

Inspection of William Brookes School

Farley Road, Much Wenlock, Shropshire TF13 6NB

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

The headteacher of this school is Stephen Richards. This school is part of the 3 to18 Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, David O'Toole, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gary Turner.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils say that they feel safe at school. Many pupils say that they are enjoying school much more now because the school has taken action to improve behaviour significantly. This means that fewer of their lessons are disrupted by others, so that they can learn more. Pupils would like to see these improvements continue so that they can always learn well in every lesson. Students in the school's sixth form benefit from a calm, purposeful and aspirational learning environment.

Pupils and students say that there is little high-level bullying and that it is usually dealt with effectively when it happens. However, they say that there is still too much unpleasant name-calling. They are consistently encouraged to report these incidents and say that the school has zero tolerance towards racist and homophobic language. Pupils are keen for their school to be seen as inclusive.

Although many pupils enjoy learning, a significant minority lack motivation and opt out of active participation. Too often, in these cases, teachers do not challenge them to improve their attitudes to learning so that they can achieve more.

Pupils and students benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Numerous clubs, and exciting residential visits, broaden their experiences and cultural understanding.

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

The school has recognised the need to take targeted action to improve behaviour and attendance as the first step towards ensuring that all pupils can achieve their full potential. They have made significant progress. They are aware that more needs to be done and have clear, appropriate plans in place to help them achieve their aims.

Leaders have ensured that a broad, well-sequenced and ambitious curriculum is in place for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, not all pupils are learning the intended curriculum, because too often it is not delivered well enough. Teachers have good subject knowledge, but not all have a well-developed repertoire of strategies and approaches to ensure that knowledge and skills are presented in ways that meet pupils' needs and offer appropriate challenge. In these cases, pupils can become disinterested and demotivated.

Currently, the purpose of assessment is not consistently understood. As a result, assessment is not always measuring the right things at the right time. This means that it is not effective in identifying gaps and misconceptions to ensure that teaching is matching need. The school has recognised this and is trialling new approaches, but these are in their infancy.

Pupils with SEND are identified quickly and appropriate plans for support are put in place. Where these are used well by teachers, pupils make good progress. However, this is not always the case.

In the sixth form, students, including those with SEND, are well served by high expectations and effective teaching. They are well supported to develop into independent learners who are confident to discuss and challenge new ideas and concepts.

Reading is a priority in the school. Those who need additional help to become fluent readers are rapidly diagnosed and usually receive appropriate support. For the small number who are still at an early stage of learning to read, the school is aware that greater expertise is needed to support with phonics knowledge development.

Routines to secure improvements in pupils' behaviour are increasingly well embedded and effective. Pupils appreciate this. Those who struggle to comply with the higher expectations now in place are supported. As a result, suspensions have reduced significantly, although the school is rightly working towards reducing these further.

Leaders have worked assiduously to secure better attendance for all. The focus is now on using all available information to pinpoint the causes for poor attendance where it continues, particularly in relation to vulnerable pupils.

The school has a carefully sequenced and age-appropriate approach to personal development. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their interests and talents, including numerous sporting activities. The school offers a wide range of visits and visitors that broaden pupils' experience and cultural knowledge. However, some aspects are less evolved than others. For instance, pupils can talk about respect and tolerance but are vague about aspects of equality and diversity. This means they do not have a deep enough understanding of fundamental British values.

Careers education is well-planned, beginning in Year 7 with visits to universities. Pupils and students value the information provided about qualifications, providers and career routes.

Leaders have worked hard to improve communication with parents, pupils and staff. Changes to how news and updates are communicated and increased consultation opportunities have improved some previously strained relationships. As a result, the school has greater support for the crucial improvements they have identified.

Leaders have worked with a range of partners to ensure that staff workload is carefully considered. Most staff feel that they are well supported by leaders and that their well-being is important.

Governors and trust leaders know the school well. They have a clear view of the improvements secured already and what the next steps should be. They work

effectively with school leaders, balancing support realistically. They ensure that all statutory duties are met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The quality of curriculum delivery is inconsistent. As a result, too many pupils are not learning the intended curriculum well enough. The school should ensure that all teachers meet the needs of all pupils, maintaining high expectations of achievement and engagement in learning.
- The purpose of different types of assessment is not consistently understood. This means that assessment is not always well matched to what should have been learned. Consequently, it is not identifying the gaps and misconceptions that are barriers to further learning. The school should ensure that assessment focuses on the right things at the right time to facilitate well-informed adjustments to curriculum design and delivery that meet the needs of all pupils.
- Too many pupils never catch up with the work they have missed through absence. This means they have additional barriers to learning. The school should ensure that there is clarity for staff, pupils and parents about the reasons for and expectations of the ways in which pupils will be supported to catch up.
- A minority of pupils struggle to meet the higher expectations of behaviour now in place. As a result, they continue to disrupt the education of others. The school should take suitable action to help engage these pupils with the school culture of kindness, respect, hard work and friendship so that they understand the value of their school and their contribution to it.
- Pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is not well developed. This means they are not as well prepared as they should be for life in modern Britain. The school should continue with their work to enhance this aspect of personal development.
- Despite significant improvement in attendance overall and a reduction in suspensions, there is more work to be done. Currently, particular groups remain over-represented in these areas. The school should continue the focus on identifying the reasons for this and ensure that this work leads to clear evidence-based plans being put in place and monitored for impact.

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	139769
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10322854
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
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	936
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	74
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gary Turner
Headteacher	Stephen Richards
Website	www.williambrookes.com
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 February 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school makes use of 11 unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 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 spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the SEND coordinator and other school senior leaders, members of the local governing board, including the chair, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors also spoke to teachers, support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed the whole-school reading curriculum.
- Inspectors made brief visits to a range of lessons in other subjects and to inclusion and SEND provisions around the school.
- Inspectors reviewed the personal development curriculum, spoke with the leader of this aspect of provision and visited form time sessions.
- Inspectors reviewed the work of the school to improve attendance and behaviour.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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

Mel Ford, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Niall Gallagher	Ofsted Inspector
Jacqueline Newsome	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Steer	Ofsted Inspector

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