

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Wrotham School

Borough Green Road, Wrotham, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 7RD

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 November 2024

Outcome

Wrotham School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Michael Cater. This school is part of Character Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Matthew Wright, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sheila Smith.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy learning at this warm and welcoming school. They value the positive and respectful relationships that they develop with staff and their peers. Staff care about their pupils' education and well-being. Pupils feel safe and supported in school. They know they have an adult they can talk to if they have concerns.

Staff share consistently high expectations regarding pupils' behaviour and outcomes. The school's focus on the development of 'strong character' permeates all aspects of school life. Clear, consistent routines ensure that most pupils behave well and focus on their learning in a calm and purposeful environment. Any inappropriate behaviour is challenged quickly and effectively.

The school provides pupils with a range of opportunities to enrich their education. For example, a growing number of pupils take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme or perform in the school show. There are a wide range of sports and games clubs and a history club with archaeology experiences.

Parents are extremely positive about the school. One parent's comment, typical of many, was, 'I am very proud of the fact that my children attend Wrotham. My children are thriving there.'

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

The school has strong aspirations for the pupils and students in its school. Teaching and support staff are overwhelmingly proud and happy to work at this school. They particularly value leaders' careful consideration of their workload and well-being so that they can focus their efforts fully on pupils' education.

The school acted swiftly on making the necessary improvements in response to the lower-than-national GCSE results in 2023. There is clear evidence today that indicates the positive impact of the work that has been undertaken to address the identified issues. There has been a strong focus on teachers' professional development. As a result, teachers accurately identify the progress that pupils are making and what is needed for them to improve.

Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. They inspire pupils and sixth-form students with their passion for the subject they are teaching. The school has considered the order in which pupils encounter new learning. Teachers present information clearly and logically and revisit topics to ensure pupils learn more and remember more. The quality of discussion and debate in sixth-form lessons is high. Students talk with confidence about their learning.

Clear processes are in place to identify and support any special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) that pupils may have. Staff understand how to adapt their sequences of work and resources to help pupils with SEND learn well. The school has developed a structured approach to identifying pupils who are struggling to read. Well-trained staff provide these pupils with the help that they need.

The school has rightly prioritised the need to improve attendance. It has developed a clear and rigorous strategy to tackle persistent absence and improve overall attendance. As a result, pupils' attendance is improving, although certain groups of pupils still do not attend often enough.

There is a well-considered programme to promote pupils' personal development in place. The school focuses on the development of character and pupils' moral code. Pupils learn about a wide range of issues, such as healthy relationships and keeping safe. However, this programme provides limited opportunities for pupils to celebrate different cultures and faiths. This means that some pupils are not prepared for life in modern Britain as well as they could be.

Pupils receive high-quality careers information and guidance. They feel well informed about their career choices. Sixth-form students participate in carefully selected work experience. They value the support and guidance that they receive in applying to further education, apprenticeship or employment.

Governors and trustees identify priorities for the school's future development. There is a shared commitment to continuing to improve the quality of education provided by the

school. Staff appreciate the wide range of professional development opportunities on offer.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, do not attend school regularly enough. As a result, some do not benefit from the curriculum and wider experiences offered by the school. The school needs to ensure that all pupils have high rates of attendance.
- The opportunities for pupils to learn about and celebrate different cultures and faiths is limited. This means that some pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain is not as secure as it could be. The school should improve how pupils learn about different cultures so that they have a deeper understanding of the differences between people in society.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in May 2019.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	139542
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10321971
Type of school	Secondary modern
School category	Academy converter
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	1,045
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	141
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sheila Smith
CEO of the trust	Matthew Wright
Headteacher	Michael Cater
Website	www.wrothamschool.com
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses nine registered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, a range of staff, pupils, the chair of the trust, a trustee and a governor.
- An inspector held a telephone discussion with a member of staff at two providers of alternative provision.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with several groups of pupils and observed their behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including early career teachers, about behaviour and their workload in school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential online staff survey. They took account of the responses to the online parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments. Inspectors considered the views of pupils shared in the confidential online pupil survey and through discussions held with pupils throughout the school.

Inspection team

Ann Fearon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jon Wood

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