

Inspection of The WREN School

61-63 Bath Road, Reading, Berkshire RG30 2BB

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 January 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

The principal of this school is John Salberg. This school is part of Excalibur Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Nicky Edmondson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Toby Watson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are benefitting from the culture of aspiration that is being developed at the school. They know how important the school value of 'ambition' is. Pupils take on many leadership roles to develop important life skills. This includes many pupils who act as prefects. Pupils have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including the popular sports clubs. These experiences, along with interesting trips, help to enrich school life.

Recently, leaders have been working with teachers to make much-needed improvements to the curriculum. Passionate staff are adapting lessons to make them more focused. This is beginning to increase what pupils learn. However, currently, the quality of curriculum and teaching is inconsistent. This means that pupils are not yet receiving a good quality of education across all subjects and key stages.

Bullying is never tolerated. School leaders and anti-bullying ambassadors are helping the minority of pupils who may be affected to feel more confident to raise any worries they have promptly. Pupils recognise the steps leaders have taken in recent times to improve behaviour in the school. Most now engage positively with learning. However, some pupils do not always focus as well as they should.

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

Through the ambitious vision and direction set by the principal, this school is improving. New senior and middle leaders who have joined the school over the last three years are determined to make the changes that are needed. Their work has already had a significant positive impact on pupils' behaviour, attendance and the development of the curriculum. Additionally, there has recently been an improvement in the results that pupils achieve in their GCSE examinations. However, the school recognises that further improvements are needed across a number of subjects, including in the sixth form, to ensure that all pupils and students benefit from a high-quality education.

The school has introduced a strategy, called 'inspirational classrooms', to improve the quality of teaching. This outlines the expectations for how lessons are taught. Some aspects of this are working well. The way that teachers help pupils to recall prior learning is a strength. However, currently, the school has not yet fully identified the precise knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn in some areas. In addition, there are inconsistencies in how well the curriculum is taught and pupils' learning is assessed. Not all teachers introduce new information in manageable steps. This means that, in some subjects, the activities given to pupils do not always help them to learn well. Consequently, pupils, along with students in the sixth form, do not consistently achieve as well as they should.

There is a well-embedded culture of reading in the school. Pupils read widely and often, ably supported by staff during tutor time sessions. The school's phonics programme is used successfully to help some pupils who may need further help,

including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to develop their confidence and fluency in reading. The needs of pupils with SEND are known well by staff. Individual pupil profiles ensure that teachers are aware of what help they should provide. However, at present, some teachers do not always provide the precise support that pupils, including those with SEND, need to be successful.

The school has significantly improved the attendance of pupils in recent years. A range of successful initiatives has ensured that pupils attend more often and arrive at school on time. The behaviour of pupils has also improved. The newly developed behaviour policy sets high expectations for their conduct. Most pupils behave responsibly and engage well with their lessons. Social times and the school environment, including corridors, are orderly. Those pupils who need further support to regulate their emotions get targeted help. However, a minority of pupils continue to fall short of the school's expectations. This happens most frequently when staff do not implement the school's behaviour strategy as consistently as leaders intend.

Pupils benefit from a comprehensive programme of personal development. Within their 'culture lessons', pupils learn to value and respect diversity. They gain important life skills, including how to stay safe. Pupils also learn about healthy relationships in an age-appropriate manner. In the sixth form, students receive thorough careers advice and guidance. This includes workshops to help with applications for future study or jobs.

Governors and trustees take their roles and responsibilities seriously, ensuring that the school continues to improve. School leaders are highly valued by the staff body. Staff recognise the developments that have been made and appreciate the high-quality training they have received to improve pupils' education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the important knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn have not been carefully identified and organised. This means that teachers do not always know exactly what should be taught and when. The school should continue to develop the curriculum to ensure pupils accumulate key knowledge and skills over time in all subjects and at all key stages, including in the sixth form.
- Some teachers do not always use effective strategies to help pupils learn. Consequently, pupils do not always learn as well as they should. Leaders need to ensure that staff know how best to introduce new learning and help pupils understand and remember what they are taught.

- The school does not always ensure that pupils with SEND always have the appropriate support to help them learn well. This means that some do not always build the knowledge and skills they need. The school needs to provide further training and support for staff to ensure that all pupils get the precise help that they require to be successful.
- A minority of pupils do not always focus on their learning as well as they should. This is because some teachers do not consistently use the school's new behaviour policy. The school should continue to embed the new behaviour system and ensure that it is implemented as intended by all staff.

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

| | |
|---|--|
| Unique reference number | 142121 |
| Local authority | Reading |
| Inspection number | 10296417 |
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Academy free school |
| 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 | 1,006 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 146 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Toby Watson |
| CEO of the trust | Nicky Edmondson |
| Principal | John Salberg |
| Website | www.wren.excalibur.org.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 19 and 20 June 2018 |

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes in staff. The principal joined the school in 2020. Since then, there have been many other changes in senior leadership.
- 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 currently uses the services of two registered alternative provisions and six unregistered alternative provisions.

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. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders, subject leaders, the leader responsible for pupils with SEND, other teachers, and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with governors, a trustee, the CEO and another representative of the trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, physical education, modern foreign languages and history. 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.
- 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.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils and staff to hear their views.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the confidential Ofsted surveys for staff and pupils, as well as the responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Martin Smith, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Ann Fearon | Ofsted Inspector |
| Mark Bagust | Ofsted Inspector |
| Peter Fry | 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.

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/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024