

Wednesfield High Specialist Engineering Academy

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

Inspection dates

4–5 December 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 4 have been weak in most subjects over recent years. This has particularly been the case for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Not enough teaching is good. Some teachers do not expect enough from pupils, especially the most able. They do not use questioning well and they do not check that pupils understand what they are studying in lessons.
- Some middle leaders have an over-generous view of the quality of teaching in their subjects. They lack the expertise to lead the improvement of teaching in their areas.
- The key stage 3 curriculum, provided by leaders and governors, does not give pupils sufficient time to develop their knowledge in languages or the arts.
- Sixth-form students' outcomes on A-level courses have been weak in recent years. Some students have taken inappropriate courses, given their academic ability.
- There is too much low-level disruption of lessons. A minority of teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour as well as they should. Senior leaders' checks on low-level disruption are not as effective as their checks on teaching and progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and senior leaders have overseen considerable improvements to the school over the past 18 months. Behaviour, teaching and pupils' progress have all improved greatly during that time. The school now provides an acceptable standard of education.
- Pupils feel safe and are well cared for by staff. The school is a respectful and tolerant multi-cultural community.
- Careers education is a strength of the school. Consequently, almost all pupils and students move to education, employment or training when they leave Year 11 or Year 13.
- Many aspects of the sixth form are very effective. Students have well-planned, individualised study programmes. They develop good employability skills as a result.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so that pupils make good progress by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - have high expectations of the quality and quantity of work pupils complete in lessons
 - plan activities that provide sufficient challenge for the most able pupils
 - use questioning well to deepen pupils' understanding of their work
 - check on pupils' understanding in lessons and provide extra help or challenge when appropriate.
- Improve behaviour, by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently address low-level disruption in lessons using the school's established procedures
 - all teachers have the confidence to tackle more challenging behaviour when it occurs.
- Improve the impact of leadership, by ensuring that:
 - all middle leaders have the skills and expertise to accurately evaluate the quality of teaching in their areas and to lead its improvement
 - senior leaders' monitoring of low-level disruption in lessons is as effective as their checks on pupils' learning and progress
 - the key stage 3 curriculum provides pupils with sufficient time to develop their knowledge in languages and the arts.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- This is an improving school. It is now providing an acceptable standard of education and is unrecognisable from the dysfunctional school that was inspected in January 2017. The headteacher, well supported by effective senior leaders, has addressed weaknesses thoughtfully, methodically and successfully. Teaching, behaviour and pupils' progress have all improved considerably since the previous inspection. However, there remains plenty of room for further improvement in each of these areas before the school is providing a good standard of education for its pupils.
- Leaders and governors know the school well and their evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is broadly accurate. Although senior leaders have an accurate view about the quality of teaching, some middle leaders have a slightly over-generous view. They sometimes focus too much on what the teacher is doing in a lesson, without considering fully the impact this has on how pupils are learning, and so improvement points tend to be about issues of compliance rather than actions that would improve pupils' learning. Consequently, some middle leaders are not leading the improvement of teaching in their subjects as effectively as they might.
- Leaders at all levels use assessment information well. They have invested considerable time and energy in improving the reliability of teachers' assessments. Departments now regularly moderate assessments and most make use of partner schools to validate their views of pupils' attainment. Leaders now use this more reliable assessment information well to identify pupils who are falling behind. They then ensure that teachers provide extra support when appropriate. Leaders carefully check that intervention strategies are having the desired effect. They discard or change strategies if they are not having sufficient impact.
- Pastoral leadership ensures that pupils are safe and well cared for. It has been successful in improving behaviour, as many staff and pupils were keen to tell inspectors. Consequently, the school is now calm and orderly and incidents of serious disruption are increasingly rare. However, senior leaders' checks on low-level disruption in lessons are not as effective as the checks they make in other areas, such as teaching and pupils' progress. As a result, leaders underestimate the extent of low-level disruption in lessons and their actions to reduce it are not as effective as they ought to be.
- The curriculum has weaknesses. These are, at least in part, due to historic difficulties the school has had in recruiting specialist teachers in some subjects. Until recently, there was no modern foreign language teaching in the school. Most pupils in key stage 3 now study French. However, almost a quarter of pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not. Those who do study French have only one hour's teaching each week. Consequently, pupils are not developing a secure knowledge of the language. Similarly, pupils study music, drama and dance for one hour each week for only one third of each year in key stage 3. This is insufficient time to develop their knowledge of these subjects.
- The key stage 4 curriculum is stronger and provides a wide and appropriate range of subjects that interest and engage pupils. In Years 9 to 11, pupils study all subjects for

sufficient time to develop secure knowledge and skills. Improving teaching in key stage 4 is now seeing the curriculum beginning to contribute well to pupils' academic progress.

- A well-planned and effective daily tutor and assembly programme runs in each year group. It helps pupils to learn how to stay safe and prepare for their future studies and careers. It ensures that pupils have a good understanding of the British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Staff morale is good. Several members of staff told inspectors that they believe the school to be better placed now than at any time in many years. They appreciate the strong leadership and effective support provided by the headteacher and senior leaders. There is also an improving perception of the school among parents and carers. The number of parents choosing to send their children to the school has risen sharply this year.
- Provision for pupils with SEND is improving strongly from what was a very low base fewer than 12 months ago. This area is well led. Leaders have an accurate record of pupils with SEND. They provide teachers with helpful information, so that they can amend their teaching to meet these pupils' needs. They ensure that pupils who need extra help receive it both in class and at other times. Consequently, these pupils' progress is improving strongly and the school is now making good use of the additional funding it receives to meet their needs.
- Leaders are making good use of the pupil premium to support disadvantaged pupils. These pupils are benefiting from better teaching. Additionally, leaders now target extra help well at those pupils who need to catch up. They are carefully checking that extra support is effective. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils are making much better progress than was previously the case. In lower year groups, their attainment and progress are very similar to those of other pupils in school and are therefore good.
- The school's sponsor, the University of Wolverhampton Multi-Academy Trust (UWMAT), provides effective support and challenge to leaders. It has become increasingly responsive to the school's needs since the last inspection. It now quickly sources additional support as soon as leaders have identified a need. UWMAT has either directly provided or externally sourced effective support for the school in many areas, including safeguarding, SEND provision, subject leadership, data use and improving the reliability of assessment information.

Governance of the school

- Governance has improved considerably since the school's previous inspection and is now effective. The UWMAT board of trustees provides effective scrutiny of the school's performance through UWMAT's chief executive officer (CEO). It also secures timely support for leaders, largely through its executive headteacher.
- The school's interim advisory board (IAB) provides an additional layer of support and challenge to the headteacher and other leaders about their day-to-day work. This body has grown in its effectiveness in recent months. It has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and sufficient expertise to carry out its delegated

roles.

- Together, the UWMAT board of trustees, its CEO, its executive headteacher and the school's IAB ensure that all statutory duties are carried out diligently. For example, the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements is checked regularly and governors provide careful scrutiny of the spending of additional funding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A strong culture of keeping pupils safe is now evident across the school. The members of an effective safeguarding team work well together to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive appropriate support when they need it. Staff are well trained and vigilant to the signs that pupils might need extra help. They readily pass on to leaders any concerns they have about pupils. Leaders act on this information speedily, involving outside agencies appropriately. Leaders are tenacious in checking that pupils are safe. They challenge other agencies when they are unhappy with the actions that have been taken to keep pupils safe.
- All safeguarding policies and procedures are clear and fit for purpose. Records relating to child protection and vulnerable pupils are detailed, well organised and securely stored.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although teaching has improved considerably since the school's previous inspection in December 2017, its quality remains variable. While there is some good practice in many subjects, there is also much that is less than good.
- Teachers' planning has improved greatly in the last 18 months and activities are now mostly well matched to pupils' abilities. However, because teachers do not always check pupils' understanding of their work, they are sometimes not aware that the most able pupils are finding it too easy or have completed it. Consequently, the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to achieve as well as they could.
- Some teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of pupils. They are too ready to accept insufficient, incomplete or shoddy work from pupils rather than insisting on high standards. Consequently, some pupils do not work hard enough in class and learn less than they could.
- The quality of teachers' use of questioning varies greatly across the school. Where it is weak, teachers accept brief or cursory responses from pupils, often then filling in the details themselves. As a result, pupils do not have to think hard and they do not develop a sufficiently deep understanding of their work. However, inspectors observed several examples of highly effective questioning. Here, teachers drew detailed answers from pupils and helped them to think deeply as they refined their responses.
- The teaching of pupils with SEND has improved considerably in recent months and it continues to do so. Leaders now provide teachers with detailed information about pupils with SEND. How well teachers use this information to inform their teaching

varies, but this is improving. These pupils now receive much improved support in lessons from teaching assistants. They also receive increasingly effective extra help at other times. Consequently, these pupils are now making similar progress to other pupils in the school.

- Most teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use well to explain ideas. Relationships are strong across most of the school. Pupils mostly like and trust their teachers. They told inspectors that teaching has improved considerably. They are particularly appreciative that they now have permanent teachers in almost all subjects and are no longer taught by a succession of short-term, temporary teachers.
- Leaders have successfully improved teaching in the subjects where it has been weakest. The teaching of mathematics has improved considerably and is effective across the department now. The department is well led. Mathematics teachers work closely together to plan lessons and share resources. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is successfully addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge. In key stage 3, pupils are now making good progress. Although the improvement is less marked than in mathematics, better teaching is now evident in a range of other subjects, including science, English and history.
- Teaching in the sixth form is stronger than in key stages 3 and 4. The weaknesses apparent in the main school are far less evident in the sixth form. Students benefit from high-quality support, often in small teaching groups.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for in school. Inspectors spoke with many pupils during the inspection and almost all said that they feel safe in school. They told inspectors that bullying is very rare. All expressed confidence in the school's staff to deal with bullying or other problems that occur. Several pupils told inspectors how much they value the support provided to them by pastoral and safeguarding staff.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe from a wide range of potential dangers. A very well-organised daily tutorial and assembly programme teaches pupils how to protect themselves, for example when using the internet or social media. Pupils have learned about the potential dangers from people with radical views and from gang activity.
- Pupils are generally polite and courteous to each other and to adults. They accept others for who they are and value the differences between others and themselves. For example, incidents of racism or homophobia are very rare. Consequently, the school is a harmonious and diverse community.
- Careers education is a particular strength of the school. It is well led and pupils receive good advice and guidance through weekly lessons and additional events, such as visits from employers and an annual careers fair. Leaders constantly review provision and compare it with good practice benchmarks. They are currently seeking to improve the

contribution that subjects make to careers education. Because of this high-quality provision, almost all pupils and students who leave the school at the end of Year 11 or Year 13 progress to education, employment or training. This has been the case even when, because of weak teaching, pupils have achieved poorer examination results than they ought. High-quality careers education has served to reduce the impact that underachievement has had on the school's recent key stage 4 leavers.

- Pupils who attend off-site, alternative provision placements are very well supported by staff. Leaders plan their provision carefully and then regularly check that it is proving successful. They communicate regularly with staff at the placement to check on pupils' attendance, welfare, behaviour and progress. They take action at the first sign of a problem. Consequently, these pupils make good progress from their starting points and their placements ensure that they remain in education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Although behaviour has improved considerably over the last 18 months, too many lessons are still disrupted by pupils chatting or not listening to their teacher. Some teachers are too accepting of this low-level disruption and do challenge it using the school's behaviour policy and procedures.
- At times, some teachers are reluctant to challenge pupils' poor behaviour because they are nervous of how the pupils might react. For example, inspectors observed pupils talking across their teacher who was explaining something to the class. Similarly, inspectors observed pupils wandering around a classroom while the teacher was speaking. In both cases, the pupils' behaviour went unchallenged.
- Behaviour has improved because leaders have raised expectations of pupils' behaviour and staff are using the school's procedures more consistently. Higher expectations have resulted in an increased use of fixed-term exclusions, the use of which has risen sharply. However, a decreasing number of pupils are excluded more than once. This suggests that they learn their lesson and do not repeat the inappropriate behaviour. Inspectors are satisfied that leaders use exclusion appropriately and that this is contributing to improving behaviour in the school.
- The great majority of pupils behave well in lessons and are keen to do well. They appreciate leaders' work to improve behaviour and look forward to seeing it improve further. At breaktime, lunchtime and between lessons, the school is generally calm and orderly. Other than a little boisterousness, pupils move around the school sensibly.
- Attendance is similar to the national average for secondary schools. Most pupils enjoy school, and are happy and therefore attend very regularly. A small number of pupils do not attend regularly and the school's work to support these pupils and their parents is well organised, thorough and effective.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils have made weak progress by the end of Year 11 in most subjects over recent years. Provisional GCSE results for 2018 suggest continuing weak progress, but with some areas where improvement is evident. For example, boys' progress is stronger, disadvantaged pupils' progress has improved and mathematics outcomes are better. Despite the Year 11 cohort in 2018 being an academically weaker year group, they achieved standards of attainment broadly similar to those achieved in 2017.
- Inspection evidence, including observations of teaching, evaluation of work in pupils' books, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of the school's assessment information, confirms that current pupils are making better progress than previous cohorts. Older pupils still have gaps in their knowledge because of previous inadequate teaching, but they are no longer underachieving significantly. Younger pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not have gaps in their knowledge. They are now making reasonable progress from their starting points and increasing numbers are making good progress.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has been poor in recent years, but this group of pupils are now making much better progress. Differences between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally remain in Years 10 and 11, but these are diminishing. In Years 7 and 8, disadvantaged pupils are making similar progress to other pupils in the school. Consequently, differences between their attainment and that of others nationally are closing rapidly.
- Pupils with SEND have made very weak progress over recent years and this has continued to be reflected in provisional GCSE results for 2018, as leaders had anticipated. New leadership of, and provision for, pupils with SEND, in place for just two terms, have seen the progress of these pupils improve considerably. Better teaching and effective extra help are seeing these pupils' progress improve rapidly in almost all subjects.
- Pupils make good progress in some subjects, including health and social care, business studies and sport. Their progress is improving strongly in mathematics and also in English and science. Progress remains weak in a small number of subjects.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for students who take A-level courses have been weak for the last two years. This is because, in the past, students were recruited to courses that were inappropriate, given their prior attainment in GCSE examinations. Some of these students did not achieve well as a result. Over the same period, outcomes for students taking vocational courses were better and their progress was in line with that of students nationally with similar starting points.
- Much improved recruitment practice with higher entry standards for some academic subjects means that students currently in the sixth form are studying appropriate courses. They are making better progress as a result. The sixth form provides a good balance of academic and vocational courses and many students study a combination of the two.

- The sixth form is well led. Students' study programmes are exceedingly well planned. Starting with each student's career aspirations, leaders construct a study programme that includes appropriate academic and/or vocational subjects and several non-qualification elements designed to develop students' confidence and employability skills. Leaders regularly check students' progress on their courses. They consider assessment information, look at work and talk with students. Should a student begin to fall behind with their work, leaders ensure that extra support is provided to help them catch up.
- All students undertake work experience linked to their career aim within their study programme. Work experience is carefully planned. At the time of the inspection, in early December, several students already knew the details of their placement, to be undertaken in the following July. Work experience contributes well to developing students' employability skills.
- In common with the main school, a highly effective careers education programme prepares students well for their next steps when they leave the sixth form. Consequently, students have a clear plan in mind from the time they start the sixth form. Approximately 70% of students go to university when they leave the school. Leaders provide good support for them as they make their applications. Although fewer students take up apprenticeships, they are given the same effective support and guidance. Of those students who completed Year 13 in 2018, almost all moved on to higher education, an apprenticeship or employment.
- Students enjoy and value their sixth form. Attendance is similar to that in the main school. Almost all students who join the sixth form in Year 12 complete their courses. A small number do not. They leave to take up opportunities that occur during, or at the end of, Year 12, such as apprenticeships.
- Teaching is effective in the sixth form. It is generally stronger than in key stages 3 and 4. Students' behaviour is exemplary. They have excellent attitudes to learning and they provide positive role models for younger pupils.
- All students who join the sixth form without having secured a grade 4 in English and/or mathematics continue to study these subjects. The great majority are successful in improving their GCSE grade, with success rates higher than those seen nationally.
- Students undertake a wide range of non-qualification activities, all with the explicit aim of improving their employability skills. For example, all students volunteer in key stages 3 and 4, where they support pupils in lessons. All complete additional volunteering activities, such as sports coaching. All complete enrichment activities, including working on the school magazine, studying for the driving theory test or serving on the sixth-form committee. Students in Year 13 mentor those in Year 12.

School details

Unique reference number	141245
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10045284

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
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	835
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	77
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Jacquelyn Dunne
Headteacher	Clive Jones
Telephone number	01902 558222
Website	www.wednesfieldacademy.co.uk
Email address	wednesfieldhigh@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 January 2017

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized school.
- It is an academy sponsored by UWMAT.
- According to its scheme of delegation, UWMAT's board of trustees has responsibility for the school's ethos, values and strategic direction and for holding the headteacher to account for the school's performance. The school's IAB has responsibility for day-to-day matters, including standards, teaching, the curriculum and providing support and challenge to leaders.

- It has an above-average proportion of disadvantaged pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is approximately average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is broadly average.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision placements at Lawnswood Campus.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons.
- Inspectors talked to many pupils and students about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. They observed them at breaktimes, lunchtimes and as they moved around the school.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including information relating to governance, attendance, behaviour, exclusions, safeguarding, pupils' and students' progress, and the checks made on the quality of teaching.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers.
- Inspectors met with the UWMAT CEO and the chair of the IAB. A separate meeting was held with four members of the IAB.
- The lead inspector spoke with a parent over the telephone.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tim Bassett	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Spoor	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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