

The Wilnecote School

Tinkers Green Road, Wilnecote, Tamworth, Staffordshire B77 5LF

Inspection dates

15–16 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The school's published outcomes at the end of key stage 4 have been weak for the past two years. This has particularly been the case in several subjects, including English, science and languages. However, results in each of these subjects improved in 2018.
- The school has been too slow to address weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills, identified at its previous inspection. Weak literacy skills inhibit some pupils' learning. Teachers do not consistently promote accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- The quality of teaching varies between subjects. It is not consistently good across the school. Too many teachers plan activities that are not well matched to pupils' different abilities.
- The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who do not have education, health and care (EHC) plans, although improving, has weaknesses. Teachers do not consistently take these pupils' needs into account when planning lessons.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is improving in all areas, including behaviour, attendance and teaching. The rate of improvement has accelerated since January 2018, when the headteacher joined the school. She and other senior leaders command the confidence of pupils, parents, carers and staff. An increasing number of parents are choosing to send their children to the school.
- Pupils generally behave well in lessons. Most have good attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed. The school is calm and orderly throughout the day. The great majority of pupils are polite and behave sensibly.
- Pupils, especially those who are vulnerable, are well cared for by staff. Relationships are strong and pupils feel safe. Pupils with EHC plans are very well supported by teaching assistants.
- Middle leaders form a positive and able group. They are contributing well to the school's current improvement.
- Governors are knowledgeable and committed to improving the school. They are well supported by the Community Academies Trust (CAT).
- The curriculum has been thoughtfully planned and carefully implemented. It contributes well to pupils' personal development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils make good progress in all subjects, especially English, by ensuring that teachers consistently plan activities that:
 - are well matched to pupils' abilities
 - take into account the specific needs of pupils with SEND.
- Address weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills by ensuring that:
 - new leadership of this area is quickly embedded and effective
 - a school-wide approach is urgently put in place to improve pupils' literacy skills
 - all teachers insist that pupils use accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Following the previous inspection in November 2016, the school went through a period of turbulence and major reorganisation of staffing. Standards declined, culminating in very weak published outcomes in 2017. Since that time, the school has improved considerably, with rapid improvement evident in many areas after the arrival of the headteacher in January 2018. Although still not good, teaching has improved. Behaviour has improved considerably and is now good. Attendance has risen for the first time in several years. Provision for pupils with SEND is more effective. Pupils are making stronger progress in all subjects.
- The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, shows determined, strategic leadership that is valued by pupils, parents and staff. She has high expectations and a strong ambition for the school to provide a good education for its local community. Senior leaders and governors know the school well. They show great honesty and integrity, clearly identifying those areas that need to improve. Most of their improvement plans are effective.
- Parents' perception of the school is increasingly positive. Several years of falling school rolls have been reversed and the numbers of pupils in Years 7 and 8 are larger than in higher years. This trend is set to continue as more parents choose to send their children to the school.
- Middle leaders are contributing well to the school's ongoing improvement. Subject leaders are increasingly responsible for checking on teaching and reviewing the curriculum content within their areas. They are keen to develop their practice and several are studying for accredited leadership qualifications, facilitated by CAT. Pastoral middle leaders are clear about their roles and the impact they are expected to have. They have been instrumental in improving pupils' behaviour and attendance over the past 18 months.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching across the school. They provide effective training, including sharing the good practice that exists in several subjects. The great majority of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire said that leaders use professional development well to encourage, challenge and support teachers' improvement. Newly and recently qualified teachers told inspectors they feel very well supported in school. They value leaders' clear expectations and the consistency that exists across the school in managing behaviour.
- The curriculum has been thoughtfully planned and carefully implemented. Leaders are ambitious and very clear in what they intend the curriculum to achieve. Specifically, they have a vision for pupils to enjoy learning while being well prepared for life after school, through achieving appropriate academic qualifications and developing mature attitudes. Leaders have recently made changes so that pupils now begin examination courses in Year 9 rather than in Year 10. This is to enable pupils to study subjects of their choice for longer and in greater depth. Leaders have also reviewed the curriculum in key stage 3 to ensure that this change does not result in pupils failing to acquire knowledge, for example about the Holocaust. While it is too soon to evaluate the

impact of these changes, pupils in Year 9 are positive about their curriculum and an increasing proportion are choosing to study the academic subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate.

- The school provides an increasing range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities that contribute well to pupils' personal development. These include sporting and musical activities, off-site trips and residential visits.
- Pastoral care and support for pupils are strengths of the school. The area is well led and all staff are committed to supporting pupils' well-being. Leaders are very clear about their expectations about how teachers should manage behaviour. Teachers consistently apply the school's behaviour consequences policy in lessons. Pupils value this consistency and it is a main reason why behaviour in classrooms has improved considerably over the past 18 months.
- CAT, the school's sponsor, provides effective support in many areas and it is contributing well to the school's improvement. Leaders and governors value the support and challenge that CAT provides, particularly through its chief executive officer (CEO).
- Leaders' use of the pupil premium has improved considerably this year. The strategy that was in place in 2017/18 was ineffective and had little impact. This year's strategy, constructed by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, is detailed and based on thorough research of good practice elsewhere. Consequently, impact is now evident in several areas. The behaviour of disadvantaged pupils has improved. They attend school more regularly and their progress has improved, and continues to do so in all subjects.
- Provision for pupils with SEND has improved markedly since the headteacher's arrival. She commissioned an external review shortly after joining the school. This highlighted shortcomings and leaders reacted quickly to its findings. Relatively new leadership of SEND is effective, although there remains more to be done. Pupils' needs are now accurately identified. Pupils with EHC plans are very well supported by teaching assistants. Staff provide effective support for pupils who have behavioural needs. Extra help is now in place for some pupils with weak literacy and numeracy skills. However, provision for pupils with SEND, but who do not have EHC plans, is not consistently good. Although teachers know who these pupils are and have received training about their needs, some do not use this information well enough to inform their planning.
- At the previous inspection, leaders were charged with improving the literacy skills of pupils who struggle with reading and/or writing. Although some work has taken place, progress has been too slow. A school literacy strategy was drafted in early 2017. Changes in staffing and difficulties in recruiting staff have resulted in this strategy still being in a draft form that has not been circulated to staff. Some new initiatives have been put in place, for example to support weak readers in Year 7, and these show some evidence of success. However, the lack of a concerted school-wide approach to teaching literacy is hindering pupils' progress. A new leader for literacy has very recently joined the school. She has a clear vision of what needs to be done, but it is too early to be able to judge its effectiveness.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school well, including its strengths and weaknesses. They provide thorough scrutiny of all aspects of the school's work, including teaching, behaviour, attendance and outcomes. They reflect on their own effectiveness. For example, they acknowledge that their monitoring of pupil premium spending in 2017/18 was not sufficiently focused on impact. They have revised their practice as a result. Consequently, they hold leaders to account for the school's performance effectively, while also providing good support.
- When they began to sponsor the school, CAT identified weaknesses in governance. They replaced the governing body with an Education Advisory Board that provided governance until September 2018, when a local governing body (LGB) was reinstated. This has resulted in effective governance over the past two and a half years and has helped to stabilise the school's financial position, despite challenging circumstances. CAT continues to provide high-quality support for the LGB.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership of this area is thorough and meticulous. All staff understand the importance of keeping pupils safe. Leaders provide regular and comprehensive training that ensures that staff are alert to the signs that pupils might need extra help. Policies and procedures are clear and well understood. Consequently, staff readily pass on to leaders any concerns they have about pupils. Leaders deal with these concerns quickly and appropriately, involving outside agencies when needed. The school's records relating to child protection are detailed, well organised and securely stored.
- Almost all pupils who spoke with inspectors said they feel safe and well cared for in school. A very small number of younger pupils told inspectors they find the school's busy and narrow corridors daunting at times. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said their children feel safe in school, as did all staff who responded to their online inspection questionnaire.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies across the school. There is some strong practice in most subjects, but there is weaker practice also. Despite improving over the past 18 months, the remaining degree of inconsistency is the reason that inspectors judged it to require improvement.
- The teaching of English is weaker than that in any other subject, although even here there is some effective practice. In science, teaching is effective for high- and middle-attaining pupils. However, it is much less effective for low-attaining pupils and for some with SEND. Teaching is most effective in mathematics, history, geography, religious education (RE) and information and communication technology (ICT). Its quality varies in other subjects.
- Weaker teaching is characterised by planning that does not match tasks well enough to pupils' abilities. Tasks are either too easy or too hard for some pupils. Most commonly,

and in several subjects, teachers plan activities that are either too difficult for low-attaining pupils or they do not provide these pupils with enough support to be able to attempt tasks successfully. Consequently, low-attaining pupils cannot complete the work set. Occasionally, this leads to pupils giving up and becoming distracted. More commonly, they simply do not finish tasks. Inspectors saw many books with incomplete work, especially in English and science.

- Teaching is too often ineffective for pupils with SEND who do not have EHC plans. Some teachers do not use information about these pupils' needs when planning lessons. Consequently, these pupils struggle to attempt tasks and are unsuccessful. Teachers rarely provide the additional support that would help these pupils in lessons. In contrast, pupils with EHC plans are much more successful because teaching assistants skilfully provide them with the extra support that helps them to tackle the work they have been set. At times, other pupils with SEND also benefit from teaching assistants' support. Generally, most pupils with SEND who do not have an EHC plan make weaker progress than they should.
- A sizeable minority of pupils join the school with weak literacy skills. Teachers do not consistently develop these pupils' literacy skills as well as they should. There is no coordinated strategy to promote literacy across subjects and so teachers lack the guidance that might lead to a consistent approach. Consequently, even when teachers do correct pupils' errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar, pupils do not learn from their mistakes. Instead, they repeat them. Inspectors saw many books in which pupils consistently failed to use capital letters correctly and where pupils repeatedly misspelled common words.
- Teaching across the school shares some common strengths. Relationships between pupils and staff are usually respectful and positive. Most pupils like and trust their teachers. They told inspectors that they value their teachers' support. Most teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge that they use well in explaining new concepts and ideas.
- Where teaching is strongest, expectations are high. Work is well matched to pupils' abilities. Teachers use questions skilfully to check on pupils' knowledge and to deepen their understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for in school. They know how to keep themselves safe, for example when online or using social media. A comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme ensures that pupils are taught how to protect themselves from a wide range of dangers. The PSHE programme is taught through carefully planned and well-resourced tutor periods and twice-weekly assemblies. These sessions are supplemented by visiting speakers. Sessions include drug education and healthy relationships.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare in the school. Most said they trust staff to deal with issues, such as bullying, when they arise. Parents who responded to Parent

View and those staff who responded to their online inspection questionnaire said that the school deals with bullying well.

- The school aims to develop pupils' characters in several ways. The curriculum and extra-curricular activities contribute well to this area. Pupils regularly raise money for charities. Inspectors observed tutor periods where pupils discussed 'resilience' and 'forgiveness' and what these concepts mean to them. More than seventy pupils have begun training to become 'autism ambassadors', where they learn about the needs of people with autism and how to support them.
- The school provides effective careers education for pupils. A thorough programme helps to guide pupils through subject choices and towards options for when they leave school. All pupils who have left the school in recent years have moved on to further education or training. Some pupils, because of low aspirations, have not aimed as high as they ought. Leaders are seeking to address this by ensuring that pupils study an academic curriculum, achieve appropriate qualifications and have the confidence to apply for the most demanding post-16 courses.
- The school uses alternative provision sparingly and appropriately for a small number of pupils. Leaders carry out regular checks on these pupils' attendance, behaviour and progress. They meet with alternative providers each month and carry out occasional visits to see the pupils in situ. All pupils currently attending alternative provision are making good progress towards achieving appropriate qualifications.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons. Teachers use the school's consequences policy consistently and pupils respond well. Consequently, any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with quickly and does not escalate or interrupt learning in classrooms. Disruption of lessons is now rare.
- At breaktimes and lunchtimes, the school is calm and most pupils behave maturely. Pupils move sensibly around the school's narrow corridors between lessons, arriving promptly and ready to work. Pupils have responded positively to the school's higher expectations. They wear their uniform smartly. They do not use mobile phones in school, following leaders' decision to ban their use. During the inspection's two days, inspectors did not see any pupils using mobile phones.
- Many pupils and members of staff told inspectors that behaviour has improved considerably over the past 18 months. This is a key reason that teaching has improved. Teachers can teach rather than spend much of their time managing behaviour. Consequently, the number of sanctions applied by staff has fallen considerably as behaviour has improved. Far fewer pupils are now excluded, fewer are placed in isolation and the number of detentions issued has fallen.
- Attendance has improved this year but remains below the national average for similar schools. This is the first improvement in attendance for two years and follows concerted efforts from senior and middle leaders. The number of pupils who do not attend regularly is also falling.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2017, published outcomes at the end of key stage 4 were very weak in almost all subjects, including English, science, humanities and languages. Outcomes improved considerably in all subjects in 2018, particularly in science and humanities. However, despite this improvement, pupils' progress remained weak in several subjects, including science, languages and especially English. Progress was weak in 2018 for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and low-attaining pupils.
- Further improvement in progress is evident for pupils currently in the school because teaching is improving. This is the case across all subjects but is least evident in English, where teaching remains weaker than in other subjects. In several subjects, pupils in Years 10 and 11 have gaps in their knowledge because of weak teaching in previous years. They are likely to attain lower standards than they should as a result. However, better teaching and additional interventions are helping them to catch up to some extent.
- Disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress because leaders are making better use of the pupil premium to support them. Although their attainment remains lower than other pupils in the school and nationally, the differences are beginning to diminish in all subjects.
- Some improvement is evident in the progress of pupils with SEND who do not have EHC plans. They are benefiting from improving teaching but, because their needs are not always well supported by teaching, they continue to make weaker progress than they should. Additionally, some of these pupils have weak literacy skills that have not been supported well over recent years.
- Lower-attaining pupils make weaker progress than others in some subjects. This is because, in common with some pupils with SEND, teaching is not well enough planned for their abilities.
- Pupils with EHC plans achieve well. Teaching assistants provide excellent support that ensures that they are able to attempt tasks set for them. This the case for such pupils in the main school and for those allocated to the school's autism spectrum condition (ASC) provision.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are making stronger progress than older pupils in most subjects. They have fewer gaps in their knowledge. Some weaknesses remain, for example in English and for pupils with weak literacy skills. However, leaders' efforts to support reading for some pupils in Years 7 and 8 are beginning to be successful.
- Effective teaching is helping pupils to make good progress in some subjects. For example, pupils make consistently good progress in mathematics. Pupils are now also making good progress in history, geography, RE, art and ICT.

School details

Unique reference number	138936
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10058481

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	715
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Simon Atkins
Headteacher	Sian Hartle
Telephone number	01827 831300
Website	www.thewilnecoteschool.org
Email address	headteacher@wilnecotehighschool.org
Date of previous inspection	1–2 November 2016

Information about this school

- Wilnecote is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- It joined CAT in September 2016. According to its scheme of delegation, governance is provided by the trust board, the hub governing body and the LGB. The remits of these bodies are summarised as follows.
- The trust board has overall responsibility and ultimate decision-making authority for all the trust's work, including the establishment and maintenance of the schools.
- The hub governing body comprises the headteachers and chairs of local governing bodies of local trust schools alongside representatives of the trust board. It is charged with ensuring that schools within the hub support each other to improve.
- The LGB carries out the main governance functions for the school, including having responsibility for standards, the curriculum, the quality of teaching and safeguarding.
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2018.

- Most pupils are of White British heritage and few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is broadly average.
- The school hosts a resource base for up to six pupils with ASC. These pupils are on the school's roll. This resource is funded and staffed by the local authority. Its pupils spend much of their time attending lessons alongside other pupils in school.
- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils in key stage 4. Some pupils attend the alternative provider full time and others attend for part of the week, attending school for the remainder. The providers are Kettlebrook Short Stay School, South Staffordshire College and Equality Training.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, and several of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors talked to many pupils about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. They observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors visited an assembly and several tutor periods.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including information relating to governance, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' progress and the checks that leaders make on the quality of teaching.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers. The lead inspector met with the CEO of CAT and with two governors, including the chair of the LGB.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views by considering the 34 responses to Parent View, including 26 free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the 56 responses from staff to Ofsted's inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Clare Considine	Ofsted Inspector
Andy Fisher	Ofsted Inspector
Rob Steed	Ofsted Inspector

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