

Some of the many comments about the curriculum delivered in secondary school, whilst there is much positivity in the comments, they also show the emphasis placed upon how the curriculum is planned and delivered.

Pupils do not benefit from a curriculum in Years 7 to 9 that is as ambitious as the national curriculum. Pupils do not learn music. Too little time is devoted to the study of physical education. Pupils do not have the chance to study a modern foreign language. Pupils choose which optional subjects they will take GCSE examinations in during Year 8. They stop learning subjects that they do not opt to continue studying at the end of Year 8. This leaves pupils with a very limited knowledge in some subjects. For example, if pupils do not choose to continue studying history, they do not learn any history in the secular curriculum that is more recent than the Restoration of 1660.

Teachers on A-level programmes make very effective use of regular formal assessments. These support students to recall what they have learned and help them to embed new knowledge. Most teachers sequence learning in a clear and logical way that allows students to make rapid progress from their starting points. However, a small minority of teachers do not check sufficiently well that prior learning is recalled. In these instances, students struggle to understand new topics.

Some pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not have the opportunity to learn MFL. These pupils spend more time studying English and mathematics. This means that not all pupils have the opportunity to learn the full breadth of subjects across key stage 3.

During Year 8, pupils choose which optional subjects they will study in preparation for their GCSE examinations. They stop learning the subjects that they do not opt for at the end of Year 8. This means that pupils have a limited depth and breadth of knowledge in the subjects that they choose not to study in key stage 4. Their learning in these subjects is restricted. This in turn limits the knowledge and understanding that they can draw upon in their further studies and later life. The limitations of the key stage 3 curriculum particularly affect those pupils who already have gaps in their knowledge when they join the school. There are times when some disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) struggle to keep up. These pupils do not achieve as highly as other pupils in the school. In some subjects, such as science, mathematics and English, teachers help pupils to

Effective teaching and a well-planned curriculum mean pupils are learning more in most subjects. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also do well. They make at least as much progress as other pupils. This is because all staff really care and give them the right extra help. Everyone is, and feels, a part of the school community. This makes a considerable difference. The school has a resourced unit for pupils with additional speech and language. It offers very high-quality support and meets pupil needs by using mainstream lessons where appropriate. Pupils from the unit are seamlessly included in the school community. They focus on what they can achieve and have high expectations for their future. In geography, leaders have made changes to how the curriculum is organised. While this is showing some signs of having a positive impact, gaps in pupils' knowledge remain. Teachers are not yet planning effectively in order to help all pupils make good progress in the knowledge, skills and understanding they need.

In most subjects, teachers have thought hard about what pupils need to know. Curriculum leaders have carefully planned what pupils will learn and the order they will learn it in. This is helping them to teach in a way that enables all pupils to be successful, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, not all teachers use effective strategies to ensure that pupils with SEND achieve the best they can. As a result, these pupils do not flourish as they could.

Senior leaders develop the expertise of curriculum leaders in all subjects. Curriculum leaders share this expertise with their departments. They also share this with other schools. Teachers use research and professional development to create demanding curriculum plans. They focus on the subject-specific language pupils need to learn. Pupils' subject knowledge is developed very well. Pupils can explain how teachers help them to remember their learning. This strong knowledge is reflected in pupils' work and their exceptional progress at GCSE. Teachers ensure that all pupils benefit from the quality of education they provide.

Subject leaders and teachers have expert subject knowledge. They judiciously use this and research to hone their planning and ensure that pupils excel. Teachers design sequences of lessons to build on prior learning and stimulate discussion and debate. As a result, pupils not only aspire to examination success, they develop deep insights into their subjects. For example, in science and mathematics pupils refine and improve their own answers, then are routinely challenged to evaluate these against different models and explanations. Across the curriculum, teachers use assessment well to interpret pupils' needs. Teachers ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make very strong progress.

The curriculum is not as well planned in all subjects. In some subjects, leaders have not made it clear what pupils must learn and remember. Pupils do not learn the important knowledge well enough. They do not remember what they have learned in the long term. Pupils told us that this means they lack confidence in their learning. Teachers do not adapt their plans for pupils with SEND well enough. These pupils do not do as well as they could in some subjects. Leaders know that some subjects are planned in more detail than others. Some subject leaders have worked together to improve their plans. The trust has provided some useful support for leaders, for example in improving plans for English and mathematics. This support has not been available for all subject leaders.

In many subjects, leaders have not developed the curriculum well enough. This leads to teaching which does not build on what pupils know or help pupils to learn new knowledge. Pupils have large gaps in their learning. They do not remember what has been taught and they are not ready for the new learning that is presented to them. They struggle to take on challenging ideas because they do not have the building blocks in place to extend their understanding. Too many staff do not take account of pupils' prior learning, particularly of what they have learned in primary school. In Year 7, curriculum plans lack ambition in too many subjects. Pupils say the work is too easy or repeats what they have learned previously. Sometimes, pupils become bored by the work. Only occasionally, such as in mathematics, are more pupils excited by their learning. This is because the curriculum in these subjects at key stage 3 is well planned and helps pupils to succeed.

Pupils achieve well in most subjects. This is because leaders make sure that topics are taught in a logical order, and teachers make deliberate links to what pupils have learned before. This helps pupils to build up their knowledge and to practise their skills. For example, in science, pupils in Year 8 recall what they learned about electricity in Year 7. This helps them understand how electric currents work. In most subjects, teachers routinely check how well pupils have understood their work. They look for gaps in what pupils know, and what they can do, and help pupils when they feel stuck.

Pupils are following a new curriculum that stretches them and makes them think. Teachers make sure pupils learn things in an order that helps them make sense of their work. Teachers check pupils' knowledge and understanding regularly and go back to topics with which pupils have struggled. Pupils do not have a wide enough curriculum in Year 9. Leaders understand that this is a significant

weakness and plans are in place to correct this for next year. Leaders have successfully increased the number of pupils who study the English Baccalaureate. The proportion is broadly in line with the national average. However, at the moment, relatively few pupils take GCSEs in arts subjects.

In the past, pupils began their GCSE courses in Year 9. Leaders have redesigned the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 so that pupils study a wide range of subjects over the whole of key stage 3. Currently, there remain limited opportunities for pupils to study some subjects, for example music and computer science, in the same depth as other subjects after Year 8. Leaders ensure that pupils gain sufficient experience of these subjects and provide pupils with a broad curriculum in key stage 3. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to pursue interests and talents, and learn more in music and computer science, higher up the school. Leaders have already taken steps to address this to ensure that pupils can build their knowledge in all subjects in Years 7 to 11 in the future.

In English, mathematics and science, the quality of teaching is improving. Teachers plan and sequence work with greater care than in the past. This is to make sure that pupils know more and remember more. Consequently, pupils speak and write more confidently about the topics they have learned. In some areas of the curriculum, the questions and tasks teachers set are too easy. To address this, leaders are providing regular training sessions for teachers. Pupils start too many GCSE courses at the beginning of Year 9. Often, they study their GCSE courses over three years rather than the recommended two. Where this occurs, pupils do not have Year 9 as a preparation year for GCSE. As a result, pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding. This makes it harder for pupils to comprehend the more advanced GCSE content. It also limits the connections pupils make to prior learning. Leaders have also stopped the practice of pupils unnecessarily sitting GCSE exams a year early in religious education (RE) and citizenship

Leaders have a clear curriculum vision, 'Being the best you can be.' They want pupils to succeed when they leave the school. The implementation of this vision is in its early stages. The quality of education in mathematics and English is improving. Planning, sequencing and delivery of the curriculum in some subjects are weak. In humanities, for example, key stage 3 pupils are not challenged as well as they should be. They are not well prepared for key stage 4.

Some teachers do not have the subject knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum well. The plans to improve this are in the early stages. Pupils with SEND do not always learn as they should. In some of their lessons they are not supported well enough. The leader who oversees this group of pupils knows pupils well. The individual plans for these pupils are appropriate. Teachers do not use these plans well enough. In some subjects this group of pupils do not remember important knowledge as well as others do.

In depth inspection of science, mathematics, history and French showed that, until recently, leaders and teachers have not planned effectively what pupils need to learn and when this should be taught. There are new plans in place to improve this, but they are not consistent across all subjects. Teachers often do not check what pupils have learned and what they have not. Weak assessment means that teachers are unclear about what pupils need to do next to build on what they have learned previously