

# Inspection of Smestow School

Windmill Crescent, Castlecroft, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV3 8HU

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Inspection dates: 21 and 22 September 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Inadequate**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Sixth-form provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Requires Improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Leaders are not vigilant enough in ensuring that safeguarding records and actions are recorded and addressed promptly. This means that leaders are not always sure if pupils, especially those who are vulnerable, are safe when they are not in school.

Leaders have introduced a new culture for learning to help improve pupils' behaviour. Staff and pupils understand this, and many have embraced it. Pupils know how staff expect them to behave in lessons and around the school. This is having a positive impact on the ethos of the school and behaviour in lessons. Many pupils told inspectors that school is a happier place. However, this is not so for pupils who struggle with their attendance and behaviour. Leaders' support for these pupils is yet to enable them to make the improvements they need. Too many pupils miss too much school.

Pupils are not concerned about bullying. They are confident that when issues arise, staff will address them promptly. Most pupils told inspectors that discriminatory language is rare and that it is not tolerated by staff. They said that they feel safe in school and know who to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful, and staff feel supported and valued. However, a small number of pupils said that they did not have the confidence to report sexualised language that made them feel uncomfortable.

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

The school has been through an unsettling time, with many changes in leadership. Many leaders are new in post this academic year. They have the energy, ideas and plans to help improve the school. Leaders consider the views, workload and well-being of staff. As a result, all share a common purpose. Leaders know how they will build on work that is already underway, for instance around further developing the improved culture for learning. However, much of this work is at a very early stage. Leaders have recently put many new systems in place, or these are planned for the near future. As a result, significant change is still needed to fulfil leaders' vision.

A significant number of pupils do not attend school regularly. This means that they miss out on a considerable portion of their education. Leaders and those responsible for governance know this. Their work to reduce this has not had the required affect. Leaders' current plans focus on improving the monitoring of attendance. The aim is to help leaders act more swiftly when a pupil's attendance begins to decline. These plans are sensible and considered, but leaders have lacked urgency in implementing them.

All pupils learn a broad range of subjects. The courses on offer in the sixth form provide students with the qualifications they need. In some subjects, such as science and history, leaders have constructed a well-sequenced curriculum. In mathematics, leaders have responded to the pandemic by reviewing the order in

which topics are taught. However, in some subjects, leaders have not considered how pupils will draw on and link their learning over time. They have placed too much emphasis on using the examination specification as a means of assessing pupils too early in their learning. Consequently, in some subjects across all key stages, pupils are not building the essential knowledge they need.

Some teachers are overly reliant on the use of distinct tasks for different pupils when delivering the curriculum. They do not adapt their teaching to identify and address gaps in learning and respond flexibly so that pupils can learn well. As a result, teachers sometimes 'plough on' delivering the curriculum instead of revisiting important key concepts when pupils are struggling.

Leaders share information with staff about pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This identifies the specific strategies that will help pupils' learn well. Some teachers use this information effectively in lessons. However, this is not universally so. This means that pupils do not always get the support to help them learn well.

Leaders have prioritised reading. They identify pupils who need additional help. Appropriately trained adults then deliver this. Developing pupils' wider love of reading is at the forefront of leaders' minds. They have recently trained all teachers to help encourage reading and are developing the school library to further this cause. This is beginning to bear fruit as more pupils discover reading for pleasure.

Leaders' introduction of a new culture for learning has already had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour. Pupils and staff know clearly what is expected of them, and staff apply sanctions consistently. However, there are a small number of pupils who find managing their behaviour difficult. Leaders' work to support these pupils has yet to have the demonstrable impact needed. As a result, too many pupils end up being repeatedly sanctioned and suspended.

Pupils learn the knowledge and skills for life beyond the school gates through the 'Building People' programme. Leaders have planned this well to ensure that pupils learn about a wide range of issues. These range from consent to healthy eating to staying safe online. Pupils learn about tolerance, discrimination and toxic relationships. Pupils' careers education is also delivered well through this programme. Pupils are supported to make positive choices about their futures, including students in the sixth form. Leaders provide pupils with a range of clubs and activities to help develop their talents and interests.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders do not keep safeguarding records for pupils, including those who are vulnerable, up to date. Any planned actions are not recorded consistently. This impacts on leaders' ability to ensure that help and support are provided in a timely

way. Leaders do not always know if all pupils registered at the school, including those who are vulnerable, are safe if they are not attending.

Staff understand the signs which could indicate that a pupil is at risk from harm. They know the systems for reporting concerns and understand the need to report all concerns, no matter how small. They use these processes well. Pupils learn how to keep safe in the personal, social and health education curriculum and learn about the risks outside school.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders are not taking the rigorous action needed to ensure that pupils identified at risk of harm are kept safe. They have not ensured that safeguarding systems are effective and that written records are secure and up to date. As a result, leaders do not always know if all pupils registered at the school are safe and well. Leaders should ensure that accurate records are kept in relation to the safeguarding of pupils and that any actions identified are completed swiftly.
- Leaders have not ensured that all teachers have the skills and knowledge to carefully adapt their subject teaching to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND. As a result, in some subjects, teachers do not readily identify pupils who do not have the prior knowledge that they need to fully understand new ideas and concepts. This means that some pupils find it difficult to learn the intended curriculum. Leaders should ensure that all teachers know how to modify their teaching effectively and use information about pupils' specific learning needs consistently well.
- Too many pupils do not attend school often enough. As a result, they miss out on a substantial proportion of their learning. This makes it harder for them to make progress. Leaders should ensure that their detailed plans for tracking, intervening, promoting and celebrating attendance are implemented fully so that the number of pupils that are persistently absent falls.
- Leaders have not ensured that the small number of pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour are getting effective help to improve. As a result, too many of these pupils end up being suspended and hence miss out on their learning. Leaders should ensure that the new systems for monitoring behaviour, and subsequent support for pupils, meet their needs and help them to improve.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140586
<b>Local authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10245114
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	675
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	69
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Alan Edwards
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jessie Chahal
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.smestow.org">www.smestow.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 July 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Smestow School is part of the Greenheart Learning Partnership Multi Academy Trust. The trust contains 12 schools. At the time of the inspection, the school was in the process of transferring to another multi-academy trust.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has undergone significant changes in leadership, with several changes in headteacher.
- The sixth-form provision is run jointly with another school in the same multi-academy trust.
- Leaders do not use any alternative 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

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and those responsible for careers education.
- Inspectors held discussions with members of the interim academy board and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, history, mathematics, business studies and science. For each of these subjects, inspectors met with subject leaders, carried out visits to lessons, spoke to pupils and looked at some of their work.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's extra-curricular activities with leaders.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. Inspectors took account of responses to a staff survey, as well as Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to behaviour, bullying, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with the designated safeguarding leader.

## Inspection team

Ian Tustian, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Mike Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Geoff Renwick	Ofsted Inspector
Neil Warner	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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