

Inspection of Wickersley School and Sports College

Bawtry Road, Wickersley, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S66 1JL

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Tony Hardcastle. This school is part of Wickersley 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, Helen O'Brien, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Steve Calvert.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Wickersley School and Sports College under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged the predecessor school, also known as Wickersley School and Sports College, to be outstanding, before it opened as a result of conversion to academy status.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders at Wickersley School and Sports College recognised that the quality of education that pupils have received in recent years needed to improve. Some pupils have not achieved well in end of key stage assessments. In response to this, the school has implemented plans to address weaknesses in the curriculum. As a result, pupils are now benefiting from a curriculum that is helping them to know and remember more of what they have been taught.

The school has a broad curriculum. All pupils benefit from this, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This offer also extends to pupils who access the school's specialist resource provision, who are supported by well-trained staff. A small number of pupils cannot read fluently when they join the school. Leaders have not ensured that they receive the support to develop their phonics knowledge, to help them catch up quickly enough.

Pupils are safe. Most pupils told inspectors that they had a trusted adult they would speak to if they were worried about something. Pupils say that bullying occasionally happens but are confident that it will be dealt with quickly by staff. The school recognised that they needed to address the behaviour of some pupils after the pandemic. Leaders have successfully raised expectations for all members of the school community and pupils now behave well.

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

The school has designed an appropriate curriculum for all pupils. Much time has been spent on improving the curriculum in recent years. Leaders have identified the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn in each subject. In most subjects, pupils learn more, do more and remember more over time. Teachers help pupils to practise and recall their prior knowledge, skills and vocabulary across most subjects. In a small number of subjects, certain aspects of the curriculum are new. These changes were made as pupils were not remembering enough of what they had been taught. Leaders are aware that some of these gaps in pupils' knowledge remain.

The knowledge and skills that pupils are now acquiring are not fully reflected in the most recent external examination results. This is because previous practices, such as a narrower curriculum, affected pupils' progression in subjects, as well as their performance in end of key stage assessments.

Leaders have allocated time each day to pupils' reading. Pupils in Years 7 to 12 read a range of authors, covering various genres, through the 'reading for pleasure' initiative. Where pupils are at an early stage of learning to read, leaders identify some of the barriers that prevent pupils from reading fluently. Although pupils receive support, this help does not address gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge. As a result, pupils at the early stages of reading do not catch up quickly enough.

Pupils with SEND are well supported to access the curriculum. This includes those pupils who access their learning in the school's specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. The needs of pupils with SEND are identified accurately by well-trained staff. Leaders ensure that staff throughout school understand the individual needs of pupils.

Pupils' behaviour has improved recently. Leaders introduced new expectations that are based around 'The Wickersley Way'. Pupils understand these values and expectations. The number of pupils receiving suspension or being removed from lessons due to poor behaviour has reduced this year. Most pupils behave well in lessons. They respect the school rules. However, some pupils do not fully engage and apply themselves in lessons.

Pupils attend school regularly. Leaders have effective systems to support pupils to improve their attendance.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They understand the importance of tolerance and respect. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is currently being improved by leaders. At key stage 3 and in the sixth form, leaders are clear about the important content that they want pupils to learn. However, the PSHE curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not build on what pupils already know, nor does it fully address gaps in pupils' knowledge. Pupils throughout school benefit from a highly effective careers programme. They are well prepared for their next steps in education, training or employment.

Students are positive about their experience in the sixth form. The range of subjects offered is broad and diverse. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. As in other key stages, there is some variation in how well some subjects are taught. Students in the sixth form are well supported by a strong pastoral team. The personal development curriculum is a strength in the sixth form. Students learn about healthy relationships and staying safe. They are prepared well for adulthood. Staff work with sixth-form students to explore potential future careers and, according to students' interests, apply for university courses or jobs.

Leaders have an ambitious vision for the school. The school is well supported by colleagues from The Wickersley Partnership Trust. Staff are well trained. The school considers staff workload. Leaders, including those from the trust, have supported the school with its recent improvement. A high number of staff have moved on from the school in recent years, and this has caused some issues with staffing. This is now more stable and pupils are benefiting from greater consistency and regular staffing. Governors provide effective challenge and support to school leaders. They are well informed and have an accurate view of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not always check that pupils have understood what they have been taught before moving on. This leads to misconceptions or gaps in knowledge not being addressed. Leaders should provide training for staff and support them to ensure that pupils' understanding of what they have been taught is checked regularly and purposefully. Leaders should ensure that this assessment information is used in lessons to inform future teaching.
- Some pupils do not receive the support they need to support them to become fluent readers, specifically addressing the gaps they have in their phonics knowledge. As a result, these pupils do not improve their reading quickly enough. Leaders need to ensure that pupils who have gaps in their phonics knowledge receive support that addresses these gaps and allows them to become fluent and confident readers quickly.

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 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

Unique reference number	140646
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	10266129
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2,059
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	354
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steve Calvert
Headteacher	Tony Hardcastle
Website	www.wickersley.net
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Wickersley Partnership Trust.
- The school uses four unregistered providers of education.
- 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.
- The school operates a SEND resource base to provide support for pupils with hearing impairments.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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 the school 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 met with the headteacher, and senior leaders responsible for safeguarding, sixth form, behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, computing, art and design and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors visited lessons, reviewed curriculum plans and spoke with curriculum leaders and teachers. They also talked to pupils about their learning and looked at the work they have completed.
- Inspectors also reviewed curriculum planning in religious education and physical education.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator. Education, health and care plans and other support plans for pupils with SEND were reviewed. Inspectors visited lessons to see how pupils with SEND are supported to learn.
- Inspectors met with the leader responsible for reading to discuss the support for pupils at the early stages of reading.
- The team scrutinised the school's records of bullying and spoke to several groups of pupils, including some single-gender groups, to understand their experience of school.
- Inspectors met leaders to discuss pupils' behaviour and reviewed the school's data on external and internal suspensions.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the local governing body, trustees from Wickersley Partnership Trust and the chief executive officer from the trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised records relating to attendance and records of pupils who have joined or left the school roll.

Inspection team

Stuart Voyce, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Katie North	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Greenough	Ofsted Inspector
Lynette Edwards	Ofsted Inspector
Tudor Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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