

# Inspection of Sir John Talbot's School

Prees Road, Whitchurch, Shropshire SY13 2BY

---

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 December 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Tim Stonall. This school is part of Marches Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sarah Finch, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alex Fry.

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

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, are made to feel welcome at Sir John Talbot's School, where all are included. The school's vision of 'achievement through caring' underpins everything it does to ensure a quality education for all. The school has high expectations for all pupils' achievement, and addresses any barriers faced by those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged in any way.

Pupils experience first-rate opportunities for personal development throughout their time at the school. They enjoy a range of high-quality experiences that include learning about relevant topics, a wide range of different clubs, visits and other school events. These add to pupils' enjoyment of school. They are extremely well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils feel safe at school and know that they could talk to staff if they had any problems with regard to themselves or concerns about others. The school ensures that pupils know how to keep themselves safe and well.

The school's high expectations for behaviour are achieved by most pupils. However, a small number struggle to meet these expectations. Suspensions have been too high in the past but have recently started to fall as a result of the school's actions to support pupils when needed.

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

The school is ambitious for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has a well-planned curriculum that identifies the important knowledge that teachers want pupils to know. Consequently, teachers know what they want pupils to achieve over time. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects. As a result, learning is progressive and builds on what pupils can already do, including in the sixth form. Teachers take opportunities to recap on previous knowledge and remind pupils which aspects of their previous learning are relevant. Where teachers identify gaps in knowledge, or misconceptions, they take steps to address these. As a result, pupils learn more and can do more over time.

The school has effective processes to identify any pupils who have SEND. Constructive relationships exist between the school, parents and external agencies to ensure pupils get the support they need. Strong communication and relevant training ensure that staff understand and consider pupils' needs. The school carefully checks the impact of additional interventions outside the classroom to make sure that these are meeting pupils' needs.

The school has re-evaluated how it supports weaker readers and has made positive changes as a result. Pupils participate in whole-school reading time. Pupils who require support to become better readers have opportunities to develop their phonics skills and to practise their reading. Their progress is celebrated.

Pupils have a positive attitude towards their learning and most attend school regularly. Pupils benefit from relevant support and a quick response to address any concerns with their attendance. The school provides a range of enhanced support for pupils to improve their behaviour, for example assistance with managing emotions. These approaches are contributing to the recent reduction in the number of pupils who are suspended from school, although a small number of pupils continue to be suspended repeatedly.

Pupils engage well with the wide range of exceptional personal development opportunities. The school's approach to personal, social, health and economic education is very well planned and relevant to pupils' needs. Important topics are experienced through valuable learning opportunities and are appropriate to pupils' needs. For example, sixth-form students learn first-aid skills. Pupils are highly respectful of the views of others. They are empowered to make informed decisions about a wide range of topics, including their physical and mental well-being. The school ensures that pupils experience an enriched and enhanced curriculum through relevant trips, speakers and extra-curricular activities.

Pupils experience relevant and useful careers education which provides them with the skills to move on to the next stage in their education. For example, students in the sixth form benefit from work experience related to their interests. The school's approach to careers education is integrated well into the curriculum so pupils can see how their studies support and inform their future aspirations. They are well prepared for their next steps.

The trust provides highly effective support and validation of the school's actions. Carefully targeted resource provides the school with additional capacity that is used well to support its work. Governors understand their responsibilities and make an excellent contribution to the school. They have a clear understanding of the school, and challenge robustly and support effectively in equal measure.

Staff feel well supported by the school and are confident that their workload is considered when decisions are made, for example in relation to the school's approach to assessment.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- The proportion of pupils suspended from the school has been too high in the recent past, and some pupils continue to be suspended on repeated occasions. As a result, some pupils miss out on learning time. The school should continue to develop its work to support pupils who struggle to meet the expectations for behaviour so that less learning time is lost for pupils as a result of suspension.

## 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>	141176
<b>Local authority</b>	Shropshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10298618
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<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>	855
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	75
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Alex Fry
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Sarah Finch
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tim Stonall
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sirjohntalbots.co.uk/">http://www.sirjohntalbots.co.uk/</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	25 and 26 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of Marches Academy Trust, which runs 11 schools.
- Five unregistered and two registered alternative education providers are used by the school to provide education for a small number of pupils.
- 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

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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history, languages and music. 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 also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other school leaders, those responsible for governance and leaders from the trust, including the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans and information about attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at the school.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. They considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including comments submitted via the free-text facility. The inspectors also spoke to some parents in person.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: checked the school's single central record; spoke to senior leaders about safeguarding procedures; took account of the views of 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.

## Inspection team

Rob Hackfath, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Martin Spoor	Ofsted Inspector
Ed Leighton	Ofsted Inspector
Huw Bishop	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Scott	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2023