

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Wilson Stuart School

Perry Common Road, Erdington, Birmingham, West Midlands B23 7AT

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 December 2024

Outcome

Wilson Stuart School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The executive headteacher of this school is Simon Harris. This school is part of Education Impact 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, Jon Harris and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Calvin Hussey.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils achieve their personal outcomes exceptionally well at Wilson Stuart School. Staff have the highest level of care and expectations for all pupils. As a result, pupils rise to these expectations and are ready for their next stages in education.

The school's curriculum focuses on getting pupils ready for life after Wilson Stuart (LAWS). Learning activities and wider experiences are carefully considered to support pupils' physical development, communication, interaction and independence, starting from the early years. This means that pupils' individual needs are exceptionally well understood and well met here.

Pupils demonstrate the school's 'circle' values of communication, independence, resilience, confidence, leadership and esteem. For example, pupils are given a range of leadership responsibilities, such as 'the kindness crew'. These pupils wear a high-visibility jacket and a distinctive yellow lanyard, which makes them stand out. They teach and show other pupils what kindness means and looks like. Pupils know about healthy relationships. This helps to keep them safe.

Relationships across the school are highly respectful. Positive relationships are demonstrated by all staff towards each other and towards pupils. Pupils are treated with

great dignity and respect at all times. Staff work closely with pupils, parents, carers and specialist external agencies in order to fulfil their roles with exceptional nurture and expertise.

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

The executive headteacher leads the school with high ambition and enthusiasm. This is reflected through the school's exciting and carefully considered curriculum. The school is expert in understanding the barriers to pupils' complex physical and medical needs. It has designed the 'get real' curriculum to 'give enough time for real' life experiences. Pupils build knowledge and skills over time across curriculum areas. This includes the children in the early years and students in the sixth form. Pupils' achievements include a range of academic and vocational qualifications and other accreditations. In addition, pupils are taught skills that equip them well for independent living. All this prepares pupils for adulthood exceptionally well.

The school's strong partnerships with parents and external agencies leads to ambitious, jointly agreed personal learning goals (PLG) for pupils. These accurately identify and meet the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of pupils. Staff support pupils' communication and interaction skilfully and consistently across school. Pupils know how to use a wide range of strategies to share their thoughts, feelings and opinions. The use of technology to enhance the curriculum is impressive. Pupils effectively use equipment, such as switches, eye gazes and joy sticks. Reading is highly prioritised for all pupils. Pupils who do not use verbal language also learn how to read and communicate using these electronic devices.

Pupils display highly positive behaviours and attitudes to their learning. They enjoy coming to school. Staff know their pupils very well. Staff will pick up on any small signs of change in pupils' behaviour and act on this quickly. Pupils across school know the school's daily routines very well, starting from the early years. Pupils' attendance is high priority for the school. The trust is aware of pupils' significant medical needs and associated absences. The school works very closely with families and agencies to support pupils' learning and safety when they are not in school. Leaders are doing all they reasonably can to achieve the highest possible attendance.

The school offers an impressive curriculum to supports pupils' personal development. Pupils' physical difficulties do not stand in the way of them accessing a wide range of exciting experiences. For example, pupils take part in adventure based residential visits. Pupils can access and enjoy canoeing and sailing. For many pupils, this will be their first time away from their families. Pupils' talents and interests are very well considered, such as in music and art. Pupils work with artists from the local community and curate their artwork at exhibition centres. Pupils experience a range of lunchtime clubs, including drama, hairdressing and card games. Consequently, the development of pupils' character across school is exceptional.

The school promotes careers information, education, advice and guidance very well. The complex needs of pupils are well considered. The school provides a range of opportunities

to support students' wishes about their future. This is particularly strong in the sixth form. Staff work closely with students and their families as they successfully move on to their next destinations.

The trust and the local governing body support the school well. However, leaders do not rest on their laurels. They make sure that standards and quality provision continue to improve and go from strength to strength. The trust's motto of 'better never ends' is demonstrated by the whole school community. The school offers its expertise and support to other schools across the city of Birmingham.

The school is held in high regard with the local authority and community. Parents and carers are rightly overwhelmingly positive about the impact Wilson Stuart School has on their family and children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in February 2015.

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	138281
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10343973
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	256
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	47
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Calvin Hussey
CEO of the trust	Jon Harris
Headteacher	Simon Harris
Website	www.wilsonstuart.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, there have been several changes to the leadership team. The executive headteacher was promoted from within the school in September 2020. The two heads of school were also promoted from within the school. The chief executive officer (CEO) was appointed in January 2022. Two associate headteachers are also new to post since April 2020.
- The school runs an additional mainstream early years provision on site.
- Wilson Stuart School is a specialist provider for pupils with complex physical and medical needs. This also includes profound and multiple learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

- 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 make use of two registered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 this into account in their evaluation.
- The inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the heads of school and other senior leaders, the chair of the trust, trustees, the chair of the local governing body, governors, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked with parents. Inspectors also talked informally with staff, including transport assistants and drivers.
- The lead inspector met with two local authority representatives.
- The lead inspector met with the CEO and other trust leaders to discuss school improvement.
- Inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning, looked at samples of pupils’ work and spoke with teachers.
- Inspectors looked at a sample of individual education plans for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils, formally and informally, about their learning and experiences at school.
- Inspectors observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and pupils’ behaviour.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments. Inspectors also looked at responses to Ofsted’s online survey for staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school’s self-evaluation, school policies, curriculum documents and SEND records.

Inspection team

Anna Vrahimi, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Rachel Perks

Ofsted Inspector

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