

Inspection of a good school: Culverhill School

Kelston Close, Yate, Bristol BS37 8SZ

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 October 2022

Outcome

Culverhill School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at Culverhill School. They relish learning about a range of subjects such as design technology and cookery. For example, pupils were observed enthusiastically grouting tiles and making sausage and lentil casserole. Through the curriculum, pupils are very well prepared for the world beyond school. They learn how to be independent and make positive choices in their lives. Pupils visit places to develop their learning beyond the classroom such as the Tower of London.

Pupils are nurtured throughout the school to learn and interact with each other well. Pupils develop empathy and are kind, polite and friendly. Pupils behave exceptionally well. The school provides highly effective support for some pupils who may experience difficulty. Bullying is rare and resolved quickly by staff. Pupils love coming to school as they feel valued. Relationships between staff and pupils are particularly strong.

Pupils love to read and learn. They enjoy listening to a range of texts and talk knowledgeably about what they read. The curriculum is ambitious, enabling pupils to think clearly about their next steps. The careers programme is an integral part of the school. Leaders and staff gather information about pupils' aspirations, and this informs what they learn.

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

Leaders, staff and governors share a highly aspirational vision for all pupils. They have designed an ambitious curriculum that enables pupils to succeed academically, socially and emotionally. Pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan) are central to the design and teaching of the curriculum. As a result, all pupils receive bespoke support that enables them to learn exceptionally well. Pupils apply learning to their own lives. For

example, Year 10 pupils were observed enthusiastically relating the human digestive system to their own experiences.

The curriculum very successfully combines academic subjects, careers information, personal development and preparation for life beyond school. The careers programme informs the design of the curriculum ensuring that pupils develop the knowledge and skills for learning beyond Year 11. Through continual discussions with staff, pupils develop high ambitions for their futures. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life beyond school.

Reading is central to the school curriculum. All staff have been trained to teach phonics and are highly successful in engaging and developing pupils as readers. Staff continually assess pupils' reading ability and adapt the curriculum appropriately. Consequently, pupils learn to read exceptionally well. Staff support pupils' decoding and understanding of the texts they read. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the books they read.

Pupils' mental health and emotional well-being are given the utmost priority across all aspects of school life. Teachers, alongside a breadth of therapeutic provision, ensure that pupils receive timely and highly effective support. Through the excellent relationships between pupils and staff, pupils are enthused about learning. Across all year groups, pupils learn a very well-structured personal, social and health education programme.

Pupils' learning is enriched through real-life experiences such as trips and visits. For example, pupils visit the Tower of London to experience British cultural institutions. Pupils learn about everyday life by visiting supermarkets and budgeting money. Pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, enabling them to learn about physical fitness. Pupils further extend their understanding of the world through the school allotment, building bird feeders, bug hotels and growing vegetables.

Pupils' behaviour both in lessons and around the school is exceptional. They develop very strong relationships with each other. Consequently, pupils love coming to school. They follow the school routines and are polite and helpful to staff and each other. Pupils state that bullying does not happen and that staff would resolve it immediately if it did. Leaders have placed pupils' emotional well-being and mental health at the heart of behavioural support.

Governors bring a breadth of expertise to their roles. They challenge and support leaders in equal measure. Staff state unanimously that they are proud to work at the school. They strongly agree that leaders support them in balancing their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are tenacious in keeping pupils physically and emotionally safe. The safeguarding of pupils is an absolute priority for all staff. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained with frequent updates so that they can identify if a child is at risk. Leaders work very closely with external agencies and are persistent in ensuring that pupils get the help they need.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Leaders ensure that appropriate background checks are carried out on all adults who work at the school.

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 predecessor school, Culverhill School, to be good in October 2012.

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	146014
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10241445
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Tubb
Headteacher	Chris Walker
Website	www.culverhillschool.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2016

Information about this school

- All pupils at Culverhill School have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is above the national figure.
- Two pupils attend two unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school is part of the Enable Trust.
- 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.

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 headteacher and members of the leadership team, including curriculum leaders.

- An inspector held a discussion with governors, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector held a discussion with the chief executive officer of the Enable Trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, English, science and mathematics. This meant that in each subject, inspectors met with senior and curriculum leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at pupils' books.
- Inspectors met with staff to consider their views.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, including the single central record of recruitment checks on staff.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who responded to the confidential questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. They evaluated the views of staff and pupils from the Ofsted online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gill Hickling

Ofsted Inspector

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