

Inspection of Wildern School

Wildern Lane, Hedge End, Southampton, Hampshire SO30 4EJ

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 April 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Ceri Oakley. This school is part of Wildern Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Stephen Mann, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Katie Griffin.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are prepared well for life beyond school. They achieve well across a range of academic and vocational subjects. Alongside this, the school's 'education for life' programme gives pupils a firm understanding of tolerance and respect. Pupils are proud of how they have shaped this, such as through the diversity leaders group. This approach is matched by clear messages from staff about pupils' conduct and language.

The behaviour of most pupils is purposeful and considerate. When this is not the case, the school has effective systems to address this. If bullying or derogatory language occur, the school takes appropriate steps to prevent this from reoccurring. As a result, pupils feel confident that staff will help to resolve issues. As well as talking to staff directly, pupils use an online reporting platform to raise any concerns.

The school sets high expectations for pupils' academic learning. This is mirrored by an emphasis on developing character and resilience. The school provides a broad range of experiences to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy visits such as Marwell Zoo or Borough Market, and the school makes sure these are accessible to all. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit strongly from the opportunities the school provides.

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

The school's curriculum sets out pupils' learning in a clear sequence in each subject. Teachers understand what prior learning their pupils start with, so they set tasks that build on this. In geography, for example, teachers draw on pupils' knowledge of erosion in rivers to help them when learning about coasts. In key stage 4, teachers place a strong emphasis on helping pupils to develop and use subject vocabulary. This is less consistent across subjects at key stage 3.

In most lessons, teachers explain and model important concepts effectively. At times, however, these explanations are less clear, and this can result in pupils not developing their knowledge as strongly. By making well-timed checks for understanding, teachers know what adjustments to make as pupils' learning progresses. Again, in some instances where this checking process is not as established, gaps in pupils' learning can be missed.

Teachers and leaders make purposeful use of assessment information. This enables them to provide targeted support for pupils who need it. It also helps to make sure that teachers identify pupils with SEND effectively and then meet their needs sufficiently.

Pupils with lower reading ages receive focused additional teaching. As a result, they build fluency rapidly, and can access the full curriculum. This approach complements a school-wide literacy strategy for boosting reading for pleasure. On the whole, pupils learn well, and disadvantaged pupils' achievement is better than published

outcome information suggests. However, over time, the impact of low attendance leads to shortfalls in some pupils' knowledge and understanding.

On attendance, the school has put together a clear strategy based on a keen understanding of the challenges. Pupils' attendance is starting to improve. However, some groups of pupils are proving harder to re-engage in school. The same is true in terms of attitudes and behaviours. The vast majority of Wildern pupils are polite, focused and attentive in their learning. A small number of pupils do not share this attitude, and persist in using derogatory language, for example. Leaders recognise this, and do not tolerate it.

The school has made widespread and effective changes to pupils' personal development provision. Pupils are taught about vital issues such as positive relationships and healthy lifestyles. Careers guidance is extensive, and is tailored to pupils' aspirations. This helps pupils to sustain their post-16 education or training. Pupils reflect on moral and ethical issues such as environmental activism.

The school engages closely with its staff, pupils, and parents and carers. This helps to ensure that their voices are heard as part of the school's development. Governors and trustees have supported leaders' approaches to addressing a range of challenges. This has led to innovation, but not always to coherence and consistency of practice. Where leaders are precise in evaluating what works well, such as the consistent use of recall activities in lessons, this results in stronger learning for pupils.

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 have not yet fully developed the positive attitudes to education and the school's values that leaders intend. As a result, these pupils' attendance, behaviour and engagement in learning are not yet in line with the school's high expectations. Leaders must ensure that they continue to help these pupils to develop greater engagement in education and the school's expectations of them.
- The delivery of consistent and coherent practice is not yet fully established across some areas of the school's provision. As a result, there are variations in pupils' learning and development, and leaders are not always clear about the impact of their actions. Leaders must ensure that they evaluate and refine their approaches rigorously in order to achieve consistency and coherence throughout the school's provision.

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	136654
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10321939
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,864
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Katie Griffin
CEO of the trust	Stephen Mann
Headteacher	Ceri Oakley
Website	www.wildern.org
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 May 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Wildern School is part of Wildern Academy Trust.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider and two unregistered alternative providers.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

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

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, including the headteacher and senior leaders. The inspectors also met representatives from the local governing board and the board of trustees, and with the chief executive officer of the trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also discussed the curriculum and provision for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, governors, staff, parents and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts the pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Daniel Botting, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Gemma Piper	Ofsted Inspector
Gavin Thomas	His Majesty's Inspector
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