ensured that younger pupils now have access to a more suitable range of subjects and qualifications. While these changes are having a positive impact on the progress being made by younger pupils, current Year 11 pupils have not felt the benefits.
- Additional funding to help younger pupils to catch up academically with their peers is not used well. Leaders have not developed effective strategies for ensuring that this group of pupils are supported well to make strides in their learning.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not good enough. Staff members are not clear about their responsibilities. The funds provided specifically for these pupils are not used well; leaders do not monitor the progress of pupils and do not tailor teaching programmes to best meet pupils' needs.
- External support from the local authority through the partnership in the 'Somerset Challenge' programme did not secure the improved achievement that senior leaders expected in the 2016 examination results.
- In some instances, pupils do not currently have equality of opportunity. For example, younger pupils who need to catch up on literacy or numeracy skills are withdrawn from classes in modern foreign languages and consequently they do not continue to study these subjects in key stage 4.
- The preparation of pupils for their lives in modern Britain has some gaps in coverage. For example, although religious education has been reorganised in different key stages, it does not currently ensure that statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education are fully met.
- School leaders have given close attention to improving the attendance and progress of disadvantaged pupils. There has been considerable investment in staff roles which focus on improving the progress rates of these pupils. While urgent emphasis has been

given to the current Year 11 pupils who form the 'Elevate' group, the impact on their learning and progress is limited.

- Training opportunities for teachers have been revised and teachers are able to select further training from a range of options. However, while these options rightly relate to the professional needs of the individual teacher, it is not clear how school leaders ensure that they link to the school's priorities for improvement.
- While there are a range of extra-curricular activities on offer, leaders are not clear about the levels of pupils' participation. This makes it difficult for leaders to fully evaluate the extent to which such activities support the personal development of a range of different groups of pupils.
- Recently, the school's leaders introduced their 'Be Proud' initiative, which is designed to further raise standards across the school. Inspectors found that the plan has been positively received throughout the school, though it is still in the early stages of implementation.
- The school's leadership team is now using external support to develop a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation which places a greater emphasis on the impact of planned actions. Although relatively recent, there are initial signs that this approach is having some positive impact.

Governance of the school

- Governors do not provide sufficient challenge to the school's leaders. As a consequence, standards have remained too low for too long. Governors do not understand their role and responsibility in securing the urgent improvement needed in the quality of education currently being provided.
- Governors do not effectively monitor and evaluate the school's work to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, they do not know how well school leaders are using additional funding to improve the progress of this group of pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The governing body is alert to the importance of safeguarding and ensures that arrangements meet statutory requirements.
- All members of staff are given regular training to ensure that pupils are kept safe from harm. The school has robust systems to check that all employees are suitable to work with pupils, careful checks are made and record-keeping is thorough.
- Senior leaders work closely with other agencies to ensure that any pupil who is particularly vulnerable to risks is looked after well; concerns about any pupil are dealt with in a timely manner. Pupils say that they feel safe and know how to stay safe.
- On the same site as the school, there is a sports facility which is owned by the local authority. Members of the public access the facility, provided through an independent sports provider, during the day. The school has used resources to ensure that pupils are safeguarded during these times.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching across different subjects and year groups is too variable. Teachers' planning does not routinely take account of pupils' needs to ensure that they make the progress they are capable of given their starting points.
- Teachers expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. Pupils are not consistently set appropriately challenging targets by their teachers and they are not motivated to achieve the best they can. Work that is too easy or too hard for pupils results in pupils losing interest quickly. Too often this leads to low-level disruption.
- School assessment processes are not consistent, and information is not used routinely to sharply monitor progress and check the impact of initiatives on pupils' academic achievement. The most able pupils are not pushed to reach the higher standards of which they are capable.
- Across subjects, leaders do not give methodical attention to improving pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation. Weaknesses in pupils' understanding in this area is limiting the development of their writing and their opportunity to achieve as well as they can.
- Pupils are not developing confidence in using numeracy skills and struggle to demonstrate their understanding fully and apply their reasoning when faced with new and/or unfamiliar work in mathematics.
- Inspection evidence shows some recent improvement in teaching and learning in a small number of subjects. For example, in English, as a result of an increased focus on reading, pupils' reading skills are improving. Pupils who read to inspectors demonstrated strong skills in working out unfamiliar words.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors gave differing views about their safety. They are confident about how to keep themselves safe when using technology, but in other respects they are less secure. Not all pupils show awareness about the risks of extremism or how to keep safe from sexual exploitation.
- School records show some instances of bullying and aggressive behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Pupils told inspectors that they are able, and feel confident, to report bullying. However, while leaders have taken action to discourage poor behaviour, their work to deal with bullying is not having the lasting impact that is intended.
- Too many pupils do not take pride in the quality of their work, their appearance or their conduct. The study ethic is not strong for too many pupils and this manifests itself in a lack of engagement in classes.

- A significant proportion of pupils have not developed a good understanding of different faiths. Sharing respect for the ideas and views of others is not always readily apparent when different groups of pupils play and learn together.
- Careers guidance is not strong. While leaders ensure that there are opportunities for careers advice, pupils who spoke to inspectors have not acted on the advice or have found it unhelpful. As a result, some pupils in key stage 4 are following courses which will not help them achieve their goals for future employment.
- Some pupils who are experiencing personal difficulties told inspectors that they appreciate the support and help that the school gives them. Pupils know that they will be treated with respect.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. Too many pupils do not conduct themselves well enough around the school site. Inspection evidence, including the views of pupils, parents and staff, confirms this. Inspectors observed instances of poor behaviour, and some pupils say that at times they feel intimidated by the actions of other pupils.
- School leaders use exclusion as a sanction to deal with poor behaviours. However, weak monitoring of the impact of exclusion and of the support provided for pupils when they return limits the effectiveness of leaders' action to improve behaviour.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons is too variable, and too often learning is hampered by low-level disruption. When activities engage the interest of pupils, they participate enthusiastically, but on too many occasions pupils do not engage in their learning as well as they could.
- Overall attendance has been consistently low in the past and, despite the school using a variety of methods to tackle this problem, shows no sign of improving. The local authority has not been able to provide regular attendance support and this too has hampered the school's efforts to improve attendance rates.
- A significant proportion of disadvantaged pupils, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are persistently absent. The school's work to improve this situation, including working closely with local primary schools, has not yet had a positive impact.
- School leaders have worked well to improve the pupils' punctuality. Consequently, more pupils now arrive at school and get to lessons in good time.
- A small proportion of pupils are educated at other centres. The school has systems to check their attendance and welfare to minimise risks to their safety.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Over a number of years, pupils have not made sufficient progress, and standards have declined. Too many pupils have not been well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- The most able pupils, and also those of average ability, have not made the progress they are capable of in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.

- Disadvantaged pupils of all abilities achieve significantly less well than other pupils nationally. Leaders' use of the pupil premium funding is not securing the intended improvement in achievement. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils of all ages and abilities currently in the school are not catching up with other pupils nationally.
- A range of evidence, including scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's own monitoring information, shows that current Year 11 pupils are not making good progress.
- The rate of progress that pupils make across subjects is too inconsistent. In English, key stage 4 pupils are making markedly less progress than that required to reach typical levels for pupils with similar starting points. Changes to the curriculum and a focus on developing teaching are now supporting better rates of progress in key stage 3.
- Progress in mathematics is too variable in different year groups. Some pupils are working at levels which are too low, and sometimes they are moved on to new topics too quickly, so that they do not consolidate their learning. Stronger and secure progress is seen in some classes across all year groups, but again this is not consistent.
- The most able pupils are not consistently working towards challenging targets. Their progress is often too slow across a wide range of subjects and as a result they are not achieving at the highest levels.
- The support given to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not good enough. Although the school has taken actions to improve the outcomes for these pupils, the impact of such actions is limited. Teachers are given some information about the specific needs of individual pupils, but a lack of assessment information makes it difficult for teachers to plan appropriate work for these pupils.
- Inspectors noted that in modern foreign languages the most able pupils are making faster progress in their classwork. However, their assessment assignments show that the learning is not secure and pupils' memorisation skills are not well developed.
- In science, humanities and other subject areas there is a similarly mixed picture, and while some pupils are making more rapid progress, overall pupils are not making sufficient progress from their starting points.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Leaders do not have a strong strategic overview of the curriculum from Year 7 through to the sixth form. Leaders are aware that the sixth form curriculum is too narrow and does not provide suitable progression for many pupils after they have completed Year 11. This is further amplified by the exacting entry criteria, so only those who have achieved high GCSE grades are accepted onto study programmes.
- Expectations of what students can achieve academically in the sixth form are too low. Leaders do not set targets for students or staff that ensure that students are challenged and supported to reach the higher standards of which they are capable. While students' achievement is in line with that of other students nationally, not enough go on to achieve the very highest grades.
- Leaders have not ensured that the range of courses students can follow is broad enough or adequately resourced to meet students' needs. The school does not have

the capacity to provide teaching in some subjects. For example, a small number of students have prepared for examinations in mathematics using online resources.

- The quality of teaching in the sixth form, while stronger than in the main school, is also variable. Students make greatest progress when learning is planned based on the teacher's assessment of what students know, understand and can do. However, this is not routinely the case in some subjects.
- Provision for students who need to resit GCSE mathematics and English is limited. Leaders have not ensured that timetabled teaching is consistently provided.
- Students in the sixth form show very positive attitudes to their learning. Relationships between students and with staff are strong. Students told inspectors that they feel well supported.
- The vast majority of students who join the sixth form complete their two-year courses. In recent years, girls have not been as successful in the first year of their studies as the boys. Leaders have made provision to tackle this and are tracking girls' progress more carefully.
- Sixth form students are well informed about the range of university courses which they can access, but this is less well developed for other career paths. Leaders are now working to broaden the range of experiences and information offered to include, for example, apprenticeships. At the end of their courses, almost all students continue to their chosen pathways, the vast majority progressing to university. Current students were positive about the support and guidance they receive, for example in preparing for university applications.
- Students have opportunities to participate in a good range of extra-curricular activities, including Young Enterprise events, a debating society and work with charities. However, not all students have developed a good understanding about topical issues. Some students have a limited awareness of the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

School details

Unique reference number	123879
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10033303

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
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	1,266
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hugh Mackay
Headteacher	Denise Hurr
Telephone number	01278 784881
Website	http://www.kingalfred.somerset.sch.uk
Email address	sch.514@kingalfred.somerset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 October 2012

Information about this school

- The King Alfred School is a larger than average-sized secondary school. Pupils' prior attainment in all year groups is at least equal to the national average.
- The current headteacher took up the post in September 2014.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below the national average.

- A small number of older pupils are educated at The Bridge School (PRU), Bridgwater, or The Cannington Centre, Bridgwater College.
- In 2016, the school did not meet the floor standards set by the government.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- The school has been supported by the local authority through the Somerset Challenge, a collaborative partnership of schools, since September 2016. Consultations have included visits to the school by a national leader of education.
- The school's website does not meet all requirements on the publication of information about the most recent examination results and the school's performance. Information about the curriculum offered to each cohort is not sufficiently detailed. Some information is not easy to find, and there are some documents which require updating.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe learning across all year groups and in a wide range of subjects. Inspectors were usually accompanied by a member of the school's senior leadership team.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school site and at leisure times. They talked to pupils informally and also formally in meetings to gather their views.
- Samples of pupils' work were looked at to assess progress over time, and inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and experiences.
- Meetings were held with the school's senior leaders and with other members of staff. Meetings were also held with representatives of the governing body, including the chair. An inspector held a telephone conversation with the local authority's education partner, who provides advice to the school's leaders. A further meeting took place with another representative of the local authority.
- A wide range of documents and records were examined, including the school's own self-evaluation and improvement plans, and safeguarding records and information about behaviour and attendance. Records included information about the progress of pupils and the actions planned to tackle any barriers to learning.
- Inspectors also took into account 173 responses to Parent View, 121 responses to the pupils' survey and 78 responses to the staff survey. Inspectors also considered a small number of responses from parents which were communicated in other ways.

Inspection team

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Carol Hannaford	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Colledge	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Nicholson	Ofsted Inspector
Teresa Hill	Ofsted Inspector
Iain Freeland	Her Majesty's 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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