

Inspection of a good school: The Wordsley School

Brierley Hill Road, Wordsley, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 5SP

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 February 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Wordsley School is inclusive and has high expectations for pupils' achievements and aspirations. Staff at the school are committed to providing a high standard of education. They care passionately about the academic and wider development of pupils. They do not see the disruption caused to pupils' education by the COVID-19 pandemic as a justification to accept lower standards. As a result, leaders have accurately identified school priorities to ensure continuous improvement. However, some of these plans are yet to show impact.

The vast majority of pupils are friendly and welcoming. However, a significant minority of pupils do not meet the school's expectations of behaviour. Pupils' learning is too often disrupted in lessons. Staff also report concerns about behaviour. Some behaviour around the school site is not good enough. Leaders are taking decisive steps to address this issue.

Pupils benefit from opportunities for their wider personal development. They can take part in lots of activities outside of lessons. These include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, the Spanish film club and various sporting and arts events. Pupils are able to learn about different careers through a well-designed curriculum that gives valuable and personalised advice and guidance to pupils on their next steps.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious and coherent curriculum that identifies the important knowledge they want pupils to learn. The curriculum is broad and offers pupils a range of academic experiences. The school prioritises reading and creates opportunities for reading

for pleasure. For example, 'the Friday big read' enables pupils to share experiences of reading novels and explore key themes and ideas. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. At times, though, assessment is not as effective as it could be. Teachers do not always have an accurate view of pupils' starting points. Teachers do not routinely identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and check that they have fully understood the work before they move on to new learning. This means that some pupils make less progress than they should. Some pupils have work missing or errors in their books. Sometimes, this is not addressed by teachers and leads to some gaps in what pupils know, understand and can do.

Pupils with SEND are included in all aspects of school life. Staff receive useful information about who the pupils with SEND are and what their needs are. Teachers use this information to make adaptations to their lessons. As a result, pupils with SEND are supported well.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Most pupils display positive attitudes and behave well. However, a significant minority of pupils disrupt learning and do not display positive behaviours around the school site. Leaders are tackling this in earnest, with a new, simpler behaviour policy which sets out more clearly the expectations of conduct in the school. However, some pupils continue to display unwanted behaviour. The school has many strategies in place to support pupils who struggle to attend regularly. Nevertheless, too many pupils are persistently absent from school.

Pupils' personal development is a high priority for the school. Pupils learn about a range of important topics such as staying safe online, how to stay safe in the community, consent and healthy relationships. In addition, pupils enjoy a rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities to support their wider development. There are a number of trips and visits for pupils to take part in, such as museum visits, visits to the countryside and castles, as well as visits to different places of worship.

Pupils receive high-quality careers advice to help them to make informed and ambitious decisions about their future pathways. The school supports pupils well by showing them how different curriculum subjects can be beneficial for future careers. For example, there is a 'careers and croissants' morning once a month where pupils hear from external speakers about a range of careers such as the police, armed forces, electricians and lawyers.

The vast majority of staff enjoy working at the school and are proud to belong to the Wordsley community. They appreciate the ways in which leaders are sensitive to their well-being and workload. While many teachers say that behaviour needs improvement, they are supportive of leaders' approaches to tackle it.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A significant minority of pupils display unwanted behaviours. Pupils' conduct around the school site is unacceptable. There are also too many instances of inappropriate behaviour in lessons. As a result, learning is sometimes disrupted. The school should ensure that pupils are supported to meet the school's high expectations of behaviour so that fewer lessons are disrupted and behaviour around the school site is calm.
- Leaders are taking action to improve attendance. However, too many pupils are absent from school and too many are persistently absent. This means that they are missing important parts of their education and are at risk of falling behind. The school should review their current approaches to improving attendance so that pupils are in school more consistently and attend well.
- Leaders have not implemented a clear assessment and feedback policy. Consequently, in some lessons, teachers do not systematically check that pupils have understood certain concepts or ideas. Pupils sometimes struggle to identify where they need to improve from their starting points. The school should ensure that teachers understand what they are expected to do to check pupils' understanding of the curriculum and do this consistently well so that all pupils know how to improve and gaps in learning do not persist.

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 September 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

Unique reference number	103858
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10294500
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community School
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	962
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nicky Cooper
Headteacher	Ashley Weatherhogg
Website	www.wordsleyschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a change of headteacher. The present headteacher took up post in September 2023.
- The school uses no unregistered alternative 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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the chair of governors and two vice-chairs of the governing body. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative from Dudley local authority.

- Inspectors scrutinised documents, including the school’s self-evaluation, the school’s development plan and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and art. 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.

Inspection team

Neil Warner, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Godden

Ofsted Inspector

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