

The University of Birmingham School

Weoley Park Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6QU

Inspection dates

18–19 April 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Governors and external partners support and challenge leaders very effectively. The partnership with the University of Birmingham is very strong.
- Leaders at all levels know their school well; they are highly evaluative and respond quickly when changes are required.
- The 'character education' programme ensures that leaders promote pupils' personal development well.
- Pupils behave very well around the school and in most lessons.
- Leaders and governors are highly committed to a truly inclusive school; the pupil intake fully reflects the social and ethnic diversity of the city. Disabled pupils are integrated into every aspect of school life.
- British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted very well by leaders, fostering tolerance and respect among pupils.
- The extent to which pupils feel safe is very high. Incidents of bullying are very rare, as confirmed by pupils spoken to.
- Staff and pupils say that they are proud to be members of the school.
- Outcomes for students in the sixth form are improving, particularly in Year 13.
- The large majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are making good progress across most subjects as a result of good teaching.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are making good progress in their learning.
- Much of the teaching ensures that pupils from different starting points are able to access the learning.
- Outcomes are not as consistently high for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities as they are for other pupils.
- The extent to which assessment information is used to track the progress of these groups across subjects is at an early stage of development.
- Teaching is not yet as consistently good in mathematics, languages and science. Some teaching does not meet the full range of needs in mixed-attainment classes.
- There are pockets of low-level disruptive behaviour in some classes where teachers do not apply the behaviour policy consistently.
- Leaders do not ensure with enough rigour that teachers follow policies for written feedback, literacy and behaviour consistently.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently at least good by:
 - equipping less experienced teachers to meet the needs of the full range of pupils in their classes, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - deploying additional support effectively
 - sharing the best teaching in the school more widely
 - providing teachers with the strategies to tackle low-level disruptive behaviour in classes where behaviour is not yet good
 - improving teaching in mathematics (key stage 3 only), languages and science so that it is as consistently good as it is in most other subjects.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders use assessment information more robustly to track the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - the new leadership of pupil premium and SEN leads to improved outcomes for eligible pupils so that their progress is as consistently as good as that of other pupils
 - leaders check more rigorously that teachers comply more consistently with the school's policies on written feedback, literacy and behaviour.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders at every level know their school well. They are able to identify its strengths and what needs improving, including in teaching. They have been effective in taking swift action where changes were required. They are highly responsive to issues raised through external support and challenge or from governors. Where improvement is needed, leaders are not slow in making necessary changes.
- Leaders have realised their vision for a highly inclusive intake in key stage 3. The school's pupil intake draws on all parts of the city and a wide range of diverse backgrounds. It is very popular and oversubscribed. Leaders have established an ethos of respect and tolerance where diversity is celebrated. Disabled pupils can access all parts of the building and are fully integrated into school life.
- The development of a 'character education' programme has rightly received national and international acclaim. Leaders promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values very well through the curriculum. This includes through 'personal learning and development' lessons.
- Almost all staff responding to the staff survey agreed that they are proud to be a member of staff. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire Parent View agreed that the school is well led and managed and that they would recommend the school to another parent. Pupils spoken to were proud of their school.
- The close partnership with the University of Birmingham has led to significant additional investment and access to high-quality resources. The university has contributed significantly to additional senior leadership team costs, strengthening the school's capacity to improve further. It has paid for additional facilities such as more science laboratories. There are strong links between subjects and the university. Subject leaders and teachers can develop their own training through research and additional study. The partnership with a local outstanding school has enabled the school to moderate its assessment judgements, given the lack of any externally verified examination results at key stage 4. The school also works well in partnership with an external adviser from the Department for Education (DfE), who provides regular and effective support and challenge. Leaders follow up advice and guidance received promptly and effectively.
- Information and guidance produced by the school for the new key stage 4 curriculum, starting in September 2018, shows that leaders are responding well to the diverse intake and increasingly lower starting points of pupils. There are three different curriculum pathways on offer and, in addition to GCSE subjects, pupils may gain vocational qualifications in physical education (PE) and sport, as well as in food and cooking. No pupil is disapplied from any subject in key stage 3 so that all pupils have access to a full range of courses in a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Careers guidance is well developed and based on how to be a successful citizen of the future. Assemblies are characterised by regular visits from different professions and universities to widen pupils' aspirations. All Year 9 pupils have been to a place of work

and on a university visit.

- Leaders have evaluated effectively the impact of additional Year 7 catch-up funding for literacy and numeracy. They have invested additional resources over and above the grant received to enable pupils to catch up.
- There have been recent changes to the leadership of the pupil premium as a result of the school's evaluation which identified some inconsistency in outcomes for eligible pupils. There are now pupil premium champions in each department. Leaders know the needs of individual pupils well. However, there is limited analysis of outcomes for disadvantaged pupils by subject.
- The new assessment system is still developing but has the potential to enable leaders to identify trends and patterns across subjects, classes and pupil groups. The extent to which this information is used effectively by leaders is still varied. Subject leaders know the strengths and areas for development well in their own subjects. However, senior leaders do not have enough strategic overview of outcomes across subjects in key stage 3 to be able to identify any underperforming subjects. There are some anomalies, for example languages and chemistry, where progress appears stronger compared to other subjects whereas teaching is less strong.
- Plans have already been put in place for a restructuring of the leadership of SEN. Leaders have recognised the need to make changes. There are plans also for a shift in strategy away from intervention towards skilling up teaching staff. Leaders know that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are currently doing less well compared to other pupil groups in the school.
- Inexperienced middle leaders and newly qualified staff are supported very well in developing their role. Those newly qualified staff spoken to were highly positive about the induction and training they have received and that mentors had gone 'above and beyond' to support them. However, the very best teaching that exists in the school is not yet fully utilised or shared more widely.
- Leaders are not rigorous enough in ensuring that teachers follow school policies for written feedback, literacy and behaviour consistently.

Governance of the school

- Governors are highly effective in supporting and challenging leaders. They are very committed to their roles and bring a wealth of expertise and talent to the school from their own experiences. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well through their link subject roles and regular visits to the school to meet leaders, staff, pupils and parents. They are very responsive when they identify changes required, such as adaptations to the curriculum to meet the growing diverse needs of pupils.
- Minutes from governing body meetings indicate that governors ask searching questions of leaders. According to the DfE's special adviser, 'they grill the principal.' By challenging leaders, governors have ensured that:
 - the pupil premium now has a higher priority than previously
 - previous disproportionate gaps in exclusions by ethnicity have been reduced
 - previous weak leadership in identified subjects has been removed

- the issue of poor behaviour incidents in particular subjects is being addressed
- outcomes in the sixth form for students are improving, especially for progress, and are analysed by ethnicity
- concerns around teacher workload are being responded to
- changes are being made to improve the provision for SEN
- the school has the financial resources it needs to increase the capacity of the senior leadership team.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture among the staff to ensure that it is their top priority. Staff are well trained to carry out their roles. Leaders keep detailed information, for example through bullying logs. They ensure that their record-keeping is rigorous so that there is transparency in how any reported incidents are fully investigated and resolved. Where complaints have been received, these too are followed up thoroughly and outcomes recorded in detail.
- Governors are rigorous in ensuring that the school meets all its statutory duties for safeguarding and that leaders are doing all they can to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils.
- All staff responding to the staff survey agreed that pupils are safe in school. A very large majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire Parent View also agreed with this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge which they impart effectively, enabling pupils to make good progress.
- The large majority of teachers are skilled at meeting the diverse needs of pupils, all of whom are taught in mixed-attainment classes. For example, in a Year 8 music lesson observed on composition, pupils from widely different starting points were able to access the learning through well-planned support strategies and resources. There are also significant strengths in the teaching of different groups of pupils in physical education, art and design and technology. As a consequence, in these lessons, pupils who speak English as an additional language are able to access the learning. These pupils also benefit from teachers' emphasis on extending their vocabulary.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. Teachers engage pupils well and foster positive attitudes to learning.
- Teachers are, for the most part, skilled at directing their questions at an appropriate level to targeted individuals. They are also adept at drawing out extended responses from individuals who are not initially keen to volunteer answers.
- Teachers are effective at modelling answers to questions before giving pupils the chance to have a go themselves. Activities are rooted in real-life examples so that pupils see the relevance of the work they are doing.

- Pupils spoken to have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. Through regular assessments and verbal feedback, they know how well they are doing. In a key stage 3 mathematics lesson, where pupils had been given a question-by-question analysis of their recent test, they were able to identify which topics they needed to focus on to reinforce their learning.
- Teachers make effective use of peer- and self-marking in line with the school's policy. However, they do not consistently comply with the policy in their own written feedback and marking in a number of subject areas. Similarly, there are some inconsistencies in the application of the literacy policy in teachers' expectations for pupils' presentation of written work.
- The extent to which additional adults are deployed in classrooms is variable. Much of the time, the deployment is highly effective in supporting and challenging pupils in their learning, particularly in English and mathematics. This is not consistent, however, and there are instances where supported pupils' mistakes and misconceptions in literacy and numeracy go unchecked. As a consequence, there is more inconsistency in the progress pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making compared to other pupils.
- In most cases, teachers manage behaviour well and lessons are free of low-level disruptive incidents. In a few instances, however, this is not so. Where it is not, teachers do not apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. As a result, inappropriate behaviour, such as pupils calling out or off-task pupil chatter while the teacher is speaking, is allowed to persist and at times interrupts the learning of others.
- Teaching is not as consistently strong in key stage 3 in mathematics, science and languages as it is in most other subjects. Where it is less effective, teaching aims at middle-ability pupils. As a consequence, most-able pupils are not fully stretched and challenged and lower-attaining pupils struggle to keep up.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There is a strong culture of good relationships between pupils of different backgrounds. Pupils show respect for each other's differences, whether by disability, ethnicity or social background.
- The school's 'character education' programme contributes significantly to pupils' personal development. All pupils have the opportunity to visit different places of worship. During challenge week, Year 7 pupils learned about the importance of team-building. Leaders are passionate about pupils' development as 'fully-rounded' individuals.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They have high aspirations and want to do well. They collaborate well in lessons, for example by supporting each other through problem-solving in mathematics.
- Pupils receive effective advice and support about their future career paths, especially

those in Year 9 choosing their options and the appropriate curriculum pathway.

- Pupils spoken to said that they feel very safe in school and that there are no 'no-go areas' in school. They also reported that bullying hardly ever happens. Where isolated instances occur, they are dealt with effectively. Pupils reported that they had 'every confidence' in staff when reporting incidents. They knew that they would be listened to and that matters would be dealt with promptly and effectively.
- The curriculum contributes well to promoting pupils' mental health through its 'personal learning and development' programme.
- Pupils enjoy the integrated enrichment programme, which takes place towards the end of the school day. However, a number of those spoken to said that they felt that the school day was too long and that by then they felt too tired.
- Some pupils do not take enough pride in the presentation of their written work.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have a good understanding of rewards and sanctions issued through green, amber and red warnings. Those spoken to said that in most lessons these are applied consistently.
- Leaders use 'restorative justice' sessions effectively between staff and pupils at the end of school for those pupils who have received two or more sanctions during the course of the day.
- Pupils conduct themselves well during breaktimes and lunchtimes, including at busy times in the dining area. At lunchtime, there is a calm environment. Pupils queue in an orderly manner and are polite to staff on duty. They are friendly and courteous to visitors.
- Pupils who have moved from other schools because of issues with their behaviour or broken-down relationships are integrated well into school.
- The rate of attendance compares favourably with the national average and is improving. The rate of persistent absence is below the national average. Attendance is not as high for some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Long medical absences for a few have had a disproportionate impact on the figures for this group of pupils. Leaders are thorough in carrying out analysis of attendance and rigorous in following up first-day absence.
- Leaders have cracked down on lateness to ensure that pupils arrive punctually for lessons.
- Leaders keep detailed behaviour logs so that they can identify any trends or patterns. The rate of exclusions is low.
- The large majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire Parent View agreed that behaviour is good in school. Pupils spoken to also agreed with this.
- In a small number of lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning are not as good. Some incidents of low-level disruptive behaviour occur, including in some science and languages classes. This was also confirmed by pupils spoken to. Pupils also said that in these lessons staff do not comply as effectively with the behaviour policy over issuing

warnings.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- With no pupils in key stage 4 and no nationally verified assessment information in key stage 3, inspectors took account of the school's most recent assessment information and work seen in pupils' books. These indicate that the large majority of pupils currently in Years 7, 8 and 9 are making good progress in a range of subjects, including in English and mathematics, from their broadly average starting points at the end of key stage 2.
- Pupils have the opportunity to read widely. All classes have a stand-alone lesson in the library. Pupils spoken to confirmed that the school promotes reading well.
- The large majority of most-able pupils are doing well in their learning and there are no significant variations between boys and girls.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are making rapid progress as a result of effective teaching, support and adapted resources which enable them to access the learning.
- Pupils in Year 9 are being well prepared for the transition to key stage 4 through the different pathways and assessment routes planned, including vocational qualifications. They have received effective advice and guidance in planning their next steps.
- Progress is not as consistently good for disadvantaged pupils or for those who have SEN and/or disabilities. This is because there is some inconsistency in how well teaching meets their needs in mixed-attainment classes and the effectiveness of the additional support.
- There are also some classes across different subjects where pupils have not made enough progress over time. Leaders have identified these classes through regular monitoring and are already taking effective action to address this.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The school meets the 16 to 19 programme of study requirements. The sixth form is growing in popularity. The link with the University of Birmingham is a key attraction for potential students.
- For students currently in the sixth form, progress has much improved in Year 13. This includes disadvantaged students, who are diminishing the difference in attainment with their peers. Current outcomes in Year 13 are already on a par with last year's cohort, despite the current Year 13 having a lower starting point than the previous cohort. Outcomes are improving more slowly in Year 12.
- In the most recent A-level examinations for Year 13 pupils in 2017 (the first cohort to take the examinations in the school), standards were in line with the national average. Progress was below average. Standards for disadvantaged students were below the national average and their progress was also lower than for other students.
- Completion rates were very high in 2017 compared to the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving three high grades was above the national average. The

proportion of students achieving an A-level qualification in mathematics was well above the national average. The proportion of students retained for a second year in their main study programme was well above average. All students spoken to had completed work experience in the sixth form.

- Almost all students who left Year 13 last year are now in education, employment or training, the large of majority of whom obtained a place at university.
- Leaders have strengthened line-management arrangements for the sixth form by ensuring that there is now a dedicated head of sixth form. Students reported that leaders are very approachable. Leaders are ambitious for students. Students spoken to, all of whom joined Year 12 from other schools, were positive about the support they have received. Students are proud of their sixth form.
- The quality of teaching is strong. It is characterised by effective questioning and very good attitudes to learning, underpinned by extensive out-of-lesson support.
- Students spoken to were positive about the enrichment programme, which includes languages, cookery and sport. The school offers a strictly academic curriculum in the sixth form of AS/A levels only. There are no vocational qualifications offered. Leaders have been responsive to student requests for a wider range of subjects by introducing psychology to the curriculum.
- No students last year retook English and mathematics GCSE because it is an entry requirement to have good GCSE passes in these subjects before joining the sixth form.
- Students spoken to were eloquent, mature and well spoken. They said that they feel safe in school. Students reported a lack of quiet spaces around school to do their work during free periods.
- Arrangements are in place for the school to organise work-experience placements; to date it has been left to students to make their own arrangements.
- There are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, particularly in languages and science; however, this does not have a negative effect on students' good behaviour or their consistently excellent attitudes to learning.

School detail

Unique reference number	140863
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10048325

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	716
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	268
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Dr Christopher Banks CBE
Principal	Mr Michael Roden
Telephone number	0121 796 5000
Website	https://uobschool.org.uk
Email address	universitieschool@contacts.bham.ac.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The University of Birmingham School opened as a free school in September 2015 as the first secondary university training school in the country. It currently has pupils in key stage 3 up to Year 9 and students in Years 12 and 13 in the sixth form. The school will admit Year 10 pupils from September 2018.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school because as a recently opened school there are still only five year groups. Two more year groups will be added over the next two years.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average and growing. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above the national average but rising.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is high, with 36 different ethnic groups represented in the school. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The school has a 'multi-nodal' admissions policy whereby after priority admission for pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan or who are looked after, half of the remaining places are allocated to pupils from three socially disadvantaged areas in the city and the other half from the school's immediate surrounding area. This proportion is reflected in the composition of tutor and teaching groups. All pupils are taught in mixed-attainment classes throughout the school in every subject. No teaching group has more than 25 pupils.
- All pupils currently in the sixth form have joined from other schools as there are currently no key stage 4 pupils in the school.
- The school is heavily oversubscribed in key stage 3 with a long waiting list.
- The principal was in post before the school opened.
- No pupils attend alternative provision off site.
- The school has not been assessed against the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11, as there are currently no pupils in Years 10 or 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons or parts of lessons, of which 11 were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons and other activities.
- Inspectors heard pupils read during lessons and conducted scrutinies of their written work in English and mathematics and other subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, other leaders and members of staff and spoke to three groups of pupils (including a student group from the sixth form).
- Inspectors met three members of the governing body including the chair. They also watched a video presentation from a member of the trust representing the University of Birmingham.
- An inspector spoke by telephone to an education adviser from the DfE.
- Inspectors took account of 116 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View as well as 46 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including those relating to the school's self-evaluation, as well as governing body minutes, improvement plans and school information on pupils' recent attainment and progress.
- Inspectors also considered behaviour and attendance information and policies and procedures relating to special educational needs, pupil premium funding, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, safeguarding and child protection.

Inspection team

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Bianka Zemke	Her Majesty's Inspector
Wendy Tomes	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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