

Inspection of Midpoint Centre (Key Stage 4 PRU)

Lawnswood Avenue, Parkfields, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV4 6SR

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attending the Midpoint Centre receive an unacceptably poor standard of education. Low expectations, a lack of respect and disregard for others typify school life. The curriculum fails to provide pupils with the knowledge and skills they urgently need. Pupils' social, emotional and learning needs are not consistently identified, planned for or met. Consequently, pupils become further disengaged with education and see little value in learning.

It is pupils, not leaders and staff, who have set the culture in school. Pupils often choose to arrive late to lessons and do little or no work. Staff struggle to keep pupils in class to stop them roaming the school. This is not safe. Pupils' poor language and poor behaviour are deeply ingrained. Leaders' actions are failing to stop this happening. Most pupils simply cycle through any sanctions. There is little demonstrable improvement in any disruptive, aggressive or bullying behaviours. The values of 'support, trust, achieve and respect' are not evident in everyday school life.

Low staffing levels and high staff absence have taken their toll on leaders and staff. The school is not a happy place for pupils or staff to be. Leaders' time is taken up constantly by managing behaviour and other issues. This has hindered leaders' capacity to lead improvements. This is the fundamental root cause of the issues in the school.

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

Leaders act with honesty and integrity. Staff genuinely care about pupils. Their dedication to the pupils is without question. Leaders are mindful of the pressures on staff. They try to reduce staff's workload, wherever possible, and are mindful of staff's well-being. Leaders and members of the management committee know that they are failing pupils, and are doing their utmost to act. However, measures currently in place are failing to remedy the situation, and the school is at a very low ebb.

Leaders' strategies to help pupils to improve their behaviour are not working. This is because they are not addressing the broken culture in the school. Pupils do not buy into leaders' view that the school can provide them with a fresh start. Pupils' poor behaviour, and a lack of respect for the school environment and the staff, has become an accepted norm. Leaders do monitor behaviour incidents. Pupils who need support spend time in 'The Hub' to reflect and reset. However, this does not bring about sufficient demonstrable change in pupils' behaviour.

Leaders have considered the structure of the academic curriculum. It offers pupils a suitable range of courses and qualifications. However, it does not meet pupils' needs, because of its weak purpose and inconsistent implementation. Pupils' starting points are not systematically or accurately identified. Leaders have not considered the key knowledge that each pupil needs for future success. Learning in lessons is therefore largely 'gap filling' and has little structure or cohesion. Teachers do not

build pupils' learning cumulatively. Instead, they deliver learning around disconnected topics. As a result, lessons fail to excite, engage or motivate pupils to want to learn more. Often, they become a battle, as staff try to cajole reluctant pupils to produce random pieces of work.

Pupils see little point or purpose in reading. Staff avoid giving pupils books for fear of pupils destroying them. Pupils who need help to improve their reading are not given the support they need. This hampers pupils' learning across the curriculum. Leaders know this, and are beginning to act, but work is barely underway.

All pupils at the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) associated with their social, emotional and mental health. Leaders review this and any other learning needs as part of each pupil's induction to the school. However, systems to help staff plan, deliver and review the support for each pupil are not in place. As a result, staff do not know the right strategies to use for individual pupils to meet their needs.

Leaders use off-site learning at alternative providers appropriately. They make all relevant checks, including ensuring that the placement is suitable for pupils. Leaders share the information that alternative providers need about each pupil. Leaders have also developed a 'complementary curriculum' for some pupils that includes a range of activities, such as sailing. For many pupils, this provides a meaningful experience that contributes to their personal development. However, some pupils see this as a reward for poor behaviour and a means to avoid the academic curriculum they need.

Leaders know that pupils do not attend well enough. They are working tirelessly to improve pupils' attendance. Some of this work is proving effective. However, pupils' attendance and punctuality remain stubbornly low, and too few are improving.

The personal development curriculum is a ray of light in the school. Leaders have planned this in detail. Pupils learn and revisit important topics. These include the dangers of knife crime, consent and healthy relationships. Leaders invite visitors in to reinforce the important key messages to pupils to help prepare them for life outside school. This includes a robust careers education. Centre staff support pupils to make decisions about their next steps. They help pupils make the transition to further education, training or employment successfully. However, pupils' poor behaviour and low attendance mean that too few pupils engage or benefit from this provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Although staff have received training in de-escalation techniques, pupils' behaviour can compromise the safety of themselves and others. For instance, there have been cases where pupils have climbed onto the roof of the building, or where pupils have physically threatened staff. Some staff raised concerns about their own, and pupils', safety on site.

Staff do not have a common and shared understanding of when to record a concern about a pupil. Some staff see reporting systems as for significant concerns only. They do not reflect the need to record every concern, no matter how small, in a timely way.

Systems for checking on vulnerable pupils are not sufficiently robust and are reliant on individuals. For instance, there is no clear system for ensuring that checks on pupils who are absent happen if key staff are not in school. This places vulnerable pupils at risk.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are overstretched and lack the capacity to lead and manage the improvements needed. This means the fundamental changes needed to improve the culture, ethos and education at the school are not happening. This is compounded by insufficient staffing overall. This is taking its toll on existing staff, and resulting in high levels of staff absence. Those responsible for governance should ensure that leaders have the support, capacity, skills and knowledge to lead improvements effectively.
- Leaders have not taken effective steps so that staff can provide consistent support to pupils that will secure improvements in their behaviour. As a result, pupils show a lack of respect and self-discipline and are not making sufficient demonstrable improvements in their behaviour. Leaders should create a culture of high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. These expectations should be clearly understood by all and reinforced to help more pupils improve their behaviour and learn well.
- Leaders have not robustly identified, assessed and planned for pupils' SEND needs. This means that staff do not know how to best meet pupils' social, emotional and learning needs. Consequently, pupils' needs are not being consistently met. Leaders should ensure that pupils' SEND needs are accurately identified, and that this information and associated strategies are shared with staff and routinely implemented to meet pupils' needs.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is effectively designed to support pupils to learn the knowledge and skills they need for success in future life. In some subjects, pupils' learning is disjointed and does not build cumulatively. Leaders should ensure that they accurately identify pupils' starting points and sequence the key building blocks of knowledge so that pupils learn well.
- Leaders have not ensured that systems for checking the welfare of pupils are sufficiently robust, that pupils are always safe in school and that all staff understand the systems for raising concerns. This means that pupils are potentially at risk of harm. Leaders should ensure that a coherent and cohesive approach to safeguarding permeates through every aspect of school life.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils attend school well. This means that pupils are missing too much of their academic learning and personal development

programme. Leaders should continue to work to improve pupils' attendance, focusing on the strategies and approaches that are having the greatest impact.

- Leaders have not put reading at the heart of their work to prepare pupils for life beyond school. As a result, pupils who need help to improve their reading are not getting the support they need. Leaders should ensure that they develop a culture of reading and that they support pupils who need additional support so they can access the curriculum.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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	134256
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10257037
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	66
Appropriate authority	Management committee
Chair	Mark Heywood
Headteacher	Rachael Brown
Website	https://www.midpoint.lawnswood.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The provision provides education for key stage 4 students experiencing behavioural difficulties, who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools or are at risk of exclusion.
- The centre is part of Lawnswood Campus. This is home to three pupil referral units and a hospital service, serving schools in Wolverhampton. An executive headteacher oversees provision across Lawnswood Campus but was absent during this inspection. Midpoint Centre's senior leadership team consists of a head of centre, a deputy head of centre and an assistant headteacher.
- All students have SEND relating to emotional, social and behavioural difficulties.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school currently uses four unregistered alternative education providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- 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 discussions with the head of centre, the deputy head of centre and other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the management committee and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, construction and motor vehicle studies. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited three unregistered alternative providers that pupils from the school attend.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's extra-curricular activities and personal development curriculum with leaders.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. They took account of responses to a staff survey.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to pupils' attendance, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with safeguarding leads.

Inspection team

Ian Tustian, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Alexander Laney	His Majesty's Inspector
Caroline Hoddinott	Ofsted Inspector

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