

Inspection of Shire Oak Academy

Lichfield Road, Walsall Wood, Walsall, West Midlands WS9 9PA

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 April 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils generally behave well, and often very well, in class. However, at social times, staff sometimes fail to address some pupils' inappropriate behaviour. A minority of pupils use bad language, lack courtesy and drop litter. Bullying is uncommon, and staff sort it out effectively if it occurs. Pupils are happy to come to school and feel safe. They enjoy a good standard of pastoral care. Pupils benefit from a wide range of after-school clubs.

Pupils follow a broad curriculum. Most learning is well organised. In a few subjects, pupils' early studies do not prepare them for key stage 4 as well as they should. Staff provide extra reading support for those who need it.

Senior leaders have high expectations for pupils and staff. They have provided effective training to improve teachers' skills. Leaders have ensured that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn well. The trust that runs the school has given those responsible for governance the confidence to challenge leaders. Senior leaders and subject leaders have a good understanding of how the school needs to improve.

Students do well in the sixth form.

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

In most subjects, leaders have organised the curriculum effectively. They have sequenced the work so that it builds on pupils' existing knowledge and skills. Pupils learn well. However, in a small number of subjects, there are weaknesses in the key stage 3 curriculum. As a result, some pupils are not prepared as well as they should be for their work in Years 10 and 11 and too few pupils follow the English Baccalaureate in key stage 4.

Teachers put the curriculum into practice well. They know their subjects, use the right technical vocabulary, and have access to good-quality resources. Teachers explain ideas well. They check on what pupils have learned, and make sure that teaching fills any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Pupils know how to improve their work. Those pupils with SEND learn well. Teachers are ambitious for these pupils and understand precisely how to meet their individual needs. Pupils in the resourced provision for pupils with SEND thrive.

A high proportion of pupils start Year 7 with low reading ages. Leaders have recently extended their support for weaker readers at key stage 3. They have implemented several appropriate schemes. Staff are well trained to deliver these. However, as the support has only recently been introduced, the full impact has yet to be seen.

In many lessons, warm relationships between teachers and pupils mean that pupils behave well. Sometimes, their behaviour is exceptional. However, on occasions, , a

few pupils disrupt the learning for others. At breaktimes and lunchtimes, a minority of pupils show significant disrespect for their peers and for the environment. Although leaders' expectations for the management of behaviour are clear, staff are not consistent in identifying poor conduct and holding pupils to account.

Pupils develop a good understanding of personal safety, relationships and social topics as part of a coordinated programme. Activities in form time and English lessons give pupils confidence to express their views orally. In humanities and creative subjects, pupils learn about different cultures and traditions. Pupils have opportunities to adopt leadership roles. Sixth-form students have contributed well to the school's promotion of equality and diversity. Personal development for post-16 students is particularly strong.

The school provides good independent careers advice. At the end of key stage 4 and the sixth form, very few pupils do not go on to appropriate education or training. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activity, for example in staging 'Shrek the musical'.

More recently, leaders have acted successfully to raise standards in the sixth form, and to improve provision for pupils with SEND. They have established a strong culture of staff training. Subject leaders are keen to improve further. Staff say that senior leaders consider their workload and are appropriately concerned for their well-being.

Since the previous inspection, the multi-academy trust (MAT) has clarified governance arrangements. Those responsible for governance now have a thorough understanding of the school and are holding leaders to account. The opportunity to study one subject at another school in the MAT enhances the post-16 curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils learn about the risks that they may face, including that of sexual harassment. Leaders make sure that staff are well trained in safeguarding, so that they know how to identify pupils at risk. They keep staff updated about local issues that might pose a threat. Leaders take the right actions and involve other agencies that work with children. They are persistent when the need arises.

The school keeps the necessary records. Leaders make the right checks on the staff who join the school.

Pupils know that there is always an adult to talk to. They feel safe at school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- During social times, there is a lack of consistency in the way staff uphold the school's expectations for pupils' behaviour. As a result, a minority of pupils use inappropriate language, barge through doorways and drop litter. Leaders should ensure that all staff recognise their responsibility to uphold the school's behaviour policy in this respect, and make sure that they do so.
- In a minority of subjects, the key stage 3 curriculum does not prepare pupils for key stage 4 as well as it should. As a result, some pupils are less inclined to study some subjects at key stage 4. Leaders should make sure that the endpoints for every subject at key stage 3 provide pupils with the best possible basis for their future studies.
- Leaders have introduced additional support to improve pupils' reading skills where required. This is yet to have the full impact intended. Leaders should continue to develop this support to ensure that pupils develop fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading.

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	136620
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10227364
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,498
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	217
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kevin Davis
Headteacher	Annabel Stoddart
Website	www.shireoakacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 and 21 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Shire Oak Academy is one of six schools in The Mercian Trust. Four of these are secondary schools, one is a studio school and one is an alternative provision free school.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for 10 pupils with dyslexia.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2020.
- 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.
- The school uses nine registered providers for alternative provision. These are attended by 10 pupils full time, and eight part time.

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 had 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 met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff (including early career teachers), trustees and officers of the MAT, and members of the local governing board to which the MAT delegates oversight of some aspects of the school's work.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils at social times, and with groups of pupils more formally.
- When inspecting safeguarding, inspectors looked at the school's procedures for recruiting and checking on staff. They also considered the effectiveness of staff training and the procedures to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' plans to improve the school, records of meetings of the local governing board and the school's attendance and behaviour records.
- The inspection team took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents and carers, including narrative comments. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English; mathematics; modern foreign languages; geography and art. In these subjects, inspectors considered the school's curriculum guidance, visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work. Inspectors also met with pupils and with teachers to discuss learning in these subjects. On the second day of the inspection, inspectors looked at the curriculum in several other subjects.
- An inspector listened to a sample of pupils from Years 7, 8 and 9 reading to a familiar adult.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tim Bassett	Ofsted Inspector
Darren Bishop	Ofsted Inspector
Graeme Rudland	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Byatt	Ofsted Inspector

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