

Smith's Wood Sports College

Windward Way, Smith's Wood, Birmingham, West Midlands B36 0UE

Inspection dates

31 January – 1 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Outcomes for pupils and standards in many subjects have declined significantly since the last inspection.
- Leaders' and governors' plans have not been effective enough in making the improvements they so earnestly seek.
- Over time, leaders have not tracked pupils' progress rigorously enough. They have failed to hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils, especially at key stages 4 and 5. Although this is changing, there are not enough signs of impact. Teaching still has some significant shortcomings.
- Pupils' attendance has been too low and persistent absence too high for too long.
- Some pupils do not behave well in lessons.
- Progress for pupils in the sixth form was significantly below average for those following academic qualifications and vocational programmes in 2016. Leaders and governors do not track the progress of students with sufficient care.
- Disadvantaged pupils, the most able and middle-ability pupils do not make enough progress from their starting points. This is most evident in English, mathematics and science.
- Governors have not been able to challenge leaders effectively enough. Their checks on the school's work have not led to sustained improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Safeguarding is effective.
- Leaders have developed robust systems for identifying and acting on child protection concerns.
- The school is making increasingly effective provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the impact of leadership and management by:
 - improving the accuracy of self-evaluation so that it focuses rigorously on the impact of the school's work on pupils' progress in all year groups
 - ensuring that improvement plans have clear success criteria
 - ensuring that middle managers are trained to understand and implement the school's improvement plans
 - holding teachers to account for pupils' achievement in all key stages
 - ensuring that governors are trained to develop the strategy of the school with clarity and that it is focused on pupils' progress and attendance
 - ensuring that leadership oversight is sharply focused on outcomes in all subjects, especially those where underachievement is most marked: English, mathematics and science.
- Urgently improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, the most able and middle-ability pupils by:
 - ensuring that work in lessons is appropriately engaging and challenging for these pupils
 - making regular and accurate checks on how well they are doing
 - monitoring the impact of the pupil premium grant on disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment regularly, rigorously and against all other pupils nationally.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment so that rates of achievement at least match national averages by:
 - helping pupils to understand how the school's assessment systems can help them to meet their targets
 - helping pupils understand the feedback they get from teachers about their work
 - improving the quality of teachers' questioning so that pupils do more than just recall facts but acquire conceptual understanding and skills.
- Improve behaviour by:
 - ensuring that pupils attend school more regularly
 - ensuring that teachers apply the school's behaviour policy with consistency
 - helping teachers to promote good behaviour by training them to eliminate low-level disruption in lessons.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of pupil premium spending should be undertaken to evaluate and improve the school's use of this grant.

Inspectors strongly recommend that the school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers until further notice except in English and modern foreign languages.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders have not been successful in tackling wide-ranging weaknesses at the school. There is too much underachievement across the curriculum and too many pupils are not fulfilling their potential. This is despite leaders' clear and evident commitment to school improvement. The current leadership team has built strong working relationships and is beginning to design systems for evaluating pupils' progress. So far, these systems have had insufficient impact on raising standards.
- Leaders have not been successful in significantly improving pupils' attendance despite their efforts. Far too many pupils do not attend school regularly. This is slowing their progress, lowering attainment and further weakening the impact of the school's improvement plans.
- Leaders have not been successful in training middle leaders to understand and implement their tracking systems and ways of evaluating pupils' progress. Some middle leaders do not track the progress of their pupils. This hampers pupils' progress and school improvement.
- The many new systems for school improvement are difficult for all teachers to understand or use in their class teaching. Leaders have introduced a new assessment system; however, it is early days and only a minority of teachers and middle leaders and governors are familiar with it. The assessment of pupils' work has been inaccurate for far too long and often overgenerous. The scale of underachievement is so great and teachers' implementation of leaders' plans is so inconsistent that the impact of this new system has been slight.
- Leaders do not effectively check the impact of additional funding to accelerate the progress of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and offers extra-curricular opportunities, especially in sports. The curriculum has yet to show significant impact on pupil outcomes. The curriculum offers extra lessons for pupils supported by the catch-up funding for numeracy and literacy. There are early signs that this spending has had a positive impact on addressing literacy and numeracy weaknesses in key stage 3.
- Leaders have put in place a curriculum to promote British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons and in assemblies. For example, pupils in key stage 3 have been learning about democracy and tackling issues raised in the national news. Pupils value the enrichment lessons that provide access to a variety of extra-curricular activities within and beyond the school day. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum meets the requirements of The Equality Act 2010, in particular the needs of those who have protected characteristics.
- The headteacher has a relentless, focused approach to school improvement. Her patient and inclusive professional manner, through some difficult times in the recent past, is indicative of her dedication to the pupils of this school.
- Many parents are supportive of the school. However, a significant minority do not

support the school's methods and there is much work to do to convince the whole community that their wholehearted backing is necessary.

Governance of the school

- Governors do not have a clear enough picture of standards and progress in the school. For too long, standards have been too low. Performance management has not been rigorous enough. Their target-setting has been vague and they have too readily accepted information presented by school leaders. This is now slowly changing.
- Over time, challenge from the governing body has been ineffective. Monitoring visits to the school have not been incisive or focused and have provided a weak basis on which to hold leaders to account. As a result, pupils have continued to achieve below national expectations and their attendance remains too low.
- Governors have helped the school secure a range of support from other schools and this had helped professional development and some aspects of teaching. To date, this has had too little impact on improving pupils' outcomes. Nevertheless, governors have a strong vision for the future and are morally committed to improving the lives of pupils in their community.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has tackled weaknesses with energy. Together with a team of pastoral support staff, she has well-considered systems for supporting pupils and families and identifying risks.
- There are robust procedures for ensuring that pupils are kept safe in school. Prompt action is taken in response to child protection concerns and records are kept systematically.
- Arrangements for the appointment of staff are compliant with requirements. Rigorous checks are made on the suitability of all who work or volunteer in the school. Leaders and members of the governing body have completed safer recruitment training.
- Staff receive regular training and updates on safeguarding.
- A nominated governor has the oversight of safeguarding, meets regularly with the DSL and carries out checks on the single central register.
- However, governors need to be more vigilant in checking that the safeguarding policy is reviewed annually to ensure that it is always fully compliant with new regulations and guidance.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Not enough teaching ensures that pupils make the necessary progress in their learning. Their work often lacks depth and so they do not make enough progress over time. Pupils frequently undertake undemanding tasks that do not stretch the most able.
- Pupils are often unclear about the targets they are set or what they need to do to improve their work. They do not understand the school's new assessment system.
- Teaching does not have sufficient impact on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

Although leaders have prioritised the progress of this group of pupils, and teachers report that they have had specific training on meeting their needs, there has been little impact in the classroom. Teachers' questioning does not help to build pupils' conceptual understanding and skills.

- The impact of teaching assistants' work on pupils' progress is often effective. In some cases, they provide high-quality support to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, it is a very mixed picture.
- Over time, teaching in English, mathematics and science has been ineffective in enabling pupils to make secure progress.
- The recently appointed subject leader for English is acting with energy to raise standards. For example, she has led a review of teaching in the English department and has redesigned the team's approach to tracking progress. However, there is not yet enough evidence to show that pupils are making up for the underachievement of previous years. Current pupils' progress is still variable.
- Department leaders for science and mathematics do not have a secure enough understanding of the achievement gaps between pupils in these subjects. Senior leaders are providing training and support, but the impact of this is not yet evident in pupils' progress.
- While standards have risen in mathematics recently, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use and develop their knowledge and understanding. Pupils' work shows that their skills of mathematical reasoning are underdeveloped. However, inspectors found some evidence of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities making stronger progress.
- There are early signs that effective teaching is leading to more rapid progress in other subjects. In modern foreign languages, for example, pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are given challenging work to do and achieve well. In humanities, dance and drama, inspectors saw that some pupils approached their work with confidence and increasing success.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including online and from radicalisation, through a planned PSHE programme.
- Many pupils show respect for those who are different from themselves, and teachers are successfully tackling pupils' use of homophobic and derogatory language.
- The provision and care for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a strength of the school. Because of the care and attention they receive from dedicated staff, they make progress in their learning.
- Pupils report that they feel safe in school and that they know they can talk to an adult if they have a problem.
- Pupils in Year 11 appreciate the extra revision sessions that teachers put on for them

at the end of each day. They say that this has given them more confidence as they approach their GCSE examinations.

- Pupils receive effective careers advice and guidance. The careers leader has implemented one-to-one interviews for all pupils in key stage 4 to help them plan their next steps. Nevertheless, weaknesses in teaching, learning and progress mean that too many pupils do not acquire the skills and knowledge that they should.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Attendance is below the national average overall and remains stubbornly low for pupils in receipt of free school meals. Inspectors found evidence of pupils absent from many lessons in key stages 3 and 4.
- When in lessons, most pupils behave well when teaching meets their needs and is challenging. However, when pupils receive work that is too easy or that fails to capture their interest, they resort to low-level disruption and off-task behaviour, such as calling out.
- Leaders have identified the improvement of pupils' behaviour as a priority. They have put in place new systems to track behaviour and to ensure more consistent use of rewards and sanctions. Pupils confirm that they like and understand the new rewards system. As a result, the number of behaviour incidents has fallen from that seen in previous years, but still remains high.
- School records suggest that behaviour around the school is starting to improve. Inspectors noted that pupils' behaviour in corridors is largely well ordered, with a high number of staff on duty between lessons.
- Fixed-term exclusions, while reducing over time, remain high, in particular for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders want to reduce exclusions further while retaining their expectation of consistently high standards of behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils do not achieve as well as they need to by the time they leave the school. Examination results have been poor and significantly weaker than is typical nationally. Too often, pupils have made poor progress from their starting points, particularly those who are disadvantaged, the most able and those of middle ability. Pupils have not been prepared well enough for the next stage of their education
- Disadvantaged pupils did not make the progress they should have done or reach the standards expected in 2015. Only a small proportion of disadvantaged pupils attained the government benchmark of five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics. Their progress was significantly below national expectations.
- Furthermore, results from 2016 indicate that outcomes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds remain significantly below all other pupils nationally. The differences between the progress of these pupils and other pupils nationally are not diminishing quickly enough.
- Pupils performed better in mathematics in 2016 than they did in 2015. Changes to

leadership and staffing in this department were key factors. Progress in mathematics, however, was still below average, including for disadvantaged pupils.

- Pupils currently in the school are not making the accelerated progress they need to in order to catch up. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils. In many cases, their responses in lessons and work in books lack depth and understanding. As a result, there is little sign that the differences in achievement between these pupils and other pupils nationally are diminishing quickly enough.
- The accuracy of the school's assessments has been weak in previous years and many students did not achieve their predicted grades. The school's current information system suggests that pupils are some way behind securing at least average progress in subject areas such as English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils are encouraged to read widely and often, and there is a growing culture of reading in the school. The library is open to pupils at break and lunchtimes. Leaders are beginning to address pupils' low literacy levels through a whole-school approach to teaching writing, but it is too early to assess the impact of this initiative.
- There are early signs that outcomes are improving in some subjects, for example in humanities and modern foreign languages.

16 to 19 study programmes

Inadequate

- Leaders have not secured a high-quality curriculum for the sixth form, and students have not achieved well. This is because teaching in the sixth form does not provide the challenge necessary for students to make strong progress. As a result, currently and over time, students are not achieving at the level they should.
- In 2016, the school did not meet the 16 to 19 minimum requirements for academic qualifications. Progress overall was well below average. For vocational qualifications, progress was also significantly below average for all pupils. The progress rates of a small number of disadvantaged students on both academic and vocational routes were below average.
- The school does not break down progress by pupil groups when it reports to the governing body. There is no robust analysis of current cohorts. This means that the school is not able to accurately monitor value-added data.
- There are signs that attainment is rising for students taking vocational subjects. This is because activities are increasingly well matched to students' abilities and interests. This is resulting in greater engagement and improved attitudes to learning.
- Study programmes are planned well. Students receive appropriate careers education and guidance. Students speak highly of this support and the easy access they have to advice.
- Leaders have created a nurturing, supportive and safe environment that caters well for the emotional development of a small cohort of students.
- Numbers of students recruited to the sixth form have fallen and the school keeps the viability of the provision under review.

School details

Unique reference number	104118
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10025318

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
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	1,090
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	105
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Hugh Hendry
Headteacher	Katy Craig
Telephone number	0121 788 4100
Website	http://smithswood.co.uk/
Email address	office@smiths-wood.solihull.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 October 2012

Information about this school

- Smith's Wood Sports College is a larger than average-sized mixed school. It has agreed an academy order in September 2016. It plans to become part of the Fairfax multi-academy trust in April 2017.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and the proportion who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are both much higher than the national average.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its

website, although at the start of the inspection the up-to-date changes in the appointment of the new principal were not on the website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 40 lessons to observe learning, talk to pupils and look at their work across all key stages. Four of these visits were carried out jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, middle leaders and a range of other staff. They also spoke to pupils from key stage 3, key stage 4 and the sixth form.
- The lead inspector met with the chair and two other members of the governing body, with representatives of Solihull local authority and with representatives of the Fairfax multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents by analysing 18 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 14 free text responses. Inspectors also took into account 60 responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of other documents, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plan, the school's website, the school's central record of recruitment checks, child protection records, leaders' analysis of attendance and behaviour, minutes of governing body meetings, and notes of external visits carried out by the trust and the local authority.
- Inspectors also reviewed safeguarding procedures at the school.

Inspection team

Graham Tyrer, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Kent	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Spoor	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Topping	Ofsted Inspector
Rob Steed	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Broomfield	Ofsted Inspector

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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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