

# Inspection of a good school: Wolverhampton Vocational Training Centre

Millfields Road, Ettingshall, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV4 6JP

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Inspection dates:

28 and 29 November 2023

## **Outcome**

Wolverhampton Vocational Training Centre continues to be a good school.

The head of centre of this school is Chris Potter. He is supported by an executive headteacher, Helen Andrioli, who is responsible for the strategic oversight of the school and one other school within the trust. This school is part of the Central Learning Partnership Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Doug Selkirk, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Robert Turton.

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

Students flourish here. They enjoy school and build strong positive relationships with their peers. Students feel safe. Leaders recognise that, in the past, many students' experiences of school have not been positive, and they do all they can to change this reality for students. They work closely with parents and carers to develop a secure understanding of students' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They use this knowledge well to support students to become resilient and independent young people.

Staff care deeply about students' well-being. There is a clear culture of mutual respect between staff, students and parents. Students behave very well in lessons and around the school site. Leaders have worked hard to develop this ethos following the COVID-19 pandemic. If students have any concerns, they know who to talk to and are confident that these will be resolved swiftly.

Developing students' independence is central to leaders' ambitions. The school's curriculum is carefully tailored to offer students the opportunity to develop their independent living and social skills. For example, through the school's 'travel training', students develop their confidence in using public transport and increasingly engage in independent travel. This work has a clear impact on students and is helping to shape their confidence and sense of self-worth.

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

There is a calm and compassionate culture here. Leaders are committed to providing students with an education that supports both their academic and personal growth. Staff share the headteacher's enthusiasm. They are committed to the headteacher's ambitious vision. All involved share a strong sense of pride in being part of the caring community that leaders have nurtured.

The school's curriculum is broad and immersive, with a specific focus on students developing the skills and knowledge needed to pursue a career of their choosing. Across most subjects, leaders have carefully planned the curriculum so that the knowledge students need to gain is well ordered. This helps students to make strong progress. For example, in catering, students develop a deep understanding of the processes involved in the preparation of a range of foods. They approach their cookery with skill and show real enthusiasm for their work. Students use this knowledge to make successful transitions into their next stage of education or employment. However, the precise knowledge that students need to learn has not been outlined in enough detail in all subjects. What students learn does not always build on the things they have been taught before. Occasionally, teachers are unclear about precisely what to teach, and the activities they choose do not always support students to learn the curriculum. Where this happens, students' progress is limited.

All students who attend the school have an education, health and care (ECH) plan. Leaders build a clear and comprehensive picture of students' individual SEND. Leaders use this to ensure that the range of qualifications available to students is appropriate and bespoke to students' individual needs. In lessons, teachers adapt their teaching smartly and unobtrusively to ensure that students receive the support they need.

The school is working to develop students' love of reading. At present, this is not well established. Support for students who have gaps in their reading is in its infancy. At present, a small number of students who struggle to read receive little support and do not learn to read fluently quickly enough.

The school makes sure that students benefit from a range of high-quality, and tightly focused, encounters with the world of work. These are closely aligned to the school's curriculum. However, the range of experiences offered to students does not extend beyond the curriculum subjects and so is narrow and not always well matched to students' career aspirations. Where this happens, students' horizons are limited.

Leaders' work to promote students' wider personal development and their independence is a strength of the school. There is a wide range of carefully planned opportunities that help to develop students' confidence in a range of social settings. For instance, students recently created Christmas decorations that they will sell at a local market. The money raised will be used to support a local charity. Through this work, students develop a sound understanding of their social and moral responsibility to their community.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Leaders do not have a clear understanding of the gaps in students' reading abilities, and effective support is lacking for those who struggle to read. Because of this, those students who struggle to read do not learn to read fluently quickly enough. Leaders should ensure that they have an accurate view of students' reading ability and provide students with the targeted support they need to bridge any gaps in reading.
- In some subjects, the precise knowledge that students will be taught has not been set out clearly enough. Where this is the case, students' learning does not always build on the things they have been taught before, and the activities chosen by teachers do not support students to learn the intended curriculum. The school should ensure that the curriculum is well planned across each subject and that knowledge is clearly defined so that students are able to make strong progress.
- The careers education that students receive is limited in its scope. Consequently, students are not always aware of the broad range of opportunities that are available to them in the future. Leaders should ensure that they provide students with a broad range of meaningful encounters with the world of work to support them to develop their understanding of future career pathways.

## 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 June 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	142123
<b>Local authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10290622
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	16 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>	51
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	51
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Robert Turton
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Doug Selkirk
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Andrioli
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.wvtc.org.uk">www.wvtc.org.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	5 and 6 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Wolverhampton Vocational Training Centre is a small special school for students aged 16 to 19. The school is one of 16 academies in the Central Learning Partnership Trust.
- The school has a joint local executive governing body with another school within the trust.
- All students have an EHC plan. All students have a range of SEND.
- The school does not use off-site alternative education providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and with other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, personal social health and economic education, and catering. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. The inspectors considered responses to pupil and staff surveys and Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text responses.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to attendance and behaviour.

## Inspection team

Alexander Laney, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Simon Smith

Ofsted Inspector

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