

Inspection of a good school: Wolgarston High School

Cannock Road, Penkridge, Stafford, Staffordshire ST19 5RX

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2022

Outcome

Wolgarston High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils know that the school expects the highest standards of work and behaviour. Staff treat pupils respectfully, and they respond by behaving maturely both in and out of lessons. In lessons, pupils are attentive and fully engaged with their learning. Outside lessons, they follow the 'Wolgarston Way', by trying to do the right thing at all times.

Teachers challenge and support pupils well in lessons, encouraging discussion and reflection to deepen their learning. Pupils achieve well across a broad range of subjects.

Pupils feel safe at school. The inclusion hub and the library provide safe spaces for pupils who need extra support. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through regular lessons on a range of topics. Pupils value the support they receive to help keep them safe.

Pupils engage enthusiastically in a range of charity and community activities. All pupils in Year 9 take part in a community day. They spend the day working in the locality on projects like litter picking, weeding and cleaning a local church. The school has a long-standing link with a community in South Africa. Pupils raise money and some pupils are able to visit the village to help the community.

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

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and explain their subjects clearly to pupils. They plan effective sequences of lessons carefully. Teachers use a selection of teaching methods to successfully deliver the lesson content. Teachers' questions and lesson activities help pupils to remember earlier learning.

Most teachers frequently check pupils' understanding during the lesson. When teachers identify gaps in understanding, they successfully use a range of teaching strategies to address them. Pupils' work shows clear improvement and progress over time.

The library is a vibrant, safe hub at the heart of the school. There is a welcoming and encouraging atmosphere. All Year 9 pupils participate in a reading scheme and their progress is carefully tracked. Small groups of reluctant or weaker readers work with the librarian or sixth-form mentors and this helps them to improve their reading skills.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported in lessons. Support is effectively targeted to individual needs and this helps pupils with SEND to make good progress. There is a strong ambition for pupils with SEND to succeed.

Pupils arrive in Year 9 from a number of middle schools. As a result, they have studied different areas of the national curriculum and have different experiences in many subjects. School leaders work closely with local schools to try to mitigate this. In recent years, curriculum planning meetings have taken place across local schools. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed the school's work on this and gaps in delivery of the full key stage 3 curriculum still remain. For example, many pupils at Wolgarston have not had the benefit of studying the full curriculum in design and technology.

In some subjects, leaders have found effective ways to fill the gaps in learning for pupils from different schools. For example, in history, pupils follow a 'bridging unit' using the Olympics and Disunited Britain as themes. The curriculum is then coherently planned to build on this through to GCSE and A level. In other subjects, leaders have not thought carefully enough about what the Year 9 pupils should know and remember.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well in lessons and have warm, positive relationships with staff. Low-level disruption is rare. Pupils are excellent ambassadors for their school. Movement around the site is calm and orderly and pupils are polite to each other.

There is a well-planned careers programme, beginning with a series of careers lessons in Year 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 12 undertake work experience. Pupils in Years 11 and 13 receive targeted, personal careers advice, including an interview with a careers adviser where necessary.

Leaders ensure that pupils experience a rich, wide curriculum outside of taught lessons. A programme of international visits and cultural experiences is just restarting, following the COVID-19 pandemic. The humanities department runs an annual diversity day. A wide range of visitors share their culture through activities focused on music, religion, food and sport.

Staff feel well supported by leaders. They know that leaders will listen and respond to any concerns they raise about workload. Departments value the autonomy they have in running assessments that are relevant and appropriate to the needs of their subject.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The trust ensures that safeguarding records are kept accurately. It also ensures that staff training is up to date and that new staff are safely recruited.

There is a carefully planned training programme for staff and pupils, which is frequently adapted to reflect topical issues. For example, on a recent 'drop down' day, pupils had training on suicide prevention, the danger of sexting, knife crime, and prejudice and discrimination.

Pupils report feeling safe and well looked after. Pupils feel confident in reporting any concerns and were sure that they would be dealt with swiftly and sensitively. Staff make good use of external agencies to support pupils with the greatest needs.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not yet ensured that the curriculum in Year 9 is fully coherent, well sequenced and delivers the full range of knowledge and skills pupils need to learn. Consequently, pupils do not have the opportunity to experience the full key stage 3 national curriculum. Leaders need to complete the process of reviewing the Year 9 curriculum to ensure it identifies the knowledge and skills that pupils need to experience the full breadth and depth of the national curriculum. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Wolgarston High School, to be good in February 2014.

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	145381
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10227801
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	819
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	182
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Roberts
Headteacher	Jo Fairclough
Website	www.wolgarston.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Wolgarston High School converted to become an academy school in April 2018. When its predecessor school, Wolgarston High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is a member of the Penk Valley Academy Trust.
- The school uses full-time alternative provision at three registered providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- The lead inspector met with the members of the board of trustees and the school's local governing committee, the CEO of the Penk Valley Academy Trust, the headteacher and senior leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history, design and technology and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum and visited a sample of lessons. Inspectors met with teachers and spoke with pupils about their learning. Inspectors also scrutinised samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders and staff working in pastoral roles. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their wider development and other aspects of school life.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation, including the school's single central record. They scrutinised other documentation, including leaders' records of staff training.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and the responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Deborah James, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Guy Shears

Ofsted Inspector

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