

Inspection of a good school: Wightwick Hall School

Tinacre Hill, Compton, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV6 8DA

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 March 2022

Outcome

Wightwick Hall School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being with their friends and the staff. They are proud of their school and enjoy showing visitors around the school buildings and picturesque grounds. Pupils feel safe and if they are worried about something, they know the staff will help them. The school is a close-knit community. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said, 'The environment is relaxed, pupils are treated with respect and teachers are caring.'

Leaders and staff want the very best for all pupils. They support pupils' academic, social and personal development well. Pupils are being well prepared for the next stage of their education and training. However, leaders are not complacent. With the support of governors and the multi-academy trust (MAT) they are continuing to develop and improve the school.

There is a calm atmosphere around the school. In lessons, pupils listen well and focus on their work. On the playground, pupils enjoy playing games, taking part in activities arranged by the physical education teacher, and simply spending time with their friends. Staff know the pupils well. They spot any changes in pupils' behaviour and step in quickly to provide additional support. Bullying is rare. Staff take any incidents very seriously and deal with them promptly.

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

Subject leaders have designed a curriculum that helps pupils to build their knowledge, skills and vocabulary. New learning builds on what pupils have learned before. Pupils study a wide range of subjects. They work towards a range of qualifications, including GCSEs, BTEC Firsts and functional skills. However, subject leaders have not had the opportunity to check how well their subject is being delivered by other staff across the school. This has been partially impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. This means they do not have a clear understanding of what is working well and what needs to improve in their subject beyond their own classroom.

Teachers, many of whom are subject specialists, have secure subject knowledge. In most instances, teachers explain new concepts in a clear and logical manner. This helps pupils to connect new learning to what they already know. Teachers check that pupils understand new learning and they adapt their teaching if required. Staff model subject-specific language well. Pupils are starting to use similar language when explaining their own understanding or answering questions. When required, staff use a range of alternative communication systems, including signing and symbols to support spoken language. Staff weave them into daily practice skilfully to help pupils communicate effectively.

Support staff are used effectively across the school. In class, they provide individual and group support, so pupils can engage fully in lessons. Teaching assistants also encourage pupils to make choices and work independently.

Pupils understand the importance of reading in and out of school. Teachers identify any pupils who are at the early stages of reading. However, staff are not accurately identifying the specific gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge. As a result, phonics teaching is not consistent, and gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge are not being filled as well as they could be.

Timetabled subjects support pupils' personal development effectively. Activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh award and the recent science fair complement this. There is a range of opportunities to develop pupils' enterprise and business skills. This includes running the school's coffee shop and charity shop. Pupils enjoy these responsibilities immensely. Cooking lessons support pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles. In cooking lessons, staff weave in activities to reinforce pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The range of trips, clubs and special events has been affected by COVID-19 restrictions. Pupils are keen for these activities to restart as soon as possible.

The careers programme starts in Year 7. An external agency becomes involved in the annual review process from Year 9 onwards. They provide tailored support for individual pupils. In other lessons, staff identify career choices that link to specific subjects. Pupils speak knowledgeably about the next step in their education and training. Opportunities for work experience have been significantly reduced by COVID-19 restrictions.

Staff enjoy working at the school and support each other well. Staff say that leaders are always prepared to listen and are mindful of their well-being. Staff value the safeguarding training they have received. However, very little curriculum training has been delivered for some time.

Despite challenges in leadership capacity, leaders have continued to maintain standards across the school. This year, improvements linked to behaviour and pastoral care are proving successful.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff are aware of the additional risks pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) may face. They know that some pupils cannot speak for themselves, so they keep a close eye on them. All staff, including those responsible for leading safeguarding, are well trained. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Training includes updates about identifying and reporting concerns, and specific training linked to sexual violence and harassment. Pupils have a sound understanding of how to keep themselves safe when working online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Subject leaders have not monitored their curriculum areas outside of their own classroom. Consequently, they do not have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in their subject across the school. This means they have not been able to arrange support or training for other members of staff if required. Senior leaders need to make sure that subject leaders have the opportunity to monitor their curriculum areas, so that they can lead the development of their respective subjects further.
- Teachers are not accurately identifying gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge. As a result, phonics teaching is not focused and gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge are not being filled in a coordinated manner. Leaders need to support staff, so they can accurately identify gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge and deliver appropriate teaching and interventions.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Wightwick Hall School, to be good in November 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	144209
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10212185
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	92
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	19
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Simon Kibble
Headteacher	Mandy Morris
Website	www.wightwickhall.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Wightwick Hall School is part of the Endeavour MAT. The school joined the trust in September 2017.
- All pupils on roll have an education, health and care plan. The school caters predominantly for pupils with a diagnosis of autism and pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school is made up of three departments: Bannatyne, Gates and Roddick. Roddick is the sixth form department.
- Several local authorities, including Staffordshire, Wolverhampton, and Dudley, place pupils in the school.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken this into account in the evaluation.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and the acting chief executive officer of the MAT. He met with the chair of the board of trustees and two members of the local governing body, including the chair.
- Inspectors held meetings with the safeguarding team and other leaders, including the behaviour leader.
- As part of the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, physical education, and communication and language. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school. Two separate groups of pupils accompanied inspectors on a walk around the school.
- Safeguarding documents were checked, including the checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children. The inspectors checked that staff implement safeguarding policies and procedures effectively across the school.
- An inspector talked to parents at the end of the day. Inspectors were unable to consider responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, due to the small number of responses. The lead inspector considered the free-text responses received during the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plan, school policies, curriculum documents and SEND records.
- The inspectors looked at information published on the school's website.

Inspection team

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Russell Hinton

Ofsted Inspector

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