

Inspection of King Edward VI Balaam Wood Academy

New Street, Frankley, Birmingham, West Midlands B45 0EU

Inspection dates: 31 January and 1 February 2024

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

The headteacher of this school is Damian McGarvey. This school is part of the King Edward VI Academy Trust Birmingham, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jodh Dhesi, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sharon Roberts.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and staff are rightly proud of how much Balaam Wood has improved over recent years. They enjoy belonging to a vibrant school community where caring, respectful relationships are the norm. Daily life reflects the school's values of being bold, ambitious, collaborative and kind.

From the uniform checks as they arrive at school, to the revision sessions Year 11 have after school, pupils know that staff have high expectations of them and want them to be successful. The vast majority of pupils are keen to learn and work hard in lessons. Their work shows that they learn well and can apply their knowledge independently. They manage their behaviour well at social times and move around the school in a calm, orderly manner. Older pupils talk about how much behaviour and learning have improved during their time at the school.

Pupils enjoy the opportunities that they have to learn beyond the classroom, including residential trips and author visits. Many pupils make the most of the extra-curricular activities on offer. This includes many clubs, police cadets, the newly-launched Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the various strands of the school's partnership with Birmingham City Football Club.

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

The school has made many improvements to the quality of education pupils receive. This includes significant changes to the curriculum and how learning is structured in every subject. The published examination outcomes are low but do not reflect the current quality of education at Balaam Wood. Pupils are now producing outcomes which demonstrate they know and remember more of their learning.

The curriculum is broad and learned by all pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Each subject has a carefully sequenced curriculum that helps pupils to learn well over time. This includes identifying the small steps of component knowledge that lay strong foundations for future learning. However, in some subjects, less thought has gone into how teachers can check that these steps in knowledge are secured. Some assessment tasks do not test the key knowledge needed for successful learning. This has resulted in some gaps in pupils' understanding going unnoticed.

The school has introduced useful learning strategies, for example, 'DNA' tasks, that are used consistently across the curriculum. This aids pupils' learning as the approaches are familiar to them. They understand what they are learning and how it fits into the bigger picture in each subject. Learning is checked regularly but this does not always result in lessons being appropriately adapted or pupils being clear about what they need to improve.

The identification and support for pupils with SEND are strong. Where needed, staff make appropriate adaptations to the planned learning for these pupils. The school's

efforts to involve parents and carers in their children's learning and SEND have strengthened over the last year. Leaders have prioritised supporting pupils who have fallen behind with their reading to catch up. Pupils who are not secure readers receive appropriate intervention. Teachers have received training in how to support weaker readers in their lessons.

The school has worked hard to improve pupils' attendance and behaviour. Pupils' attendance is in line with national figures. The need to use more serious consequences for inappropriate behaviour is reducing. This reflects how almost everyone has bought into the culture of high expectations and are helping each other to be successful. There is a small number of pupils who sometimes use disrespectful language but everyone knows this is not acceptable.

Personal development is a strength. Pupils benefit from a well-planned personal, social, health and economic curriculum that is taught by a small team of expert staff. This learning is supplemented by powerful assemblies and events like the whole school Remembrance Day service. Pupils receive helpful advice and guidance about the choices available to them in the future, whatever their career aspirations.

The trust has provided considerable support for Balaam Wood since the school joined them. It has implemented robust improvement plans successfully and this is enabling the school to flourish. Staff feel valued and appreciate how their workload and well-being are considered by leaders at all levels.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, tasks that are used to assess pupils' learning do not have enough focus on the important component knowledge. As a result, some staff do not have a precise enough understanding of what pupils have learned at each step in the learning process. The school should ensure that assessment tasks support the effective building of pupils' cumulative knowledge.
- There are occasions when the feedback given to pupils is too broad to be of good use. It does not identify the gap or misconception relevant to each pupil. This means that pupils do not understand exactly what they need to do to improve their work. The school should ensure that its approaches to assessment enable more specific feedback for pupils.

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	147440
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10294679
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	421
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sharon Roberts
Headteacher	Damian McGarvey
Website	bwa.kevibham.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- King Edward VI Balaam Wood converted to become an academy in September 2019. When its predecessor school, Balaam Wood School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The school joined the King Edward VI Academy Trust Birmingham in September 2019. It is one of twelve academies in the trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- 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.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, other school leaders, the trust CEO, the chair of the trust board, the co-chairs of the local governing body and spoke with an external school improvement partner.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, art and design, history and geography. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also visited other lessons.
- 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.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys. They considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including comments submitted via the free-text facility.

Inspection team

Nicola Beech, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Huw Bishop

Ofsted Inspector

Jane Epton

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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