

Inspection of The King Alfred School an Academy

Burnham Road, Highbridge, Somerset TA9 3EE

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a strong sense of community at this school. Pupils feel safe and enjoy positive relationships with staff. This can be seen through the rewards system that is in place. One pupil said, 'It makes my week if I receive a Friday praise phone call.' Students in the sixth form speak highly of their tutors and the support they receive from teachers across the curriculum.

Pupils display positive attitudes towards their learning. Low-level disruption is not tolerated. There are strong behaviour systems in place. Pupils understand these and say they are followed consistently by staff. Bullying incidents are rare. If they do occur, pupils have confidence in leaders to resolve them effectively.

Pupils celebrate difference and the school is inclusive. For example, the pride club is an important part of school life. There are many opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities. Younger pupils can be music superstars or develop their skills as a journalist at the Jill Dando news centre. Students in the sixth form participate in societies, such as debating. There are opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills through the prefect system.

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

There is an ambitious, knowledge-rich curriculum in place for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Students in the sixth form benefit from a growing range of course options. Leaders have planned the knowledge that pupils need to learn. They have carefully considered the order of units within 'learning cycles'. This ensures that pupils can build and develop their expertise in most subjects. However, in some subjects, the core knowledge that pupils need to learn is not detailed clearly enough.

Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge. Where the delivery of the curriculum is most successful, teachers use strategies such as recall quizzes and questioning to understand what pupils can do and remember. As part of the school's 'learning cycles', there is a consistent approach to teachers' use of assessment. Pupils are well prepared for these assessments and understand their purpose. Teachers use this information to address misconceptions and re-visit learning where necessary.

Pupils with SEND are well supported. Teachers consider their needs in their curriculum planning. Leaders have created an alternative provision for a small number of pupils in key stage 4. This is appropriate to their needs, which means that they thrive at school. A similar approach for pupils in key stage 3 was introduced at the start of this academic year. However, it is too soon for leaders to judge the impact of this.

Pupils are introduced to a range of texts through the school's reading programme. They learn about different people, places and cultures. Students in the sixth form enjoy supporting younger pupils with their reading. A phonics programme has been introduced this academic year for pupils in the early stages of learning to read. However, staff have not received the specific training to help them deliver this.

The school site is calm. Pupils move between lessons purposefully. Routines are the bedrock of this positive culture. Staff are highly visible at all times of the school day. They model the respectful behaviours that are expected of pupils. Pupils' attendance continues to be a stubborn issue for the school. However, leaders are taking effective action to improve the attendance of all pupils.

There are a wide range of enrichment opportunities available. Pupils attend trips to enhance their understanding of the curriculum. For example, there was a recent Year 11 trip to London to see 'A Christmas Carol'. Leaders have prioritised supporting pupils with their mental health, as part of the personal development curriculum. Pupils also learn about cultures and beliefs different to their own. There is a detailed careers programme that is mapped out across all year groups. Students in the sixth form and pupils in Year 10 benefit from a comprehensive work experience opportunity. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause.

The effectiveness of governance has strengthened significantly. Governors are passionate about doing the best for pupils at the school. The academy council and the trust work together effectively to support leaders, but also hold them to account. Leaders gather the views of parents through regular parent forums. Despite this, a minority of parents say that communication between school and home could be improved.

Staff are proud to work at this school. The trust motto of 'cherish your staff' is lived out in practice. They talk positively about the support they receive from senior leaders. Staff well-being is always considered when leaders make changes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff and governors have received the statutory safeguarding training. There is a robust process for the safe recruitment of staff. Leaders communicate key information to staff about vulnerable pupils.

Leaders are relentless in ensuring that pupils receive the help and support they need. This includes working effectively with external services. Leaders have formed strong community links with charities and the local police.

There are appropriate policies and practices in place to keep pupils safe. Pupils know who to go to with any safeguarding concerns. They can also use an online platform to share any worries or to report an incident.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the core knowledge that pupils need to learn is not broken down into sufficient detail. Therefore, pupils do not always build a secure, consistent knowledge in these subjects as they move through the key stages. Leaders should ensure that the knowledge they want pupils to learn is planned precisely in all subjects.
- Although leaders have introduced a phonics programme for pupils at the early stages of reading, staff delivering the programme have not received appropriate training. As a result, they are not able to support pupils effectively to become fluent readers. Leaders should ensure that staff receive the necessary training to deliver the planned programme well.

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	146439
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10247343
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1309
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	163
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kate Dominy
Principal	Dan Milford
Website	tkasa.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The King Alfred School an Academy converted to become an academy in October 2018. When its predecessor school, The King Alfred School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, the chair of the academy council, a trustee and the chief executive officer for the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader to consider how well the school identifies pupils who are at risk and engages with external services. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff survey and responses to the survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Kelly Olive, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Helen Kerr	Ofsted Inspector
Rob Coles	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Coulson	Ofsted Inspector

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