

Inspection of a good school: Waverley Studio College

470 Belchers Lane, Bordesley Green, Birmingham, West Midlands B9 5SX

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 September 2022

Outcome

Waverley Studio College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They take part in lessons enthusiastically. Older pupils said how much everything has improved since the principal started. Their courses prepare them well for their future careers. Pupils new to English and those who find learning difficult have curriculum pathways suited to their individual needs. Many sixth formers on placement experience a regular weekly taste of the world of work.

The equality and diversity days help pupils to keep safe and prepare for life in modern Britain. A recent theatre company performance taught pupils about online risks. Leaders deal well with any rare incidents of bullying.

Leaders want the best for every pupil, which is why they are extending the range of courses and qualifications to achieve this.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They get on well together. Staff and pupils have embraced the changing pupil profile of the school. One pupil said, 'We can meet people from different backgrounds and learn from them.' A sixth former stated, 'I came as a new arrival with no English when no other school would take me. Now I'm going to university.'

Pupils appreciated the recent trips to the Birmingham's Symphony Hall and Shakespeare's Globe theatre in London.

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

Following a period of turbulence in leadership after the previous inspection, the new principal and leaders have brought about stability and positive change. Leaders have established a welcoming ethos for new arrivals from overseas and those from local schools seeking a fresh start or a more vocational route.

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum, which they are adapting to take account of the changing profile of the school. They have put in place a wider range of courses and qualifications to prepare pupils for their next steps. In English, for example, additional courses meet the needs of pupils at the earlier stages of learning English as an additional language. Leaders sequence the curriculum well. They adapt plans flexibly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This enables pupils with SEND to achieve well.

Teaching supports the intended curriculum well through teachers' good subject knowledge. In lessons, many teachers are confident to stop if pupils have not grasped new learning and need further reinforcement. This happens in mathematics, for example, where teachers skilfully break up learning into smaller chunks. They focus on the key vocabulary and knowledge that pupils need for the next stage in their learning.

Teachers check effectively how well pupils understand their feedback so that pupils can use it well to progress in their learning. Suitable questioning in lessons helps teachers to establish whether pupils are ready to move on or need more help with their work. However, less experienced teaching does not achieve this as well. The structural changes leaders have made to the leadership of departments, to share good examples across subjects, are still very new.

There is a strong focus on pupils at the early stages of learning to read, including those with SEND or who are learning English as an additional language. In different subjects, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to read aloud. However, some pupils lack confidence in reading and speaking aloud in class.

Some pupils who speak English as an additional language arrive with previous high academic achievement and aspirations. At present, there is a more limited range of options for these pupils in Year 10.

Lessons are largely free of any disruptive behaviour. Pupils display positive attitudes to their learning and work well together. For example, sixth formers in business plan a presentation on opening a current bank account. There is a calm, orderly environment around the school. Pupils take responsibility for organising sports activities and charity events, such as a recent event to coincide with Eid.

Attendance is improving, despite a rising incidence of COVID-19. Leaders follow up any absence promptly.

Pupils show respect for others, including those from different backgrounds. They learn about different types of relationship. 'This helps us to understand each other better,' according to one pupil, summing up the views of others. Where pupils have personal issues to discuss, they can talk to approachable staff.

Leaders prepare pupils well for the world of work. A partnership with a local company enables many to find suitable work experience, especially in Year 10. Since the pandemic, opportunities for weekly work experience in the sixth form have been more challenging. Despite these challenges, leaders have persevered to place as many students as possible.

Pupils access a wide range of clubs, including those for gardening, languages and martial arts, although a number reported wanting more opportunities.

Senior leaders are highly mindful of the workload and well-being of staff. Feedback from the staff survey confirmed this. The 'Friday staff breakfast' demonstrates the principal's appreciation for colleagues. Governors, trustees and external partners all hold leaders to account effectively for the performance of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders identify any pupils at risk and monitor them closely. Leaders put in place any additional help required promptly, including from external agencies. Leaders are well trained for their safeguarding responsibilities. They know how to respond to allegations appropriately and how to appoint new staff safely.

Leaders ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They work closely with the police to raise pupils' awareness of gun and knife crime, gangs and drugs. Pupils are confident in reporting any sexual harassment and have successfully challenged previous incidents of derogatory language, which the school addressed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is a limited range of subject options in Year 10 for new arrivals who come to the school from overseas with a strong academic background. As a result, they have more limited choices, which could limit their future career pathways. Leaders should make further adaptations to their curriculum to broaden the choice of subjects on offer, especially for those intending to follow a more academic route.
- Some less experienced teachers are not as skilled at adapting learning when pupils are finding the work too hard or not accessible. Consequently, there are times when the learning moves on before some pupils have fully understood the concepts. Leaders should ensure that the new department structure enables teachers from different subjects to share effective teaching strategies and learn from each other.

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 an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns

about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2017.

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.

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	139788
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10211228
Type of school	Other secondary school
School category	Academy studio school
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	115
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	James Sutton
Principal	Matthew Morton-Hire
Website	www.waverleystudiocollege.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 and 18 January 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current principal was appointed in January 2021.
- The chair of the governing body was appointed in 2019.
- Almost no members of the current staff were at the school at the time of the previous inspection.
- As a studio school, the school specialises in providing vocational education from Years 10 to 13 for pupils drawn from Birmingham. It is exempt from the government's English Baccalaureate expectation that as many pupils as possible will study geography or history and a modern foreign language.
- The numbers and backgrounds of school population have significantly changed in recent years. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language and who are new arrivals to the country has risen to 70%. Forty new arrivals joined in the week leading up to the inspection.

- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- 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 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 held meetings with the principal, executive principal, other senior leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors spoke to several groups of pupils, including a group of sixth-form students.
- An inspector met the chair of the governing body and the chair of the board of trustees.
- An inspector spoke to two school improvement partners remotely.
- An inspector spoke by telephone to the director of learning to work.
- Inspectors took account of the very small number of responses to Ofsted Parent View, including to the free-text facility, and the online survey for pupils. Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted staff survey.
- Inspectors considered information on pupils' behaviour, attendance, personal development, safeguarding and child protection.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in business, English, mathematics and science. They also looked at work in a number of other subjects, including in the sixth form. 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.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Simon Smith

Ofsted Inspector

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