

Sexey's School

Cole Road, Bruton, Somerset BA10 0DF

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the boarding provision	Inadequate
How well children and young people are helped and protected in the boarding provision	Inadequate
The effectiveness of leaders and managers in the boarding provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The leadership of this school has recently been through a period of significant change. New senior leaders have improved many aspects of the school's work. However, they have not yet established effective safeguarding practice in the school or the boarding provision.
- Safeguarding arrangements are weak because too often there is a lack of a fast and effective response to concerns about pupils.
- Pupils' progress varies too much between subjects. Pupils' progress in science, languages and humanities is well above average, but current pupils are not making strong progress in mathematics.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not supported well. Some of these pupils do not make the progress they are capable of from their starting points.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' academic achievement are not consistently high across the school. The most able pupils' progress in key stage 3 is not good enough.
- Although pupils are typically well mannered, too many pupils, especially in key stage 3, lack enthusiasm for learning. A minority of pupils do not take enough pride in their work. This leads to unfinished or poorly presented work.
- The risk-assessment process for safeguarding vulnerable pupils is not rigorous enough. It does not lead to timely and effective action by staff to protect these pupils.
- Middle leaders have not yet secured routinely good teaching in their areas of responsibility.
- The governing body has not challenged senior leaders robustly enough about the arrangements for pupils' welfare.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff follow robust health and safety procedures. For example, senior leaders' records of fire safety drills lack detail. Consequently, pupils' welfare is put at risk.

- Teachers' planning does not take pupils' prior attainment into account sufficiently well. This leads to learning activities not being closely matched to pupils' needs.
- The sixth-form tutor programme is not sufficiently wide ranging. Sixth-form students' understanding of online safety and the risks of extremist ideology is not well developed.
- Leaders have not ensured that the quality of accommodation in the boarding houses is consistently good.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher monitors the quality of teaching closely so that staff are now being held accountable for their performance.
- The school has been well supported by external advisers in a period of substantial leadership change.
- New senior leaders have a good understanding of the changes that need to be made to improve the school.
- The curriculum allows a high proportion of key stage 4 pupils to study an academic core of GCSE subjects that meets their needs.
- A change in culture brought about by the current leadership of boarding is having a positive impact.
- Staff management of medications in the boarding houses has improved significantly. The nursing team provides a high standard of care.
- Pupils feel well looked after and cared for by staff in the boarding houses.

Compliance with national minimum standards for boarding schools

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils in key stage 3 are capable of
 - establishing greater consistency and quality of teaching across the school and particularly in mathematics
 - planning work that is closely matched to pupils' prior attainment
 - providing further guidance for teachers and teaching assistants so they are better able to support pupils with SEND.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - ensuring that learning activities are engaging and motivating, particularly in key stage 3
 - encouraging those pupils who do not take pride in their work to complete it and present it to the highest standard they are capable of
 - checking that risk assessments for vulnerable pupils are timely and identifying relevant protective strategies.
- Improve 16 to 19 study programmes by extending range and depth in issues covered by the sixth-form tutor programme, particularly those issues relating to internet safety and radicalisation.
- Improve the experience of pupils in the boarding provision by raising the quality of accommodation in one boarding house to bring it in line with that of the other two houses.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - urgently improving safeguarding practice at the school
 - providing training for the safeguarding team so that its members develop an accurate understanding of inter-agency work and so that they respond quickly and effectively to concerns and risks
 - checking that health and safety procedures, such as fire-safety arrangements, are detailed and are followed by all staff
 - acting on the findings of the recent review of governance so that governors' challenge of senior leaders is more effective
 - developing the accuracy of middle leaders' self-evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of their departments to ensure effective teaching

- improving the leadership of the provision for pupils with SEND so that these pupils' needs are identified accurately, and support is aligned with those needs.

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools.

- The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk-assessment policy, and that appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified. (NMS 6.3)
- The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the secretary of state. (NMS 11.1)
- The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role (specifically in relation to leadership of safeguarding matters). (NMS 13.3)
- The school's leadership and management and governance actively promote the well-being of pupils (especially in relation to management of safeguarding matters). (NMS 13.5)
- Schools operate safe recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to the relevant guidance issued by the secretary of state. (NMS 14.1)
- Any staff member or volunteer employed or volunteering in a position working with boarders receives regular reviews of their boarding practice. Specifically, this is related to supervision for boarding staff and those staff who support children with or manage safeguarding matters. (NMS 15.1)

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
The effectiveness of leaders and managers in the boarding provision	Inadequate
How well children and young people are helped and protected in the boarding provision	Inadequate

- Since she started in September 2018, the headteacher has begun to change the culture at the school by modelling high expectations to all staff. While some improvements are evident, governors and leaders have not ensured that safeguarding practice is effective. The leadership of safeguarding is weak, and inadequate practice has not been challenged.
- Senior leaders have not ensured that provision for pupils with SEND is effective. Weak organisation and a lack of strategic vision mean that this group of pupils has not been well served over time. The headteacher has recognised this. She is taking steps to improve this area of the school's work.
- Middle leaders have not yet established good teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility. Several middle leaders are new to their roles. They are well motivated, but they have not yet had enough impact on teaching, and so significant variation still exists between subjects and in different year groups.
- A new procedure for assessing pupils' progress and reporting it to parents and carers is proving successful. Senior leaders are using this information, along with other checks, to monitor the quality of teachers' work and begin to raise their expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving.
- The headteacher and new senior leaders have caused the school to become more outward looking. They have a good understanding of the improvements that are required. The school is developing relationships with external organisations to support these improvements. As a result, staff training aligns well with their professional needs. Newly qualified teachers are supported well at the school. Aspiring leaders' development is supported by secondments to the senior leadership team.
- Teachers' skills are now improving. All teachers are being encouraged to learn from each other. For example, a group of teachers has been set up to consider and share good ideas about the development of teaching. While this has brought better consistency in some aspects of teaching, such as lesson starters, other basic areas of common working have not yet been addressed. For example, there is no clear strategy for developing pupils' literacy skills across the school.
- Senior leaders' oversight of the strategy for using additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils in Year 7 who need to catch up is not close enough. The strategy has brought about an improvement in disadvantaged pupils' progress. Even so, no plan or evaluation is available to account for the use of Year 7 catch-up funding, as the government requires.
- The key stage 3 curriculum covers similar content to the national curriculum. It provides pupils with many artistic and creative opportunities over a three-year period.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These help pupils to develop new skills and build confidence.

- A very high proportion of pupils enter the English Baccalaureate suite of GCSE subjects. Senior leaders keep the curriculum under review and consider changes each year to make sure the range of subjects is suitable to meet pupils' needs.
- The personal, social and health education programme and the GCSE religious studies course provide suitable opportunities for all pupils to reflect on life in modern Britain. Pupils are respectful of others; they are tolerant and welcoming of pupils from different cultures and backgrounds.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well by a variety of activities in the curriculum. For example, Year 11 pupils' recent participation in a day of prayer and contemplation encouraged them to be reflective. Senior leaders are aware that more can be made of the links with the church. Their plans for improvement include explicit reference to the school's Christian foundations.
- Staff are largely positive about working at this school. They recognise that the rapid change it is undergoing presents difficulties but they believe the changes are necessary. The great majority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey would recommend this school to others.
- Leaders of the boarding provision have not ensured that staff are provided with regular supervision or appraisal in line with the school's policy. This includes staff responsible for safeguarding matters. As a result, poor practice is not identified and challenged quickly enough.
- Boarding staff said that the new head of boarding has brought them together as a strong team since his appointment. Consequently, communication between staff has improved. New systems introduced by the head of boarding have allowed staff to spend more time with pupils. Staff and pupils are developing stronger relationships.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed to the school and passionate about its distinctive character. However, they have not challenged senior leaders effectively enough, and so weaknesses in the key area of safeguarding have gone unchecked.
- The governing body has not ensured that additional funding for pupils with SEND has had sufficient impact on the progress of this group of pupils. Governors have not maintained close oversight of the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and Year 7 pupils who need to catch up in literacy and numeracy.
- Governors have received training over the last 12 months. They have a better understanding of information about pupils' progress and attainment. The headteacher provides accurate reports to the governing body, and so governors now have a better understanding of the performance of the school.
- Three months ago, a national leader of governance reviewed the governing body's work. Since then, the co-chairs of the governing body have taken steps to improve communication between governors. They are now in a position to set a strategy for the future that shows the potential to address the identified areas of weakness.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- The systems to ensure pupils are safe are unclear and do not follow statutory guidance. This is further compounded, because leaders responsible for safeguarding do not have the knowledge and skills required to take appropriate action and safeguard pupils fully. This results in the safety of pupils being compromised.
- Child protection concerns are not managed well or in accordance with statutory guidance. For example, leaders have not consulted fully with relevant safeguarding agencies before making decisions about the best course of action to take.
- Too often, the assessment and management of safeguarding risks are insufficient and not completed swiftly. Immediate protective strategies are not put in place to protect pupils. Risks are not routinely communicated to the staff who are responsible for care and supervision, so that pupils can be protected.
- On a small number of occasions, managers have failed to ensure that staff who have not had full recruitment checks are supervised while on the school site. This placed pupils at additional risk. The electronic register does not capture when visitors are on site or when they have left well enough.
- The physical environment is kept safe. However, the records relating to fire safety and evacuation drills are cumbersome. In addition, leaders cannot currently satisfy themselves that all pupils and staff have been involved in fire drills. Therefore, some pupils or staff may not be familiar with fire evacuation procedures.
- The governors, headteacher, head of boarding and senior staff are committed to improving safeguarding practice at the school. They have demonstrated this commitment over the last six months by, among other actions, expanding the safeguarding team and introducing training on a range of issues for all staff. These changes have not yet gone far enough to establish an effective system.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving as a result of senior leaders' raised expectations of staff. However, it is not yet good. Too many pupils do not make the progress they are capable of, particularly in mathematics.
- Teachers' planning does not take enough account of what pupils already know. Some teaching challenges pupils to extend their learning, but there is too much variation between subjects. In particular, teaching does not help the most able pupils in key stage 3 to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils with SEND are not supported effectively. Teachers do not modify learning activities for this group of pupils. Teaching assistants have recently begun to give teachers feedback about pupils' response to lessons. However, this basic system is not fully established yet.
- Training and guidance on the use of assessment combined with a new assessment policy and better coordination in this area of the school's work are bringing about improvements. Consequently, pupils have a clearer understanding of what is expected

of them. Parents are now receiving helpful, accurate information about pupils' achievements.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is detailed and extensive. Most teachers are specialists in the subjects they are teaching. This enables them to provide careful explanations of concepts and identify pupils' misconceptions. Nevertheless, some teaching is not engaging enough to sustain pupils' interest.
- Teachers are well respected. Pupils have positive relationships with their teachers and this enables the great majority of learning to proceed unhindered by disruption.
- The great majority of parents believe that pupils are well taught. Parents say they receive valuable information about pupils' progress. However, a small number of parents expressed concern about changes to staffing in the last year, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Teachers understand that improving teaching, learning and assessment is a high priority for the school. Teachers are motivated to rise to the challenge the headteacher has set and improve their skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Senior leaders and governors have not ensured that safeguarding practice at the school meets the government's statutory requirements. Consequently, potential risks to pupils' welfare are not dealt with effectively. Senior leaders' risk assessments for vulnerable pupils do not contain important details about preventative strategies that staff can use.
- Many pupils demonstrate maturity by taking on leadership roles in the school. For example, several Year 11 pupils act as prefects around the school. Inspectors noticed the self-confidence of many of the older pupils. Even so, a minority of pupils do not take pride in their work. These pupils' work does not reach the standards they are capable of achieving.
- Senior leaders have introduced several initiatives to combat bullying. For example, pupils have been trained as anti-bullying champions. These initiatives have been largely successful. Most pupils and parents believe that bullying is now being dealt with much more effectively than in the past.
- Pupils feel safe at the school. Pupils are taught about a range of threats to their personal safety, including the potential dangers of using the internet and social media. Pupils understand the need for great care when entering personal details on the internet.
- Pupils have access to a good range of welfare services, including a school nurse, a counsellor and several members of staff with expert training in aspects of mental health. For this reason, pupils feel well supported. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy, both physically and emotionally.

- Pupils receive comprehensive careers advice and guidance. Since September 2018, the school has been part of a partnership of other local schools involved in 14 to 19 education. Pupils develop their employability skills well through a range of activities.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils are typically polite and well-mannered in lessons. However, too many pupils, particularly in key stage 3, do not take an active interest in their learning. For some, this leads to incomplete tasks and a lack of progress.
- Pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtime is generally calm. The school is an orderly place to learn. The site is made up of a mixture of old and new buildings and, typically, pupils treat the environment with respect.
- The rate of pupils' attendance at school has improved over the last two years and is now above the national average. Boarders' rate of attendance has also improved. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance is improving but is not yet high enough.
- This year, the number of pupils excluded from the school has been high. This reflects senior leaders' increased expectations of pupils' conduct.
- Senior leaders have introduced a new behaviour policy that places a greater emphasis on rewards for good behaviour. For example, a small number of particularly conscientious pupils are selected each Friday to meet with the headteacher. Initiatives such as this, and others, are having a positive effect on pupils' behaviour.
- The majority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey believe the school makes sure pupils are well behaved.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress varies significantly between subjects, because the quality of teaching is not typically good. Although pupils do well in science, humanities and languages, the progress of current pupils in mathematics across all year groups is not good enough.
- The most able pupils in key stage 3 are not making strong progress in a wide variety of subjects. For example, they are not learning as well as they should in art and music.
- In the past, pupils have made strong progress in English. Nonetheless, current pupils' progress has been hampered by disruption to staffing in this subject. In subjects other than English, pupils' reading and writing are not developed as well as they could be, because there is no coordinated strategy for improving their literacy skills across the school.
- Pupils with SEND are not supported well. Consequently, these pupils are not making sufficient progress from their starting points across all year groups. Even so, pupils with SEND are appreciative of the support they receive, along with all Year 11 pupils, through the new 'period 6' extra tuition programme.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress was in line with that of other pupils nationally in 2018. These pupils are supported well. A number of strategies are used to raise their

aspirations. For example, a programme of motivational talks from inspiring external speakers has recently been started.

- Year 7 pupils who join the school with weak attainment in English or mathematics are provided with support through short one-to-one meetings with teaching assistants. This regular support has improved these pupils' confidence in lessons.
- The proportion of pupils that attain a good pass in GCSE English and mathematics was above the national average in 2017 and 2018. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education because most have the basic qualifications they need to progress to further courses.
- Pupils receive suitable advice and guidance about their future careers and so they have a good understanding of the options that are open to them. Very few pupils do not secure places in education or training when they leave.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Leadership of the sixth form has not ensured that the quality of teaching is consistently good across subjects.
- A tutorial programme supplements students' academic study. It provides good advice about careers and university application. Even so, the tutorial programme does not cover a sufficiently wide range of issues. For example, students are not taught about the risk of radicalisation posed by extremist ideologies and so they have a limited understanding of how to protect themselves from this risk.
- The rate of students' attendance in the sixth form has fallen since the previous inspection and is well below the target set by the school.
- Students are offered a choice from 21 A-level subjects. This is a wide range considering the small size of the school. Students made strong academic progress overall in 2018, and particularly in A-level geography and psychology. However, students' progress was average in several other subjects.
- A small number of students studied a vocational qualification—level 3 BTEC national diploma in sports science—last year. These students made average progress from their starting points.
- Senior leaders are aware that, as in the main school, teaching is not yet responsive enough to students' individual needs, and so too few students are stretched to make above-average progress. Even so, teachers' assessment of students' attainment and progress has improved over the last year. As a result, students now have clear targets to work towards and they know where they stand in relation to them.
- Leaders of the sixth form ensure that each student's learning forms part of an individually tailored package that meets the requirements of the government's study programme guidance.
- Students follow a suitable work-related learning programme. This combines work experience in Year 12 with other activities to enhance students' employability skills.
- Students enjoy studying. They are positive about their experience in the sixth form and speak highly of their teachers. The small number of students who enter the sixth form without having attained a standard pass in GCSE English or mathematics are given

extra tuition in these subjects. The majority improve their grade in English when they resit this qualification. However, only a small proportion do so in mathematics.

- Students feel safe and well looked after in the sixth form. They told inspectors they knew whom to talk to if they were unhappy and they were confident they would receive help if they needed it.
- Students' attitudes to their learning are generally good. The great majority of students stay on the courses they have chosen in Year 12 and complete them in Year 13.
- Students are adequately prepared for the next stage in their education. A high proportion of students go on to secure places in higher education when they leave. Many students go on to Russell Group universities.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the boarding provision

Inadequate

- The arrangements to ensure children are safe are not effective. Too often there is a lack of fast and effective responses to concerns and risks.
- Concerns in respect of staff are not investigated or managed efficiently. Statutory child-protection processes are not followed. Staff undertaking these investigations have not been provided with training. This results in some poor practice not being robustly addressed.
- Care planning for children is weak. Staff working with children are not provided with the detail required to respond effectively to children's needs and ensure their safety. A lack of good communication between the school and the boarding provision means children's issues are not reacted to consistently.
- Children feel listened to by staff and can identify an adult that they can talk with both in and out of the school if they have any worries or concerns. Most feel safe. Children welcome the voice they have to share their views through the student council.
- Children can also access staff and their parents during the night or when they need support or help. Children report that they have good relationships with the staff and one stated that there is 'love in the house' and that the children feel loved. Significant improvements have been made in relationships between children and staff.
- Rules and consequences are acceptable and easy to follow; children are clear about expectations of them and feel that the rules are fair.
- Children are helped to become part of their community. They are offered a variety of extra-curricular activities and trips and so they have good access to the local community.
- Leaders have ensured that the systems to safely store, administer and record medication have improved since the previous inspection. The health centre is well used and managed. Children are helped to self-administer medication and there are clear rules and plans in place for the management of this.
- The nursing team provides good care and support to the children in respect of their health and well-being. Children like spending time in the health centre and feel nurtured.

- The quality of the accommodation in one of the boarding houses falls below the standard of the other two and some upgrading is required to improve the facilities for children.

School details

Unique reference number	137313
Social care unique reference number	SC039847
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10088313

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	600
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	104
Number of boarders on roll	163
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chairs	Emma Miller and Janet Wilson
Headteacher	Helen Cullen
Telephone number	01749 813 393
Website	www.sexeyes.somerset.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@sexeyes.somerset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 January 2017

Information about this school

- This is a state-funded school with boarding facilities for pupils. The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Approximately one third of the pupils on roll are boarders. They are accommodated in three boarding houses on the school site.
- The proportion of pupils in the school who are eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school is part of the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells.
- Following the previous inspection, the headteacher and chair of the governing body left the school. The school was subsequently supported by the Cathedral Schools Trust, a multi-academy trust based in Bristol. Following a year of interim leadership, the current headteacher was appointed in September 2018.
- The two co-chairs of the governing body took up their responsibility in September 2017.
- The head of boarding was appointed in January 2018 and one assistant headteacher was appointed in September 2018. The deputy headteacher left the school in November 2018. A new assistant headteacher is due to join the school after Easter 2019. The great majority of personnel involved in leading this school are newly appointed.
- Since the previous inspection, the governing body has commissioned an external review of governance and an external review of the use of pupil premium funding.
- At the time of the inspection, no pupils were attending off-site alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was an integrated inspection undertaken by social care and education inspectors. A full inspection of the boarding provision by social care inspectors took place as part of the inspection of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, the two co-chairs of the governing body and one other governor.
- Inspectors visited all three boarding houses. They spoke with children and held meetings with leaders responsible for welfare and boarding.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the Cathedral Schools Trust, including the chief executive officer.
- The lead inspector held telephone conversations with a number of advisers who have recently provided support for the school.
- Inspectors observed learning in a wide range of subjects and across age groups. Inspectors spoke with pupils and students about their learning and looked at examples of their written work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including documents relating to safeguarding, minutes of governors' meetings, analysis of pupils' attainment and progress and the school's own evaluation of its performance.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 and students on 16 to 19 study programmes.
- The lead inspector considered two telephone calls from parents of pupils at the school.
- Inspectors took account of 119 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, 56 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 52 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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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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