

Wednesfield High Specialist Engineering Academy

Lichfield Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV11 3ES

Inspection dates

10–11 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders' work to safeguard pupils, including sixth form students is not effective. A significant number of pupils do not feel safe. Not enough is being done to tackle this.
- The records kept to vet adults working in the school are disorganised and ineffective.
- Pupils are boisterous and sometimes disorderly in corridors and around the school site.
- Leaders do not ensure that attendance is accurately recorded or followed up. The absence of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is too high and is getting worse.
- Pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, underachieve considerably across a range of subjects, particularly in mathematics.
- Leaders send pupils home for disciplinary reasons without following proper processes for exclusions.
- Governors have not ensured that extra funding for disadvantaged pupils or those pupils who enter the school with weak literacy and numeracy skills is effectively used.
- Pupils' poor behaviour in a significant number of lessons disrupts learning. Teachers do not use the school's behaviour management system consistently or effectively.
- Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to enable all pupils to make good progress from their starting points. Too often, the work given does not meet pupils' needs.
- Governors and the multi-academy trust have not provided the support that the school has needed since its conversion to an academy. They have not taken effective action to improve teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils in the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Students in the sixth form make progress in line with national averages. The vast majority of sixth form students go on to a range of appropriate destinations.
- Sixth-form students act as positive role models to younger pupils. They work independently and studiously around the school site.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Take urgent and effective action to ensure that arrangements for safeguarding pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form are effective by:
 - ensuring that all the necessary checks on staff and relevant adults, including identity checks, are completed and recorded on the single central record
 - making certain that leaders in the school monitor these systems closely and are confident of their robustness
 - clarifying the extent to which staff appointments have followed safer recruitment procedures fully, making proper checks where procedures have not been followed
 - making sure that the use of unlawful exclusions ceases immediately
 - ensuring that pupils' attendance is recorded accurately and is carefully monitored
 - addressing the boisterous, disorderly and occasionally dangerous behaviour around the school site so that it is stopped
 - making robust checks on the personal development, behaviour, welfare, attendance and progress of pupils who are in alternative provision.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the multi-academy trust and governing body respond to the long-standing weaknesses in leadership and teaching in the school, with swift and effective support
 - extra funding provided for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who enter the school with weak literacy and numeracy skills is effectively used
 - leaders develop their ability to accurately evaluate the impact of the many carefully considered changes recently made to leadership structures on teaching, learning and assessment
 - teachers follow the school's marking and feedback policy closely
 - leaders reduce the use of non-specialist and short term staff, and recruit and retain high quality teachers in all subject areas.
- Improve attendance in the sixth form and in Years 7 to 11 of all pupils, but particularly disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
 - carefully evaluating the impact of the current strategies used to improve the attendance of these groups to determine which are most effective

- using national comparisons for attendance when making decisions about whether attendance for groups is a cause for concern.
- Improve pupils' behaviour so that all pupils feel safe in school and poor behaviour does not disrupt lessons by:
 - developing consistency in teachers' approach to managing pupils' behaviour and providing effective support to teachers when behaviour problems occur
 - reducing bullying and pupils' fear that they will be bullied
 - reducing the number of pupils missing their lessons when they are in the on-site unit for short-term and long-term internal exclusions.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that outcomes accelerate for all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information to match tasks to the ability level and knowledge of their pupils, making sure that work is not too easy or too hard.

External reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how these aspects of leadership and management might be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The governors have not dealt effectively with the absence of the headteacher. This has contributed to uncertainties in leaders' roles and responsibilities over time. While other staff in the school have taken over responsibilities temporarily, full oversight of all of the school's operations has been weak. The multi-academy trust and local governing body have not ensured that the leadership team is well supported through this time.
- Leaders have not acted quickly enough to improve the progress of all pupils, particularly the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Improvements in assessment and tracking systems have only recently been implemented and there has not been time to properly evaluate their accuracy.
- Leaders have analysed school information on progress in terms of differences between the progress of different groups in the school and not national comparisons. This means that they have not had high enough aspirations for groups such as disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have only recently begun to use national comparators to evaluate the progress and attendance of pupils in the school.
- Leaders do not have a clear view of the extent of behaviour issues that were raised by pupils, staff and parents. This is because they have not accurately evaluated behaviour in the school.
- Leaders do not have a precise overview of which groups of pupils have poor attendance. Inaccuracies in records of attendance undermines the quality of the information that leaders have to analyse. Leaders do not, as a matter of course, monitor closely the attendance of vulnerable groups. Leaders have not fully evaluated the impact of strategies to improve attendance.
- While leaders have recently developed training for teachers, and teachers value this training, it is too early to see the impact on pupils' progress. Leaders do not consistently provide the evaluative feedback teachers need to effectively develop their teaching.
- Pupils who are educated in 'The Hub', an on-site unit for short- and long-term internal exclusion, do not have access to the same high-quality facilities or social opportunities available to pupils in the main school. The curriculum for these pupils is extremely narrow. While pupils in 'The Hub' this year are taking a slightly wider variety of subjects than in the past, pupils in this unit do not have access to a broad and balanced curriculum appropriate to their abilities and aspirations. This severely limits their progress.
- In a significant minority of lessons, inspectors observed that the school's marking policy was not being followed and teachers do not consistently use the school's behaviour sanctions and rewards system.
- Leaders are currently reviewing the curriculum and making changes. For example, some courses have been changed from vocational to academic courses and some pupils are beginning GCSEs in Year 9 instead of Year 10. The impact of these changes is not yet evident in better outcomes for pupils.
- While opportunities for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are

taught through the curriculum, leaders do not evaluate these elements well.

- The school provides a range of extra-curricular activities, mainly in sports and engineering. However, over half of pupils who responded to the online questionnaire said that they rarely or never take part in any of these activities.
- A significant minority of parents who responded to the online survey do not feel that the information provided to them by the school helps them to support their child's education. Parents raised issues about the clarity of school reports; the poor response they get when trying to contact the school about problems; and the quality of homework given.
- The headteacher and local governing body have recently completed a restructure of leadership roles in the school. While the new structure has clear lines of accountability, key staff have been appointed and middle leaders have a much clearer role, it is too early to see the impact of these changes.
- Inspectors recommend that newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.

Governance of the school

- The multi-academy trust and the local governing body have not ensured that the school is provided with the resources it needs to tackle key weaknesses in leadership and the progress of pupils. Support for weak areas of the curriculum such as mathematics has only very recently been put into place and has yet to demonstrate impact.
- The trust and the local governing body have not ensured that extra funding for disadvantaged pupils, or the funding for pupils who are behind in their literacy and numeracy when they arrive in Year 7, are used well enough to improve these pupils' progress. They do not clearly evaluate the impact of the use of these funds so they do not know what is working and what is not.
- Governors are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses, and scrutinise many different aspects of the school, asking pertinent questions of school leaders. Subject leaders report directly to governors so that governors can hold middle leaders to account. However, the impact of the local governing body has been undermined by the lack of effective provision from the trust.
- The very accurate and high-quality advice given by the school improvement partner (SIP) has been ineffective because the recommendations made by the SIP have not been implemented by the trust.
- The trust lacked, until very recently, the capacity and stable staffing to support the school effectively. A high turnover of staff in the trust has resulted in very weak support for the headteacher and governing body.
- Leaders, governors and new staff from the trust are much more positive about the support that the trust has very recently provided in mathematics and its plans for future support.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- A significant minority of pupils told inspectors that they do not feel safe in the school.

Parents told inspectors through responses to the parent questionnaires, and during discussions, that teachers and leaders do not deal with bullying effectively.

- Leaders and governors have not ensured that the records kept regarding the vetting of adults in the school are complete and accurate. Checks on the identity of adults coming into the school are not always held in one place and a variety of staff have responsibilities for different checks. This means that leaders do not have a secure overview of these systems.
- The files held on the recruitment of staff are not well ordered and do not consistently follow the school's own procedures. Audits of safeguarding that have been undertaken by the trust have not focused sufficiently on securing an effective culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Registers of attendance are not consistently accurate and leaders do not have secure systems in place to check on the welfare of pupils who have been absent for some time. Consequently, leaders cannot know for sure who is or is not in school. Checks on the attendance of pupils who have been excluded or who attend alternative provision are not carried out consistently and systems for these checks are not always understood by leaders. Inspectors discovered a case where a pupil had not attended alternative provision, and school leaders did not know.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate and this means that across a range of subjects including English and mathematics, pupils do not make enough progress.
- Teachers have a wide range of information about pupils but they do not use it well enough to provide tasks that match pupils' needs and abilities. When teachers offer more challenging tasks, especially to higher-ability pupils, these challenges are sometimes too hard or not well enough explained for pupils to learn effectively.
- Teaching for lower-attaining pupils is more likely to be disrupted by poor behaviour. In addition, the school's strategy of sometimes putting the most effective teachers with higher-ability classes means that the progress of lower-attaining pupils is often slow.
- In discussions with inspectors, pupils expressed concern that frequent changes to teachers and the use of non-subject specialists was slowing their progress. This was especially the case in humanities and mathematics, where the school has struggled to recruit teachers.
- Assessments and pupils' work show that there are pockets of more effective teaching. When this is the case, teachers have strong subject knowledge and have built positive relationships with their pupils. In these lessons, pupils respond to their teachers' requests readily, work productively together in small groups and try hard.
- Teaching in English has improved recently. Teachers have responded to the new requirements of study and focus keenly on new and sophisticated vocabulary to elicit from pupils thoughtful answers to questions about a range of texts. However, some pupils lack the language skills to write down their increasingly sophisticated ideas in a way which will allow them to communicate their thoughts effectively.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- A significant minority of pupils who responded to the online survey stated that they do not enjoy school and do not always feel safe. Nearly half stated that bullying is a problem and that the teachers do not deal with it well.
- Pupils' attitudes to their lessons vary. Too often, pupils do not work purposefully in lessons, and engage in off-task conversation which slows their progress. However, where relationships between pupils and teachers are strong, pupils often show respect for their teacher and one another. They enjoy opportunities to work collaboratively, responding maturely.
- Teachers regularly take opportunities presented by the curriculum to explore fundamental British values. For example, inspectors observed lively discussions and learning across a range of lessons on topics such as culture, democracy, religion and current affairs. Pupils often respond positively to these opportunities, listening intently to the opinions of others.
- The vast majority of pupils who responded to the online questionnaire said that the school encourages them to respect people from other backgrounds and treat everyone equally.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Teachers told inspectors that they have concerns about behaviour in lessons, and the leadership team's lack of action to improve behaviour until very recently. In a significant minority of lessons inspectors observed pupils being silly and disruptive, pushing each other, not settling down to work and chatting instead of completing tasks. A third of pupils who responded to the online questionnaire said that behaviour in lessons was never, or almost never, good. Pupils' behaviour around the school site at lunch and breaktimes is boisterous and sometimes dangerous. For example, inspectors observed frequent shouting, play-fighting and swearing, and pupils running in corridors. Pupils told inspectors that this behaviour is typical. Just under half of the pupils who responded to the online questionnaire had concerns about behaviour around the school site.
- While published figures for fixed-term and permanent exclusions are low, inspectors found that the school regularly excludes pupils and does not record them as having been excluded. This means that the published data does not accurately reflect the level of exclusions in the school.
- Teachers' use of the school's system for poor behaviour and rewards is inconsistent. It does not, therefore, have a consistently positive impact on the behaviour of pupils.
- The school uses 'The Hub' to educate those pupils who are not allowed into lessons. Some pupils are excluded from lessons on a short-term basis and some pupils remain in this unit on a permanent basis until the end of Year 11. The use of this unit is increasing in response to behaviour issues in the school but is having no discernible impact on improving behaviour.

- Pupils' absence is above the national average. Absence and persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is very high and is not improving.
- The school does not undertake thorough checks on the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils who are in alternative provision.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils are underachieving considerably, particularly at key stage 4. Progress in 2016 was in the bottom 10% of schools nationally for low, middle and high prior attainment groups. The school's own assessment information shows that across a range of subjects, many pupils in Year 11 are not making the progress that could be expected of them, given their starting points. This is particularly the case for pupils with low prior attainment.
- Leaders do not use the extra funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils' progress is particularly poor. Across all prior attainment groups, disadvantaged pupils underachieve considerably when compared with other pupils nationally who have similar starting points. This difference is not diminishing rapidly enough for disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils currently in the school.
- In 2016, across a range of subjects, the most able pupils' attainment and progress was below that of those nationally with similar starting points.
- In 2016, progress for pupils with low and middle prior attainment in separate sciences were broadly in line with national averages. However, many of the most able pupils did not make enough progress and this continues to be the case. This is because teachers of science do not ensure that they are appropriately challenged.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not progress well enough given their starting points. The poor quality of teaching in some lessons, especially for those who have low prior attainment or special educational needs and/or disabilities, means that current pupils are making similarly poor progress.
- The school identifies weak literacy skills, especially low reading ages, as a key barrier to the success of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. While leaders have put in place interventions to improve literacy, initial literacy assessments have not been completed for all pupils and there is little evidence of improved reading ages yet. The process of assessing and tracking these pupils is at an embryonic stage.
- The progress and attainment for pupils who are educated full time in 'The Hub' are of concern. These pupils do not make the progress that could be expected of them given their starting points. The environment of 'The Hub' does not contribute to strong outcomes for these pupils because the building conspicuously lacks the high quality of facilities found across the rest of the school.
- In English, stronger teaching is leading to better progress for current cohorts of the most able and pupils in the middle prior ability group. However, progress for those with low prior attainment in English remains poor. In mathematics, improved teaching for

the most able means that current cohorts of most able pupils are making better progress than in the past.

- While information on the sustained destinations of pupils is not available for 2016, the school's own analysis suggests that the vast majority of pupils go on to a range of appropriate destinations when they leave the school. The percentage of pupils who are not in education, employment or training when they leave the school is low.

16 to 19 study programmes

Inadequate

- The effectiveness of the sixth form is inadequate because leaders have not ensured that safeguarding is effective.
- School leaders agree that attendance in the sixth form is too low. Leaders are aware of this and have put into place a range of actions which are beginning to have an impact.
- Students entering the sixth form who have not secured a grade C in English and/or mathematics are all placed on appropriate courses. These include both GCSEs and stepping stone qualifications. While some students are successful on these courses, many are not.
- Outcomes for post-16 students in 2016, for both academic and vocational study programmes, were positive. Students performed in line with national averages overall. The school's own information suggests that current cohorts of students are likely to make even better progress in 2017 on both academic and vocational study programmes.
- Retention in the sixth form is high, and the vast majority of pupils complete their study programmes.
- The leadership of the sixth form is effective. Leaders have an in-depth understanding of attainment and progress. Where subjects have underperformed, swift action has been taken to improve students' outcomes. For example, leaders have arranged for some departments to check their assessments across different schools to maintain their accuracy and have brought in teachers from other schools to help improve standards. Standards in weaker subjects are improving as a consequence of this support.
- Teaching in the sixth form is generally stronger than in the main school. In lessons, students work collaboratively and have good attitudes to their studies. Students are positive about their lessons and value the range of opportunities that are available to them, both in lessons and beyond the curriculum.
- The behaviour of students around the school site is exemplary. They use their study time studiously, work in the school in a mature way and seek to act as positive role models to younger pupils.
- Leaders provide a range of opportunities for students to explore their next steps in education or employment. This includes visits to career fairs, university visits, online career tools and mock interviews. Consequently, the school's own tracking information shows that the vast majority of students leaving the sixth form go on to suitable destinations, including higher education, apprenticeships and employment. The number of students not going on to a suitable destination is currently very small and has fallen over the past two years.

- Leaders help all students in the sixth form to arrange work experience appropriate to their aspirations. Students gain a wide range of work-related skills in the weekly 'Enterprise Afternoons', where they are involved in fundraising, and project-based work.
- Students are very positive about life in the sixth form. They told inspectors that they value highly the additional activities provided for them. These activities include charity events, assemblies, specific support to develop study skills, current affairs debates and opportunities to promote physical and mental health and personal safety. This programme of activities is well matched to the students' needs that leaders in the sixth form have identified.

School details

Unique reference number	141245
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10025158

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	884
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Chalk
Headteacher	Claire Gilbert
Telephone number	01902 558222
Website	www.wednesfieldhigh.co.uk
Email address	c.gilbert@whschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Information about this school

- Wednesfield High Specialist Engineering Academy is a medium-sized school with a sixth form.
- The headteacher is currently on long-term absence. The deputy headteacher is presently acting as headteacher.
- The school became an academy in January 2015 and is a member of the Education Central Multi-Academy Trust.
- The proportions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are above the national average.

- Some pupils are educated full time in 'The Hub', which is an on-site unit for internal exclusions.
- A small number of pupils are educated by an alternative provider, the Orchard Centre.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons and observed some lessons with senior leaders. They observed pupils' behaviour around the school at other times.
- Inspectors evaluated the work in pupils' books and in lessons across a range of subjects and year groups.
- Inspectors held meetings with parents; governors; a representative of the multi-academy trust; the school improvement partner; senior and middle leaders; and teachers, including those who are newly qualified and in training.
- The views of parents were considered through 42 responses to Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered 67 responses to a staff questionnaire carried out during the inspection.
- Pupils met formally with inspectors through three separate focus groups and inspectors spoke informally with a number of pupils in lessons and around the school. They also considered responses to the online Pupil View questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, current assessment systems and data, and destinations information. School policies were also reviewed, as was the school's own information about attendance, behaviour and teaching.
- Records relating to the safer recruitment of staff were also evaluated.

Inspection team

Dan Owen, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Elizabeth Ellis-Martin	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Mallett	Ofsted Inspector

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