

# Inspection of a good school: The University of Birmingham School

Weoley Park Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6QU

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Inspection dates:

16 and 17 May 2023

## **Outcome**

The University of Birmingham School continues to be a good school.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to The University of Birmingham School. There is a vibrant and diverse environment, where all pupils are very much valued. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit a great deal from coming to this school. Pupils say they feel safe.

Leaders have very high aspirations for all pupils. As a result, pupils are gaining an education that prepares them very well for a successful life beyond school. Leaders prioritise pupils' character development and academic achievement equally.

Pupils behave very well around school. They have positive attitudes and are courteous. The small proportion who finds this difficult are supported well to learn from their mistakes and make better choices. Pupils say that on the rare occasion when bullying does happen, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.

Leaders have ensured that all pupils study a broad and ambitious curriculum in all key stages. In the sixth form, students are able to choose from a wide range of A-level subjects. The vast majority move on to university.

Pupils' wider development is supported exceedingly well. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities. All pupils in Year 9, for example, participate in the bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious and interesting curriculum. All pupils study a wide range of subjects in key stage 3. The curriculum ensures that pupils are able to gain a strong foundation of knowledge, skills and understanding. This helps them when they move on to GCSE and A-level courses. The curriculum is very well planned and sequenced

in all subjects. It builds on prior learning to progress to clear end points. Most pupils in key stage 4 study the English Baccalaureate, in line with government ambitions.

The school has many pupils with a wide range of SEND. Leaders have ensured that these pupils are well supported. Leaders have provided staff with specific training, and teachers have the right information to plan for the needs of pupils with SEND. They adapt learning effectively to enable pupils to study the same curriculum. In key stage 3, some pupils with SEND have their English and mathematics lessons in the 'nurture' room. This is a happy and secure space for them, where they receive very targeted and effective support.

In lessons, teachers model and explain new knowledge and concepts clearly. The majority of teachers check pupils' understanding regularly. This helps them to quickly identify and address any misconceptions that pupils may have. However, this is not always the case. Very occasionally, teachers do not routinely check pupils' understanding before moving them on to new learning. This can result in misconceptions not being addressed, which makes it harder for pupils to understand new learning.

Leaders encourage all pupils to read regularly. Leaders plan and provide a wide range of activities for all year groups to promote a love of reading. The school has a well-resourced library, which provides pupils with opportunities to read a diverse range of books. A rigorous approach to improving reading is in place. Pupils who are still at the early stages of reading receive targeted support to develop their confidence and fluency.

In lessons, pupils behave well. They want to engage with the activities that teachers provide for them. Their positive attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to their achievement over time.

The school's focus on virtues underpins pupils' personal development. These virtues support their development to be responsible citizens and make the right choice, at the right time, for the right reason. Pupils learn about appropriate healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe. This includes when they are working or playing online. The school provides many additional activities in the arts and sport. For example, pupils can learn to play a musical instrument, and they go on trips. Recently, some pupils visited Boston in the USA.

Pupils benefit from very sound careers advice and guidance. They have opportunities to visit universities and undertake work experience.

The vast majority of staff feel valued and well supported by leaders. They appreciate the professional development opportunities to support them in their roles. They say that leaders care about their well-being and provide help when they need it.

Governors are very knowledgeable and well informed. Their relationship with senior leaders is professional and one that provides challenge. They ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties in full.

Most parents are positive about the school's provision for their children. However, some parents feel that the school's communication with them could be better.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is at the heart of everything the school does. Leaders have ensured there are robust processes in place to keep pupils safe. Pupils say they feel confident in speaking to a member of staff if they have a concern.

Leaders are aware of the risks pupils may face outside of school. They ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Leaders also provide parents and carers with information about how they can support their child to be safe online.

Leaders provide staff and governors with regular training. This includes training on safer recruitment processes when appointing new staff.

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

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

- On a small number of occasions, teachers do not check pupils' understanding before moving them on to new learning. As a result, some pupils have misconceptions about their learning, which are not addressed. Leaders should ensure that assessment strategies are used to full effect to enable pupils to build successfully on what they already know.

## **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 18 and 19 April 2018.

## 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>	140863
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10269444
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<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>	1,178
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	395
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Professor Jeff Bale
<b>Principal</b>	Colin Townsend
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.uobschool.org.uk">www.uobschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18 and 19 April 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The University of Birmingham School was founded as a free school on 1 September 2015. It is sponsored by the University of Birmingham and managed by a governing body.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 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.

- Inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders, staff, and pupils. The lead inspector held a meeting with the chair of governors and two governors.
- Deep dives in English, biology, modern foreign languages, geography, and art were completed. These included discussions with subject leaders and teachers, visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. Inspectors also met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects and listened to pupils read.
- The lead inspector reviewed the 'Learning for Life' curriculum plan and spoke with the curriculum leader and senior leader for sixth form. An inspector also reviewed the support provided for pupils at an early stage of reading.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' plans to improve the school and their self-evaluation of the school's work. Minutes of local governing body meetings were also reviewed.
- When inspecting safeguarding, the inspector considered the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe, the checks made to ensure safe recruitment and the quality of staff training.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, the staff and pupil questionnaire.

### **Inspection team**

Nicola Walters, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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