

# Wednesbury Oak Academy

Greenacre Road, Tipton, West Midlands, DY4 0AR

## Inspection dates

24–25 April 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching have declined. Leaders and governors have not acted quickly enough to reverse this trend.
- Pupils, including children in the early years, do not make the progress that they are capable of, especially disadvantaged pupils and the most able. This is because, too often, teachers' expectations are too low and tasks are not matched well to pupils' learning needs.
- Progress in reading and mathematics, particularly by the end of key stage 2, is below the national average.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across the school, including in the early years.
- The use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils has not been tracked carefully, and leaders do not know what impact it is having on pupils' outcomes.
- Until recently, leaders' views of the school have been overly generous, and planning for school improvement has lacked focus. As a result, governors have not had an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they have not held leaders to account for the school's performance.
- The curriculum has not been sufficiently broad or balanced to allow pupils to develop their knowledge across a wide range of subjects. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to work independently or to apply their reading, writing and mathematics skills across a range of subjects.
- While the teaching of phonics is improving, it is not yet consistently strong across the school. Younger pupils do not always have reading books that are closely matched to their reading ability. The school does not promote a love of reading effectively.

### The school has the following strengths

- In recent months, leaders and governors have taken action to address many of the areas identified as requiring improvement. This is starting to have a positive impact.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well supported and make small, but effective, gains in learning.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are safe and very well cared for. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive and caring.
- Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is supported well. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life as citizens in modern Britain.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for all pupils, but especially those who are disadvantaged and the most able, by increasing rates of progress in all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including in the early years, by:
  - strengthening the use of phonics to improve writing skills
  - ensuring reading books are closely matched to pupils' abilities
  - raising the profile of reading across the school and encouraging a love of reading
  - continuing to strengthen the teaching of mathematics
  - ensuring that tasks are matched well to pupils' learning needs
  - ensuring that pupils have opportunities to work independently and apply their reading, writing and mathematics skills in other subjects
  - ensuring that there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching across the school and that existing effective practice is built upon.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - strengthening the quality of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning so that there is a tighter focus on key priorities to bring about improvement
  - strengthening the board of trustees and the role of governors in holding leaders to account for the school's performance
  - embedding the recent new initiatives to improve pupils' progress
  - embedding the changes to the curriculum to ensure that pupils develop knowledge and skills across a wide range of subjects
  - further refining assessment systems to enable accurate tracking of pupil progress
  - ensuring that middle leaders have an accurate and realistic understanding of pupils' progress in order to lead improvements.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not acted quickly enough to address the decline in pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching. Until very recently, leaders' views of the school were overly positive and evaluations of the school's performance were unrealistic. As a result, plans to improve the school lacked focus. This has started to be addressed through the introduction of a new development plan which has clear and appropriate priorities.
- The school is currently being led and managed by an acting principal and vice-principal, due to the long-term absence of the principal. The acting leadership team demonstrates the capacity and drive to move the school forward during this uncertain time. They have the support of staff and the confidence of many parents and carers.
- Current leaders have worked with staff to raise everyone's expectations about what pupils can achieve. Staff are clear that everyone has responsibility for helping to strengthen pupils' progress and improve outcomes. Senior leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching. However, these checks have focused too much on the teachers' actions rather than on what pupils are actually learning.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are accurately identified. Their academic and emotional needs are addressed in a variety of ways, including support in class, in small groups and one-to-one support. Adults help to build pupils' confidence and engender a sense of achievement. Funding is used appropriately to address identified needs. The SEN coordinators (SENCOs) monitor the input pupils receive and increasingly track the impact it is having on each pupil's progress. The SENCOs also ensure that parents are kept informed about their children's progress. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making small, but effective, gains in their learning.
- Leaders and governors do not track the use of pupil premium funding effectively. They cannot say what impact different strategies and approaches are having on the progress of disadvantaged pupils across the school, including in the early years. As a result, outcomes for this group of pupils remain too variable. Leaders and governors are aware of the need to develop this aspect of the school's management.
- Historically, plans for the use of the primary physical education and sport funding have lacked detail, and leaders and governors have not checked to see what impact this funding has had. Current plans are sharper and include more opportunities for pupils, especially girls, to take part in a wider range of sports, including team sports and competitions with other schools. It is, however, too soon to see the impact of these plans on pupils' outcomes. Leaders acknowledge that they will not be able to meet the new requirements in relation to swimming this academic year.
- Leaders and staff make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Fundamental British values, such as democracy and tolerance, are taught alongside opportunities for pupils to learn about different religions and cultures. During the inspection, older pupils talked about different types of discrimination and pupils explained that they learned about the Suffragette Movement through a school assembly. Pupils have opportunities to take part in a large number of

activities, including school productions, family events, theatre trips and residential trips as well as external events such as 'Pride of Tipton' awards and 'Tipton Teamworx'. As a result of these opportunities, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

- The school's curriculum had not moved with the times. It was not sufficiently broad or balanced to allow pupils to develop a wide range of skills and knowledge. Current leaders and staff have worked together to create a more vibrant and exciting curriculum in order to engage pupils' interests. It is too soon to see the impact of these improvements on pupils' progress. Regular trips are an integral part of the learning process. For example, Year 1 pupils are excited about a forthcoming trip to the seaside, while Year 6 pupils talked enthusiastically about a visit to Blists Hill Museum and spending time in a Victorian schoolroom.
- The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, including a variety of sports and games, crafts, computing and ballet. However, some pupils cannot attend because the clubs do not take place every week of term or due to the cost of attending. Leaders are looking at ways to make these clubs more accessible to a greater number of pupils.
- Leaders have recently adapted systems to assess and track pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The process is now more rigorous. It allows leaders and teachers to identify more quickly the progress that pupils are making and any pupils who may be at risk of falling behind. Middle leaders, including subject and phase leaders, do not have a strong enough understanding of pupils' progress and assessment information in order to maximise progress in their subjects or phases.
- Several complaints were made to the school following a decision to charge parents to enable their children to access new play equipment. Governors quickly overturned this decision and issued an apology. The great majority of parents spoken to, and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, are positive about the education and quality of support that their children receive.

## **Governance of the school**

- Until recently, the board of trustees has not had an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and it has not effectively held leaders to account for the school's performance. Governors have accepted information too readily and they have not questioned or challenged leaders or sought to compare different sources of information that they have been given.
- Governors' understanding of the impact of additional funding has been poor, particularly of pupil premium funds.
- However, governors have recognised weaknesses in their work and are taking rapid action to address them. For example, they are now working with a national leader of governance and have arranged for an external review of governance to take place in the near future. They are also in the process of refreshing the school's website to ensure that all information is up to date and relevant.
- The governors, in particular the chair and vice-chair of governors, provide effective support for the acting principal and vice-principal during the long-term absence of the principal. They are supportive of recently introduced initiatives and they have set up links with a local teaching school to provide additional support and guidance.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding, and keeping pupils safe is central to the work of the school. As a result, the school is a safe environment for pupils and they are well cared for at all times.
- Staff receive regular training, reflecting the latest safeguarding guidance. They have a clear understanding of the school's procedures and referral systems. Leaders are aware of the specific safeguarding concerns that relate to the context of the school.
- The safeguarding team maintains the required confidential records and, when appropriate, shares information with relevant external agencies. Leaders follow up concerns with these agencies as necessary.
- Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on all adults appointed to work at the school.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in the school and know who to talk to if they have any worries. Pupils have a good understanding about online safety. They speak confidently about what actions to take should they feel concerned.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Over time, the evaluation of teaching and learning has been overly generous and, in some cases, teachers' expectations have been too low to enable pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. There is some strong teaching within the school, which is engaging and effective. Expectations are rising and teachers are now clear that ensuring pupils make at least good progress is everyone's responsibility. However, the quality of teaching and learning remains too variable.
- Teachers within year groups follow similar plans and adapt activities to meet the specific needs of pupils' in their classes. However, this is not done consistently well across the school and, as a result, activities are not always matched well to pupils' needs. In some lessons, there is a lack of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils, and time is spent completing work that they can already do.
- Where teaching is effective, pupils are clear about what they are learning and why. Teachers explain concepts clearly and use questioning effectively to clarify and deepen pupils' understanding. Teaching assistants provide effective support and have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils' work is presented to a high standard.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not make their expectations clear. As a result, pupils take too long to settle or they do not complete as much work as they could. Some teachers stop the whole class too frequently to re-teach a point that is only relevant for some pupils. This interrupts the flow of lessons. In some cases, pupils' errors, such as incorrect number formation or common punctuation errors, are not picked up and are made repeatedly. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- Reading has rightly been identified as a key priority for improvement. Phonics teaching in Year 1 has been strengthened and rates of progress are improving. A wider range of

phonetically based reading books is now available. However, in key stage 1, inspectors did not find that pupils' reading books closely matched their level of reading. Some were too hard and others too easy.

- Reading does not currently have a high profile within the school. There are limited areas where pupils can sit to read and enjoy books. Across the school, each classroom has a good range of books for pupils to choose from but these are stored in cupboards. Leaders have identified the need to celebrate reading more widely and have introduced a series of reading challenges.
- Leaders are taking steps to improve the consistency of writing, in order to ensure that pupils are making strong progress. Staff training and a focus on the quality of planning are having a positive impact on pupils' work, especially across key stage 2. However, pupils in key stage 1 have too few opportunities to write at length. Teachers do not always make links with phonics to improve pupils' writing, or activities are too limiting and teachers do not expect pupils to write more than very short responses.
- Mathematics books show that many pupils are now working at the standard expected for their age and that their learning covers all aspects of the mathematics curriculum. In most classes, pupils have opportunities to solve problems and to explain how they have reached an answer. However, some pupils have limited opportunities to work independently and are unable to apply their learning in different contexts. As a result, they cannot use their mathematical knowledge effectively to help them solve related problems. For example, pupils may know  $6 - 4 = 2$  but cannot use this fact to help them calculate  $16 - 4$ .

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are polite, happy and confident. They generally show positive attitudes to learning and are proud of their school. The great majority of pupils show respect for adults and each other. For example, inspectors witnessed a boy supporting his friend to tackle a mathematics problem by working through the problem with him. In another class, pupils were supporting each other when using dictionaries.
- The school's nurturing environment promotes all aspects of pupils' welfare. Regular praise assemblies and weekly newsletters acknowledge a wide range of pupils' achievements. Across the school, there are strong, positive relationships between pupils and adults.
- Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to school life and the wider community. For example, following an idea from a pupil, several hundred pounds was raised for Cancer Research.
- Older pupils have the opportunity to take on a range of school-wide responsibilities, such as being prefects, house captains, and register monitors. Prefects are elected following an application, hustings and voting process that help to support pupils' understanding of British values and democracy. Older pupils are able to apply for the much sought-after roles of animal carers, helping to look after the school's hens,

ducks, rabbits and guinea pigs. Pupils take these roles seriously and are proud to undertake them. These opportunities are helping to prepare the pupils well for the next stage in their education. There are, however, few similar opportunities for younger pupils.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's behaviour policy is clear and understood by everyone. There are very few incidents of serious misbehaviour. Pupils generally play and learn well together. Pupils say that occasionally behaviour can be too rough on the playground and arguments do occur, but these are dealt with quickly and fairly. During some lessons, a few pupils become distracted and lose concentration. This happens when the tasks they have been asked to work on are not matched well to their needs or when the teacher has not made expectations clear. Most pupils respond quickly to a reminder from the teacher and do not disrupt the learning of others further.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms that it can take. Pupils spoken to were very clear that bullying is not tolerated in the school. Behaviour records show that, historically, incidents of bullying have been taken seriously and followed up by senior leaders. A small group of parents raised concerns about poor behaviour and bullying through Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View. These concerns were not substantiated during the inspection.
- Pupils are keen to come to school and rarely miss a day. As a result, attendance for the majority is high and above the national average. Staff are rigorous in following up any absence to ensure that pupils are safe. Staff track patterns in attendance, including lateness, and work closely with families to provide any additional support that may be required to support pupils' attendance. The school celebrates those pupils with high attendance through regular praise assemblies.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- The proportion of pupils who reached the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was above the national average. However, the amount of progress that these pupils made from key stage 1 to key stage 2 was significantly below the national average in reading and mathematics. This indicates that they did not achieve as highly as they could have done.
- In 2017, at the end of key stage 1, pupils' outcomes were above the national average in mathematics but below in reading and writing.
- Over a number of years, too few pupils have reached the higher standards expected for their age at the end of both key stages 1 and 2.
- Over time, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have been variable but, overall, they have not achieved as well as other pupils nationally. Improved assessment and tracking systems enable a greater focus on progress for current pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

- Rates of progress for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have, in the past, been low. However, current pupils are making better progress because of well-targeted support.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has improved over time but remains a little below the national average.
- Historically, leaders have had an overly generous view of pupils' progress. This is changing, and staff expectations are rising. Leaders have a more accurate knowledge of current pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers are becoming more aware of the standards that pupils should be reaching, based on their previous attainment.
- From information available, including work seen in pupils' books, current Year 6 pupils look to be on track to make stronger progress in reading and mathematics, in line with the progress achieved in writing in 2017. More pupils in Year 6 are on track to achieve at the higher standards than in previous years.
- Pupils' mathematics and writing books show evidence of stronger progress at key stage 2.

### Early years provision

### Requires improvement

- Historically, many children in the early years have made good progress from typically low starting points and achieved outcomes in line with the national average. However, a gap is opening up in the proportions of children reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and number compared with those seen nationally. In 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was below the national average. The outcomes for disadvantaged children were particularly low.
- Adults regularly monitor how well children are doing, using assessments recorded on electronic tablets. They do this so often that sometimes opportunities to engage directly with the children are lost. It is not clear how teachers and leaders use this information to inform future planning or to check that all children have completed a wide range of tasks.
- From the school's own data, the progress of children currently in the early years is too variable. Children's learning journals indicate that, over time, they have limited opportunities for writing and the progress that they are making is too slow.
- Phonics is not taught consistently well across the early years, because adults do not always model sounds accurately.
- Some activities are not sufficiently challenging, especially for the most able children, and this can affect the amount of progress they make. For example, children were asked to order the numbers 1 to 10, linked to the story of the 'Hungry Caterpillar'. However, the worksheet already showed the order of the numbers so this was simply a matching task. Other activities provide opportunities for adults to maximise pupils' learning. For example, in the Nursery class, an adult supported two girls making playdough beans effectively and, by linking to the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk', the girls were able to practise their counting skills and recall the story.



- The early years leader has identified appropriate priorities for development, including developing children's language skills and vocabulary. She provides relevant training for staff.
- Children are well cared for and nurtured, so that they feel increasingly confident and eager to join in activities. Children's behaviour is good and they show respect for each other. They play together well, sharing resources and discussing their activities.
- Both the indoor and outdoor learning environments offer the children access to a good variety of activities. Outdoors, children have opportunities to take managed risks through an exciting range of equipment that supports their physical development.
- Children have many opportunities to develop their curiosity and creativity. During the inspection, they enjoyed studying caterpillars and playing in the mud kitchen. Much excitement was created by a very large cardboard box that was big enough for the children to walk into. However, activities to support number, reading and writing skills were not presented in a way that engaged or excited the children and no child was observed choosing to complete a writing task.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and welfare requirements in the early years are fully met.
- Early years staff encourage regular communication with parents and the level of parental involvement is increasing, for example through 'stay and play' sessions, phonics workshops and 'Families in Action'.

## School details

Unique reference number	140793
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10048640

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	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	456
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Elizabeth Perrin
Principal	Maria Bull
Telephone number	01215563387
Website	<a href="http://www.woak.co.uk">www.woak.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:information@woak.co.uk">information@woak.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Wednesbury Oak Academy converted to academy status in April 2014. The school is the sole member of the Wednesbury Oak Academy Trust and is managed by a board of trustees.
- The school is currently led and managed by an acting principal and vice-principal, due to the long-term absence of the principal.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background. Other pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. Few pupils are at the early stages of speaking English.

- A larger than average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 36 lessons or small-group sessions.
- Inspectors met with pupils and listened to some pupils read. They looked at examples of pupils' work and spoke to pupils formally and informally. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime and around the school, as well as in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the acting principal, acting vice-principal, other leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector met with representatives of the board of trustees, including the vice-chair of governors.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, records relating to safeguarding and attendance, minutes of meetings of the board of trustees, school performance data and the school's website.
- Inspectors considered parents' opinions through 34 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View. Inspectors also spoke to parents on the first day of the inspection.

## Inspection team

Catherine Crooks, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Appleby	Ofsted Inspector
Diana Pearce	Ofsted Inspector

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