

Inspection of Wixams Academy

Green Lane, Wixams, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK42 6BA

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Wixams Academy enjoy school. They appreciate the safe and supportive environment that leaders create. Pupils embrace the school's values, such as responsibility, community, and determination. They have positive relationships with staff. Pupils are well supported with their mental health and well-being.

Most pupils behave well. In general, pupils say that bullying is not common. However, sometimes pupils behave less well than leaders expect. A few get distracted in lessons. This makes it harder for others to learn. Pupils say that leaders challenge less positive behaviour, but do not always resolve it.

Pupils value the high ambition of leaders for the quality of their education. They praise the skill of their teachers. Pupils talk articulately about what they learn.

There are plentiful opportunities for personal development. Pupils learn through the curriculum how to respect others. They enjoy going to the wide range of clubs, such as debating, rocket club, or handball. Pupils extend their learning by going on trips, for instance to Kew Gardens or Shakespeare's home. They develop their characters through volunteering, for example, as Anne Frank ambassadors or for the 'Junior Leadership Team'.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have put in place a well-considered curriculum. They identify what pupils must learn at the end of each part of the 'five-year curriculum'. Leaders break down the learning along the way piece by piece. For example, pupils solve problems in mathematics only when the knowledge they need to do it is secure. This means pupils learn quickly and achieve well.

Teachers use assessment effectively. They are well trained in checking pupils understand and remember what they learn. This means that pupils develop rich knowledge and can apply it to new contexts and situations. In English, for example, pupils talk insightfully about how Dickens challenged judgemental Victorian attitudes to poverty and can describe how this applies to our society today.

Leaders support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Leaders identify these pupils' needs accurately. Teachers are trained effectively to break down the curriculum, so that pupils with SEND can access all aspects of it well. Leaders work closely with parents, so that pupils with SEND get the support they need. Pupils with SEND develop the knowledge they need to move on successfully to their next steps.

The school has more than doubled in size since the start of the pandemic. As it has grown, leaders have not developed robust enough processes to manage behaviour. The majority of pupils are polite and respectful. However, a few do not live up to the

high standard promoted and show poor behaviours, such as name calling and, on occasion, discriminatory language. Leaders use their systems to address this, but these are not always successful in eliminating it. Leaders do not use the information they have about behaviour effectively to closely evaluate what is working and what needs to change.

Most teachers know how to help pupils behave well in the classroom. A few teachers are less well trained in applying the behaviour policy. When this is the case, pupils sometimes lose focus in lessons. This can hinder the learning of others.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum helps pupils to learn to understand individual differences. Pupils say this has begun to improve attitudes in the school. Pupils voice mature and tolerant views about identity, such as through the 'Human Kind' group.

Leaders help pupils develop the knowledge and attributes they need to be successful beyond school. For instance, pupils praise the teaching they get about life skills, such as budgeting. Pupils get helpful and objective guidance about their future steps. They learn a lot about careers, and regularly have visits from employers.

Trustees are not always confident in monitoring leaders' work. Consequently, they do not support and challenge leaders well enough in some areas of school improvement. This particularly applies to behaviour. The trust and the local advisory board have supported the leadership of pupils with SEND and safeguarding effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a vigilant culture of safeguarding in the school. They make sure they have the knowledge and expertise they need to keep pupils safe. Leaders identify local risks in depth, such as county lines, and the importance of supporting mental health and well-being. They regularly train staff and teach pupils about these. Leaders deal promptly with safeguarding concerns and keep appropriate records. They liaise with agencies diligently where needed.

Staff are well trained in how to spot and report concerns.

Pupils learn through the curriculum content how to stay safe. They know a lot about online safety and apply this, so they remain safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not know if they have sufficiently effective systems for managing behaviour. They do not use information well enough to evaluate what is working and what needs to change. Because of this some behaviour, such as occasional discriminatory language, is not always dealt with as well as it could be. Leaders need to review and amend their systems for managing behaviour to ensure that these are effective at securing positive behaviours across the school.
- Not all staff know how to apply the behaviour policy effectively. As a result, there is low-level disruption in some lessons. Leaders should ensure that all staff receive the training they need, so that they understand and implement the behaviour policy consistently and well.
- Trustees are not confident in monitoring some areas of leaders' work. Consequently, they do not support and challenge leaders well enough in some aspects of school improvement. The trust should make sure it has the knowledge it needs to hold leaders to account for the impact of their work.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	144595
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10212073
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	719
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anthony Abrahams
Principal	Paul Spyropoulos
Website	www.wixamsacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened to pupils for the first time in September 2017. This is the school's first inspection since it opened.
- The headteacher has been in place since the school opened.
- The school's sixth form is due to open in September 2022.
- The school uses two alternative education providers for a very small number of pupils.
- The school has a much higher-than-average proportion of pupils with an education, health, and care plan.
- The school is part of the Bedford College Academies Trust.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with the chief executive officer of the trust, senior leaders, other leaders, staff, pupils, and those responsible for governance, including the chair of the trust, and the chair of the local advisory board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, physical education, and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding inspectors checked the school's single central record, considered its safeguarding policy and procedures, and spoke to leaders, staff, parents, and pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the 156 responses that were submitted from this academic year by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 98 free-text responses submitted during the inspection. Inspectors considered the 36 responses to the staff survey, and the 11 responses to the pupil survey.
- An additional inspector was present on the first day of the inspection to conduct a focused deep dive in mathematics.

Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sue Pryor	Ofsted Inspector
Kristian Hewitt	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marc White	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alastair Ogle	Ofsted Inspector

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