

# Inspection of KWS School

51 Brunel Road, Bedford MK41 9TJ

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Inspection dates: 13 to 15 June 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Insufficient evidence**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

KWS School, Bedford is a happy and safe school. Pupils come to the school having had a disrupted previous experience of education. The school's calm and positive ethos helps them settle. Pupils enjoy nurturing relationships with staff. A typical comment from pupils was, 'Staff know when to be a teacher and when to be friend.' Pupils get skilful support with their mental health and well-being. As a result, their confidence grows and they get back on track with their learning.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs. They build up knowledge in English and mathematics and study interesting practical courses such as vehicle maintenance. This means that pupils re-engage with their education and do well.

Expectations are high. Clear routines create a purposeful atmosphere. Pupils learn respect and kindness. They are polite and friendly. Bullying and discrimination are rare. This creates an orderly environment that empowers pupils to learn and progress.

There are a wide range of opportunities for personal development. Activities extend what pupils learn in class, such as the recent trip to the London Dungeon. Regular visits from employers, for example the police, broaden pupils' awareness of careers. Pupils get the support they need to progress successfully to their next stage.

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

Leaders have created a curriculum with a clear rationale. They are ambitious for pupils to learn what they need to be successful. Leaders assess closely what pupils know when they arrive at school. The learning is broken down step by step. As a result, pupils achieve well. In design and technology (DT), for example, pupils learn in detail about tools and materials, so they produce high-quality work. While this is the case, leaders do not ensure that rich connections are made with prior learning in all subjects. This means that pupils do not always develop the depth of understanding that they could.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They explain new subject content well. Teachers check pupils' understanding carefully and correct any misconceptions. Leaders and staff are skilful at identifying and supporting pupils' learning needs. They set clear and achievable targets so that pupils make consistent progress. Because of this, pupils understand and enjoy what they learn. They take pride in their work. Pupils see that doing well at school increases their options for their future.

Reading is a high priority. Pupils in the early stages of learning to read get the help they need to read fluently. They get regular and effective teaching that helps them to match letters to sounds. Leaders are creative in encouraging pupils to read a range of texts. Pupils develop their knowledge and enjoyment of reading.

Pupils respond well to the high expectations for how they should behave. Their behaviour and attendance improve over time. Incidents of challenging behaviour are typically dealt with quickly. Consequently, this does not affect the overall positive culture of the school. Pupils are reflective about their own behaviour. Those who have had sanctions, for example, describe how they have learned to improve. Although suspensions and exclusions are used appropriately, they are high in number. Leaders do not in all cases pre-empt and respond to incidents of serious misbehaviour as effectively as they could. This creates further disruption to the education of those involved.

Pupils are supported well in their personal development. The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn in depth, for example, about the characteristics that are protected by law. This leads to them expressing tolerant attitudes. Pupils get strong careers education and advice. This enables them to make informed choices about what to do beyond school.

The proprietor has a clear sense of mission for the school. He supports leaders closely and checks regularly on provision. Leaders ensure that they get the external input they need to improve the school.

The proprietor and leaders ensure that the independent school standards are met. Regular health and safety checks mean that the site is safe and fit for purpose. Risk assessments and suitable first-aid processes are in place and are carefully reviewed so that everything is done to protect pupils. There is an appropriate policy for relationships and sex education. All the required information is available for parents and local authorities, although some of this was amended on site. There is an appropriate safeguarding policy on the school website. The single central record of recruitment vetting checks is well maintained. Leaders comply with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are knowledgeable. For example, they are involved in high-level local authority safeguarding work. They ensure staff stay vigilant. Staff are well trained and know how to spot potential signs of harm. When they record concerns, these are followed up thoroughly. Records show that referrals to external agencies are diligent when needed. Leaders practise safer recruitment carefully.

Pupils learn about risk and safety through the curriculum. They know how to stay safe when online. The strong pastoral support, such as from the key workers, helps pupils to be safe. Pupils trust adults at the school and are comfortable in voicing their concerns.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders do not ensure that the curriculum makes the clear connections it could with previous learning in all subjects. This means that pupils do not always build up the depth of understanding they should. Leaders should check that curriculum plans build on prior learning so that teachers make these connections and pupils develop a more connected, deeper web of knowledge and skills.
- Leaders do not always deal with incidents of serious misbehaviour as effectively as they might. As a result, the number of suspensions and exclusions is high. Although these are used appropriately, they further disrupt the education of the pupils affected. Leaders need to develop more effective ways of pre-empting and de-escalating serious incidents so that the number of suspensions and exclusions falls over time.

### 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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136122
<b>DfE registration number</b>	822/6015
<b>Local authority</b>	Bedford
<b>Inspection number</b>	10267652
<b>Type of school</b>	Other Independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	13
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Karl Weaver
<b>Chair</b>	Magdalena Nichols
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Nichols-Weaver
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£26,364
<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 358638
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.kwseducational.co.uk">www.kwseducational.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@kwseducational.co.uk">admin@kwseducational.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	3 to 5 July 2019

## Information about this school

- KWS Educational Services is an independent day school. The school is situated on a light industrial estate. The proprietor has another school in Milton Keynes at R2D, 1-9 Barton Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK2 3HU that opened in June 2021.
- The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to consider the proprietor's request for a material change in July 2020. Prior to the COVID-19 restrictions, the school had reached its registered capacity of 20 pupils. Leaders initially applied for an increase to 30 pupils. In discussion with inspectors, leaders decided that a 50% increase on the school's current capacity would create potential difficulties in meeting the independent school standards. Leaders altered the material change to an increase to 25 pupils, and this was accepted.
- The school's previous standard inspection was in July 2019, when the school's overall effectiveness was judged to be good. All of the independent school standards were met. The school has consistently met all of the independent school standards at previous standard inspections.
- Places for pupils are commissioned by their local authority, in most cases Bedford and Milton Keynes. Pupils attend on a full-time basis.
- The school caters for boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18 years. Most pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils typically have education, health and care plans. Most pupils have a range of complex social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Most pupils arrive with histories of poor attendance and have been excluded from their previous schools or have been vulnerable to permanent exclusion.
- There are currently no pupils in the sixth form. However, leaders do in other years have pupils who stay on for post-16 education.
- This year, leaders have implemented a four-week summer holiday to support pupils' well-being and retention of learning. To mitigate for this, the summer half-term is two weeks long.
- The school does not use agency staff.
- The school makes use of three unregistered alternative providers on a temporary and part-time basis for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school's inspection history:
  - In July 2020, the DfE commissioned a material change inspection. The independent school standards were deemed likely to be met if the material change was accepted. The number of pupils was increased to 25.
  - In July 2019, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection. The school was judged to be good and all of the independent school standards were met.

- In September 2017, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection. The school was judged to require improvement and all of the independent school standards were met.
- In May 2015, the proprietor submitted an action plan in support of the material change application. This was evaluated by Ofsted and deemed acceptable. As a result, the maximum roll was increased to 20 and the age to 18.
- In January 2015, the DfE commissioned a material change inspection. The independent school standards were deemed not likely to be met if the material change was accepted. The material change was not accepted.
- In September 2014, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection. The school was judged to be good and all of the independent school standards were met.
- In May 2011, Ofsted conducted a standard inspection. The school was judged to be good and all of the independent school standards were met.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

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 meetings with the proprietor, the headteacher, other leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector had a conversation by phone with representatives of Bedford and Milton Keynes local authorities.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, DT and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, met with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- As part of the evaluation of safeguarding, inspectors checked the school's single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, considered its safeguarding policy and procedures, and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils.
- As part of checking compliance with the independent school standards and evaluating other areas of provision, inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils and scrutinised a range of policies and documents. They checked the safety and appropriateness of the school site.

- There were too few responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, for inspectors to evaluate. Inspectors considered the small number of free-text responses submitted by parents during the inspection. The lead inspector spoke to a number of parents and social workers by phone. There were no responses to Ofsted’s questionnaires for staff and pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Nathan Lowe

His Majesty’s Inspector



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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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