## Selly Oak Trust School
Oak Tree Lane, Selly Oak, Birmingham, West Midlands B29 6HZ

**Inspection dates**  
6–7 June 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall effectiveness</th>
<th>Good</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of leadership and management</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of teaching, learning and assessment</td>
<td>Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal development, behaviour and welfare</td>
<td>Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcomes for pupils</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 to 19 study programmes</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall effectiveness at previous inspection</td>
<td>Good</td>
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### Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

#### This is a good school

- The passionate and committed leadership of the headteacher, with the support of his team, ensures that pupils receive a good and improving standard of education at this school.

- The strong and skilled governing body knows the school very well. It holds leaders to account, challenging and supporting in equal measure. It has been instrumental in establishing the shared vision for the school.

- Leadership at all levels has been strengthened since the last inspection resulting in a highly skilled, supportive team that helps to drive further improvement. Staff speak highly of the training opportunities they receive.

- The progress pupils make from their starting points enables them to achieve excellent outcomes. Disadvantaged pupils make similar, and sometimes better, progress than other pupils.

- The well-organised and balanced curriculum allows pupils to access a wide range of accreditation from ASDAN and entry level qualifications to GCSEs.

- Staff provide an outstanding level of care and support for pupils through a well-organised pastoral support system. They know the pupils extremely well and tailor support and intervention to meet individual needs.

- The outstanding 16 to 19 provision ensures that students continue to build on their achievements in key stage 4 and gain additional qualifications. Students access high-quality work experience, supported internships and a range of volunteering opportunities.

- Teaching is good and improving. Lessons are often engaging and planned effectively so that pupils are learning well. However, in some lessons, teachers do not set work which matches the ability of the pupils. As a result, some pupils are not challenged sufficiently to make even better progress.

- Pupils are safe at this school and the majority say that they are happy and enjoy school.

- The school’s system for measuring progress is beginning to embed but requires further refinement.

- Pupils’ behaviour is usually good and staff help pupils learn how to regulate their behaviour. However, some pupils are not yet able to control their behaviour sufficiently well, so leaders continue to use fixed-term exclusions and a small number of permanent exclusions.

- Leaders are working hard to improve pupils’ attendance and good attendance is celebrated. However, actions to improve attendance are not having enough of an impact and school attendance rates remain stubbornly low.
Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue the drive to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  - work and adults’ questioning is more closely matched to pupils’ abilities, enabling them to achieve their full potential
  - the school’s systems for tracking pupils’ progress and setting individual targets are further refined so that all pupils are sufficiently challenged.

- Improve the attendance of all groups of pupils and reduce the rates of persistent absence by:
  - reviewing current strategies to see how effective they are
  - considering the use of a range of different sanctions and strategies which have been used effectively in other similar schools.
# Inspection judgements

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<tr>
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- The headteacher’s vision and commitment to achieving the best quality of education for the pupils are unmistakable. He, along with governors and senior leaders, continues to strive to improve the school further. All leaders have an accurate knowledge of the school’s strengths and areas for development. They know where further improvements need to be made and are working hard to address these.

- Leaders are responding well to the changing profile of the school. More pupils are now entering the school with social, emotional and mental health needs. Leaders and governors have made sure that the school’s areas for development reflect the need to adapt the provision to meet the needs of this group of pupils. Pastoral systems in place to support pupils with managing their own behaviour are very strong.

- Since the last inspection, there has been a drive to develop further the skills of senior and middle leaders in the school. This work has been extremely effective. Leaders have been nurtured and developed in school and, as a result, a highly skilled leadership team is now in place. Leaders, including middle leaders, make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. They know the areas which require further improvement and they are rising to this challenge. Each faculty in the school has its own development plan which links to the whole-school development plan. This ensures that there is a shared and consistent focus on school improvement.

- Leaders have developed a comprehensive programme of professional development for all staff to improve their skills so that they are able to provide more effective support for pupils. This training is closely aligned with the school’s priorities for development and systems for managing staff performance. Staff speak highly of the wide range of training opportunities they receive.

- Pupil premium and literacy and numeracy catch-up funding are used very well. The focus on developing reading skills has had a positive impact, resulting in improvements to pupils’ reading ages. Pupil premium funding is mainly used to provide additional staff who support pupils in different ways. For example, there are now four learning mentors for pupils with an autistic spectrum condition. They help pupils to manage their anxieties and increase their engagement in lessons so that they can make better progress. Funding is also used to employ speech and language and occupational therapy support for pupils. The school’s assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils make better progress than non-disadvantaged pupils.

- The small number of pupils in key stage 2 benefit from the sport premium funding available and access additional lunchtime clubs, tennis, swimming, archery and out-of-hours football activities. This has helped to improve not only their physical skills but their confidence and resilience as they learn to work as a team.

- Leaders have reviewed the curriculum to make sure that it meets the needs of all pupils. In key stage 4, pupils follow different curriculum pathways which provide a range of qualifications for them to work towards.
The daily ‘Skills for Life’ lessons promote a wide variety of engaging and appropriate topics which help pupils develop their wider understanding of the world. Fundamental British values are woven in seamlessly to planning, and pupils learn about becoming responsible citizens. Inspectors saw pupils engaging sensitively in a lesson focusing on the recent terror attacks in London, with staff skilfully supporting pupils and promoting tolerance and understanding of different faiths. One pupil echoed the views of several when he said, ‘We are from different cultures and beliefs... we get on well.’

Governance of the school

Governors are highly skilled and dedicated to achieving the best possible outcomes for pupils. They are robust in their challenge of the headteacher and senior leaders, but at the same time balance this with the right level of support. Governors have been instrumental in developing the whole-school strategic vision which enables them to see how this is reflected in the school’s practice. Governors access a range of training which helps them to keep up to date with developments in education, including safeguarding and the use of the pupil premium funding.

Governors have recently had to make difficult decisions based on the school’s projected finances. They have decided to shorten the school day from September 2017 by 30 minutes. They have not made this decision lightly. They have consulted widely with parents and staff, and believe that the adjustments they have made will not impact on the overall quality of education for individual pupils.

Governors check that the information they receive from the leadership team is accurate. They do this by comparing information with external data, carrying out pupil and staff surveys, and organising external peer reviews. Because they visit the school regularly, they can gather additional information by talking to staff and pupils. They know that there is still work to do in terms of improvements in attendance and making sure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged.

Governors understand fully their responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe. The safeguarding link governor meets regularly with leaders and ensures that all staff have received appropriate training and development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead and her deputy receive appropriate, up-to-date training. They make sure that staff receive comprehensive training on a regular basis concerning all aspects of safeguarding. This includes training in the ‘Prevent’ duty, female genital mutilation, sexting and forced marriage. Staff are aware of their responsibility to keep pupils safe, and procedures for reporting concerns are understood and carried out in a timely way.

Leaders respond quickly and effectively when a pupil may be at risk of harm. Records show that referrals are made to outside agencies when necessary. Individual case files are detailed and well organised.
Leaders make sure that children looked after receive the right support. Their progress and achievement are tracked and they receive additional support if necessary.

Appropriate vetting checks on new employees are carried out before they begin their employment in the school. Some staff and governors have been trained in safer recruitment. The safeguarding link governor carries out regular safeguarding checks in the school and an annual audit of safeguarding is carried out.

Leaders have made sure that all aspects of safeguarding thread comprehensively through the curriculum of the school. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremism, and how to keep safe on social media. Inspectors saw pupils working safely with materials and equipment in science and construction activities.

Pupils to whom inspectors spoke say that they feel safe at school. This is also reflected in the pupil survey responses and the school’s own ‘happy’ survey. Where pupils identified via the happy survey that they did not feel safe, leaders responded swiftly to understand and address these individual concerns.

**Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** Good

- The strong relationships between pupils and staff create a positive climate for learning. Leaders have created a behaviour and reward tracker which is used at the start of a lesson and helps pupils recognise when they are ready to learn. When this is used, it has a positive impact on pupils’ behaviour and readiness for learning.

- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan and deliver lessons which capture the pupils’ attention. Teachers use information about gaps in pupils’ learning to focus additional support and intervention. In a science lesson, pupils were learning how to use solvents, dyes and binder to make paint. The activity was carefully managed and pupils’ subject-specific vocabulary was being developed well. Staff used questioning effectively to check pupils’ understanding of the task and extend their thinking. Pupils were engaged in the activity and were able to make connections to the world of work. A pupil commented, ‘If I want to, I could get a job making paint.’

- Additional adults in the classroom help to create a positive climate for learning. In the best lessons, adults allow pupils to work as independently as possible, only intervening when pupils need additional help.

- Pupils who require it are provided with extra help to support them with their learning and behaviour. In many classes, visual timetables are used to help the pupils recognise the sequence of lessons. Some resources are personalised for the pupils – for example, a behaviour support chart linking activities with rewards. Some pupils are allowed to use ‘fidget spinners’ to help them remain focused on their learning.

- Work in lessons, pupils’ files and the school’s own assessment information shows that pupils are making progress in their learning. Inspection evidence agreed with leaders’ judgements about progress, and the strengths and areas for development in teaching and learning.

- Where questioning is used to good effect, it engages pupils in the lesson and makes them think and reflect, and consequently make further progress in their learning. However, in some lessons, adults did not always take the opportunity to use
questioning to deepen pupils’ knowledge or explain their answers. This meant that some pupils were not challenged to extend their learning. As a result, some pupils lost focus in the lesson and started to distract others.

- In some lessons, and from work seen in books, pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Sometimes pupils finish tasks before the rest of their classmates, and are not challenged with an extension task. On occasions, work is too easy and does not extend pupils’ learning quickly enough to the next level. Pupils told inspectors that sometimes work could be ‘harder’.

- In mathematics, pupils are developing their skills in problem-solving but have fewer opportunities to use reasoning. In English, there was some evidence in pupils’ work of pupils’ grammar and punctuation errors not being addressed. While a feedback, marking and assessment policy is in place, there is still some variation in the way pupils’ work is presented and the feedback pupils receive.

- Assessment systems are developing in the school and leaders are focused on making sure that pupils make the best possible progress. Leaders recognise that some refinements are necessary so that targets are challenging, especially for the most able pupils.

**Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Good**

**Personal development and welfare**

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is outstanding.

- The strong relationships which have been developed between staff and pupils are clear to see. Pupils receive a high level of care and support. Leaders have transformed the pastoral system in the school so that pupils get the help they need. At the same time, the curriculum enables pupils to be more independent and take on additional responsibilities. Pupils in key stages 4 and 5 are able to apply to become peer mentors to support other pupils. Other pupils are able to take on responsibilities as play monitors, litter pickers and solar store managers.

- Pupils have a voice and this is a strength at Selly Oak. They have been involved in developing the vision for the school and they are provided with frequent opportunities to shape the work of the school. There are a number of different groups and committees in which pupils can take part. These include the well-being council, headteacher voice group, steering panel and anti-bullying committees at each key stage. The school recently achieved a level 1 UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools award in recognition of its work.

- On some occasions, pupils may need additional support to help them manage their behaviour and this can include the need for physical interventions. All staff have received relevant training to enable them to carry out these interventions, which are only used as a last resort. These are recorded in detail and followed up with regular supervision meetings. Pupils are encouraged to help write their behaviour management plan, so that they can share how they feel when they are anxious or angry. Records of physical interventions show that they are reducing over time.
In 2016, the school received the AcSEED Award in recognition of its commitment to the emotional well-being and mental health of pupils and staff. Pupils told inspectors that they feel well supported in this area. Leaders recognise that for some pupils, difficulties with their emotional health and well-being can be a barrier to learning. Leaders have worked thoughtfully to look at different strategies to support pupils with this aspect. The residential visits to ‘Jamie’s Farm’ and the key stage 3 team-building residential are examples of pupils being helped to develop their self-confidence, self-esteem and resilience.

Pupils support a wide range of charities as part of their global citizen group responsibility at every key stage. This enables them to develop their empathy skills and support people less fortunate than themselves. All the charities are chosen by the pupils. These include the Teenage Cancer Trust, Wythall Animal Sanctuary and SIFA Fireside for the homeless. Pupils have also taken part in weed clearing for the local canal trust, and have run a successful Christmas box campaign.

Pupils recognise that there is some bullying that takes place in school, but they know that this is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils know how to recognise and report racist and homophobic bullying. The anti-bullying groups at every key stage help to share the message about the importance of reporting any bullying, as well as making sure that pupils understand what bullying is. Pupil mediators try and resolve problems before involving members of staff. The STOP message displayed around school, explaining that bullying is something that happens ‘Several Times On Purpose’, helps pupils to understand the difference between minor fallouts and systematic bullying.

Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of physical health. This is addressed comprehensively in the Skills for Life lessons, and pupils have additional opportunities to improve their physical health. There is an outdoor gym, opportunities to take part in kickboxing, residential outdoor pursuits and a swimming club.

**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The strong systems which are in place to support pupils to manage their own behaviour are having an impact, particularly in the classroom. Inspectors saw good behaviour for learning in classrooms.
- Pupils usually move from lesson to lesson in an orderly way, although there were several occasions where pupils were running in the building. Staff are quick to deal with incidents of inappropriate behaviour and help pupils think about their actions. A small amount of disruptive behaviour was seen at the start of the day. Pupils told inspectors during conversations and through the pupil survey that sometimes their learning is disrupted by other pupils’ behaviour in lessons.
- The ‘POD’ system, which enables pupils to leave lessons and regulate their behaviour, is having a positive impact on overall disruption in lessons. It is not clear whether the use of these areas is reducing because leaders do not have this information. However, call-outs to the pastoral team for behaviour incidents are reducing over time. This is because pupils are being helped to learn how to regulate their own behaviour. Fixed-term exclusions, however, remain at a similar rate to previous years.
Leaders and governors know that regular attendance is important and have implemented a number of strategies to improve attendance rates. Inspectors saw nearly half the school attend the half-termly 100% attendance celebration with their personalised invitations. Pupils value this shared celebration with senior leaders and recognise that it is important to come to school regularly because learning is important. Pupils can gain additional awards for more regular attendance over a longer period of time.

Leaders check that when pupils do not attend school, they are safe. They have evidence that when small groups are targeted, this has a positive impact on their attendance. Despite this work, attendance rates remain low and are showing no sign of improvement. This is also the case for persistent absence. Pupils’ attendance during the inspection was below 90%. Leaders have not yet considered all options available to them, nor those used successfully by similar schools, including more formal ways of addressing persistent absence, such as the use of fixed penalty notices.

Outcomes for pupils

Outcomes, from pupils’ low starting points, continue to improve at Selly Oak. The school’s assessment information shows a three-year rising trend of improvement in rates of progress. From their starting points in both English and mathematics, pupils made more progress from the end of key stage 2 to the end of key stage 4 than other pupils with similar starting points nationally. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils performed better than non-disadvantaged pupils overall.

Current progress information shows that the majority of pupils in key stage 4 have already exceeded their targets and are on track to make even better progress in English and mathematics this year. This is also the case in other curriculum subjects.

Pupils in key stage 3 are also making good or better progress. This is tracked by leaders and progress is evident in pupils’ work across a range of subjects. Recent reading and phonics interventions are having a positive impact on pupils’ progress in this key stage.

Pupils are able to access a range of options in key stage 4. This means that by the end of Year 11 they have achieved qualifications which are matched to their abilities and prepare them well for the next stage of their education. In 2016, some pupils achieved GCSE passes in English, mathematics, statistics, science and humanities. They gained entry-level qualifications in mathematics, humanities and numeracy. Pupils also achieved BTEC and vocational qualifications at level 1 and level 2 in a range of subjects, including art and design, childcare, cookery, sport studies, land-based studies, information technology and music technology. Some pupils gained a level 1 functional skills qualification in communication and numeracy.

Leaders regularly review pupils’ option choices and in 2017 no pupils will be accessing English GCSE. Instead, pupils will be focusing on functional skills qualifications at level 1 and level 2. This is because leaders believe that functional skills qualifications, which are equivalent to GCSEs, provide more relevant learning opportunities for pupils. This means that pupils are then better prepared for employment.
The school’s assessment system is developing further and leaders are not afraid to refine it to make sure that it enables them to track progress carefully. Leaders recognise that it has been more difficult to track the progress of pupils in some BTEC qualifications. As a result, they are extending the use of ‘I Can’ statements, based on the national curriculum, into BTEC progress tracking.

Leaders make sure that judgements about progress are accurate. They do this by checking standards of work regularly, both within the school and with other special schools in the local authority. Records of moderated work show that the judgements made about work are accurate and robust.

Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training. They value the advice they receive. Year on year, almost all pupils go on to further education, employment or training. The Skills for Life lessons which begin in Year 7 give pupils the opportunity to think about their future career choices, understand ‘what makes a good employee’ and practise interviews and writing CVs. Leaders make sure that pupils and students are able to access independent careers advice. Leaders organise regular careers evenings, inviting local colleges and work placement providers to meet the pupils to discuss their options. Students in the sixth form are able to take part in work experience placements, and a small number are now participating in supported internships. Year 11 pupils do not yet have the chance to take part in work experience and leaders recognise that this is an area to be developed.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

The strong and purposeful leadership of this provision has developed a vision to extend lifelong employability for students in key stage 5 and it is evident throughout the work of the sixth form. Students are able to follow a more vocational curriculum which offers additional challenge and breadth of opportunity.

The vast majority of Year 11 pupils join the sixth form. Very quickly, staff make sure that their previous achievements are built on and they are provided with additional challenges and responsibilities. Students are expected to improve their grades in English and mathematics by completing a functional skills qualification.

Students follow one of two pathways and complete examinations linked to personal and social development, work and employability skills. These qualifications are offered at a number of levels from entry level to level 2. This ensures that students are challenged to build on their previous best. In addition to this, a number of optional subjects are available to extend students’ qualifications.

Teaching is good and improving in the sixth form, and students behave very well. There are very few issues with behaviour in the sixth form. Students told inspectors how well sixth-form students behave.

A particular strength of the sixth form is the students’ participation in the school’s Royal Naval Cadet programme. This supports the BTEC First Diploma in Public Services Award, which is equivalent to gaining four GCSEs. The number of cadets has grown steadily and now over 50 students are participating in this programme. Students have had the opportunity to work with HMS Raleigh and received high praise from the
Commodore at their annual cadet force inspection.

- During the weekly enrichment morning, students are able to access local colleges to take part in courses in construction, horticulture, catering and car valeting, and are supported by school staff. Attendance is checked every day. The leader of the sixth form carries out regular checks on these providers, judging pupils’ attendance, engagement and progress. Detailed records of these checks were seen.

- In addition to the curriculum opportunities, every student participates in a work experience activity, supported by the Central England Co-operative. Students can also take part in a range of volunteering opportunities. All students are able to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award scheme.

- A small number of students in Year 14 are able to follow a supported internship programme. This is organised by the school in conjunction with National Grid and enables students to develop further their employability skills in the workplace. As a result of this work, some students have secured successful employment on leaving school and others have been able to move on to higher-level qualifications in further education.

- Sixth-form students operate their own business enterprise project, Oak Empire. They make a range of products and sell them, investing their profits in developing the business further. Students learn about the principles of running a business, while working towards a BTEC work skills qualification.

- The school employs the services of a travel trainer to promote and develop independent travel for those students who are able. This can include home to school travel, or travel to college or work experience. This support is having a significant impact on the development of students’ independence. Nearly half of the sixth-form students are independent travellers.

- The Skills for Life curriculum continues into the sixth form. This ensures that students continue to learn about keeping themselves safe and healthy. Leaders have worked with external agencies such as Women’s Aid to run workshops and enhance students’ understanding of sex and relationships education. Other workshops promote safe use of the internet and body confidence.
School details

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This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

| Type of school                          | Secondary                   |
| School category                         | Foundation special          |
| Age range of pupils                     | 10–19                       |
| Gender of pupils                        | Mixed                       |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study      | Mixed                       |
| programmes                              |                             |
| Number of pupils on the school roll     | 392                         |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19    | 93                          |
| Study programmes                        |                             |
| Appropriate authority                   | The governing body          |
| Chair                                   | Linda Lockwood              |
| Headteacher                             | Chris Field                 |
| Telephone number                        | 0121 472 0876               |
| Website                                 | www.sellyoak.bham.sch.uk    |
| Email address                           | enquiry@sellyoak.bham.sch.uk|
| Date of previous inspection             | 19–20 November 2013         |

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Selly Oak is a large secondary special school. All the pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- Selly Oak is a foundation trust school supported by The Real Life 4 Me Trust.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. The majority of pupils are White British. The remainder come from a variety of
backgrounds, the largest being Pakistani heritage.

- The school has a sixth form. Some students follow programmes of study at registered local colleges: Bournville College, South and City College, Queen Alexandra College and Southside College.

- The school is one of 12 secondary schools which form the Oaks Collegiate.

- Two years ago, the school admitted 10 Year 5 pupils in response to a demand for places in the local authority. This was arranged through a service level agreement with the local authority, but is not continuing. In September, there will be no key stage 2 pupils.
Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited and observed parts of lessons throughout the school taught by teachers and support staff, accompanied by senior leaders. They looked at pupils’ work and talked to pupils about all aspects of their education, in a group, in lessons and on the playground. They observed pupils arriving at school, at breaktime and lunchtime.

- Inspectors held discussions with the school’s senior leaders, governors and staff. The lead inspector spoke to the school’s improvement adviser by telephone and met with the Oaks Collegiate coordinator.

- The inspection team looked at a wide range of evidence including the school’s own development plan and self-evaluation, progress information, information about managing staff performance, monitoring documentation, peer reviews, behaviour and attendance records, and documents relating to keeping children safe, including child protection files. Inspectors also looked at the minutes of meetings of the governing body.

- The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair.

- Inspectors listened to a group of pupils reading.

- Inspectors considered the views of parents through the 16 responses on Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, and the free-text responses. They took account of pupils’ responses to the online survey, the responses of staff to the Ofsted online questionnaire, and the school’s own pupil and staff survey information.

Inspection team

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<tr>
<td>Deb Jenkins, lead inspector</td>
<td>Her Majesty’s Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derek Barnes</td>
<td>Ofsted Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Orgill</td>
<td>Ofsted Inspector</td>
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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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