

South Wolverhampton and Bilston Academy

Dudley Street, Bilston, West Midlands WV14 0LN

Inspection dates

24–25 January 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' current progress in key stage 3 and 4 in English, mathematics, science and some other subjects is not consistently strong because the quality of teaching is variable.
- Standards in modern foreign languages remain low.
- The most able pupils, including those who were disadvantaged, left Year 11 in 2016 having made weak progress. At key stage 4, too few of the most able are on track to fulfil their potential.
- The work set for the most able pupils is often insufficiently challenging, so that they do not make the progress they should.
- Teachers' questioning often fails to establish how well pupils understand their work. Teachers seldom encourage pupils to think really hard and deepen their understanding.
- Teaching rarely requires pupils to reason and explain how to apply their mathematical knowledge to new situations.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors set high expectations for pupils and for staff. The quality of teaching is improving, and rising rapidly in humanities.
- Leaders have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and have in general tackled the issues identified at the last inspection effectively.
- Leaders have improved the curriculum, so that pupils are able to study a greater number of demanding subjects. They promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Provision for students on 16 to 19 study programmes is good, and many make strong progress.
- The school's effective safeguarding procedures and vigilant staff ensure that pupils are safe. Pupils feel secure, and treat each other and adults with respect.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently positive. They behave well in lessons and during social times.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in key stages 3 and 4 by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently set work for the most able pupils which provides an appropriately high level of challenge
 - making sure that teachers probe and deepen pupils' understanding
 - providing pupils with frequent opportunities to develop their abilities to reason mathematically.
- Raise standards of achievement in modern foreign languages by ensuring that work set for pupils is based firmly on what they already understand, and enables them to make consistently strong progress.
- Further improve leadership and management by ensuring that all teachers have a full understanding of strategies to stretch the most able pupils, and checking that teachers implement them effectively.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- In the relatively short period since the last inspection, the principal and other senior leaders have increased expectations for pupils, successfully introducing a new behaviour policy. They have continued to set high standards for staff. Although the school has not found it easy to recruit high-quality teachers, leaders have made some strong appointments this academic year. As a result, the quality of teaching is now rising, especially in the sixth form and in some subjects where achievement has been low.
- Leaders have refined the checks they make on pupils' progress, so that they provide a clearer focus on the effectiveness of teaching, and a regular opportunity for pupils to address any weaknesses highlighted in their assessments. Leaders use the results to identify those pupils at risk of falling behind, and at key stage 3 to make adjustments to a pupil's academic pathway, which defines the pace at which they learn.
- Subject and other leaders entirely share the principal's ambition and direction for the school. They make a good contribution to monitoring pupils' progress, and holding teachers to account. Leaders check teachers' judgements periodically against those made by teachers in other schools.
- The school has developed well the breadth and rigour of the curriculum at all key stages. At key stage 3, which comprises Years 7 and 8, courses have been redesigned to prepare pupils effectively for key stage 4. Pupils who arrive with weaker skills benefit from the effective expenditure of the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, making good progress with their reading and arithmetical skills. At key stage 4, the school has retained successful work-related courses, while more pupils are following academic options leading to the English Baccalaureate.
- Leaders have redesigned the school day in part to promote extra-curricular activities. Opportunities include sport, creative activities and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, for which take-up is particularly strong.
- Tutor time and whole days devoted to particular topics develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding most effectively. Each week, discussion on 'Worldwide Wednesday' ensures that pupils develop an understanding of international issues. 'Learning for Life' lessons encourage pupils to respect different cultures and traditions, and prepare them effectively for taking an active part in British society. Pupils have good opportunities to express their views on school issues.
- Pupils receive effective careers guidance, and strong encouragement to pursue demanding occupations and seek places on challenging courses in further or higher education. Pupils benefit from a taster period at the start of key stage 4 which helps to ensure they follow courses for which they are well suited.
- The school has spent the pupil premium effectively. The progress of disadvantaged pupils, while still uneven, is generally improving, especially at key stage 3. Leaders have successfully judged which strategies, such as the recruitment of academic mentors, have been successful, and adapted the provision accordingly.
- Staff, including those teachers at an early stage of their careers, say that the training they receive is very helpful in developing their skills. Leaders link training effectively to the management of individual teachers' performance. However, the impact of training

has proved inconsistent. Inspectors witnessed staff implementing some recent initiatives – such as those related to behaviour and to literacy – well, but teachers' understanding of how to set work for the most able pupils remains incomplete.

- Leaders' views of the teaching observed during the inspection were perceptive and accorded with those of the inspectors. Their evaluations of the school's strengths and weaknesses showed a secure identification of what needs to be done, but has not paid sufficient regard to the performance of particular groups of pupils and achievement in key subjects. Leaders' plans for improvement are specific, thorough and have clear measures by which leaders and governors can judge progress.
- Leaders make effective checks on the attendance, behaviour and progress of pupils who receive alternative provision, responding appropriately to any concerns they identify.
- The academy trust has supported the school well. In particular, it has helped to advise school leaders about where to find best practice and specialist support.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the school, and know how it compares with other schools nationally. They are well trained, for example in the government's strategy to prevent the radicalisation of young people. They see where further enhancements to the school can be made, and are determined to improve the school further. Governors have a very good grasp of the local community, and the ways in which the school can benefit the local area.
- Governors ensure that they play a full part in keeping pupils safe. They check that the right procedures are used when new staff are appointed, and that leaders make the necessary checks on those who come into contact with children. Governors have taken important steps to enhance the physical security of the site. They are well informed about the risks posed to pupils locally, and have worked with school leaders to ensure that these are addressed.
- Governors have a good understanding of how leaders spend additional money such as the pupil premium provided to support particular groups of pupils. They hold them to account for the impact of this expenditure on the school's agreed priorities. Governors work effectively with the academy trust in the management of the principal's performance. They give due consideration to the principal's recommendations on the pay and performance of other staff.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's arrangements meet all statutory requirements, and all policies and procedures are up to date. The principal has ensured that staff are familiar with child protection guidance, and provides regular updates on any changes to legislation or pupils' circumstances. All staff are alert to any potential risks.
- Inspectors found that staff keep meticulous records, work well with parents and react quickly to help pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. When the need arises, they make contact with the other agencies which protect young people, and will not rest until they know that the pupil's needs are met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it remains too variable, and has not ensured that pupils make consistently good progress across a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. To an extent, difficulties in recruiting good teachers to some departments have slowed the rate of improvement, but teaching is now improving more rapidly. Some teaching in modern foreign languages remains weak.
- Teachers typically question pupils to establish the right answer, but rarely ensure that they gain a proper understanding of the extent to which pupils have grasped the underlying ideas. As a result, teachers commonly fail to address misconceptions or adjust the learning for groups of pupils to take account of their progress. Teachers often concentrate solely on the main point of the lesson, and do not encourage pupils, especially the most able, to extend their thinking and deepen their understanding.
- Teachers fully understand the importance of setting work for the most able pupils which provides them with the challenge to sustain their interest and to ensure that they make strong progress. However, their effectiveness in doing so is too inconsistent. Sometimes the tasks set for the most able lack additional complexity. Sometimes the most able pupils have to complete a great deal of elementary work before starting the work which presents an appropriate level of challenge.
- Teaching in mathematics ensures that pupils practise skills and learn how to perform calculations of varying levels of difficulty. Teachers pay attention to the practical application of mathematics, and in key stage 4 to examination techniques. However, teaching rarely requires pupils to consider the different ways to approach a particular problem, or to explain their reasoning to others.
- Across all areas of the curriculum, teachers are taking increasingly effective steps to develop pupils' writing. They routinely identify key words, and for the most part ensure that pupils pay due attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers regularly encourage pupils to answer in full sentences. Pupils read regularly in school, and leaders report that the adoption of a commercial reading scheme has significantly increased the reading of fiction.
- In all the learning observed during the inspection, the relationships between staff and pupils were strong and contributed to a calm, constructive working atmosphere. Teachers showed consistently good subject knowledge. Homework makes an effective contribution to learning, and the school makes good provision for those who lack facilities at home.
- During the inspection, pupils were almost always willing to apply themselves, and showed a general desire to improve their work. At times, especially in key stage 3 and the sixth form, the learning captured their imagination, and generated an enthusiasm and a commitment which led pupils to make excellent progress even in understanding and applying unfamiliar ideas. For example, in a Year 7 history lesson, pupils' discussion of where a castle should be sited bred genuine interest and excitement.
- New appointments have led to the rapid improvement in the quality of teaching in humanities subjects.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils understand the value of their education, and how the staff's high expectations are helping them to achieve. They appreciate the impartial advice and guidance they receive on how to take the next steps in their careers.
- Pupils say that bullying is very rare indeed, and they have every confidence that adults in school can resolve any disagreements. They could not recall an instance of discriminatory behaviour. The school site is very well supervised. Pupils therefore feel entirely safe in school, and parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire agree.
- The school teaches pupils how to stay safe in many respects, and involves visiting speakers and other agencies to reinforce important messages, such as the dangers of knife crime. They understand how to stay safe online, and information collected by the school shows that they use the school's computers responsibly.
- Leaders gather information, liaise with other agencies and plan provision with great care in order to ensure that they are able to support and encourage those who may be particularly at risk. The school uses alternative provision effectively to support a small number of pupils who have particularly complex needs.
- Pupils at key stage 3 are evidently very proud of their school. Some older pupils are less enthusiastic, although they remain respectful and conscientious.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. Their behaviour on the corridors and at social time is orderly and responsible. They respect the school's attractive and well-maintained facilities, and drop very little litter. Standards of uniform are high.
- Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are consistently positive. They bring the right equipment to lessons, settle to work quickly and generally present their books neatly. Pupils report that learning is disrupted only rarely, and inspection evidence confirmed this. When the learning does not engage pupils' interest some become a little inattentive, but respond well when called to order.
- This academic year, leaders have implemented successfully a new behaviour policy with clear proportionate consequences for any misbehaviour. Pupils and staff understand the new policy well, and as a result behaviour in the school is continuing to improve. Older pupils who have recently joined the school explained to inspectors how staff have helped them to improve their behaviour. The school excludes pupils for a fixed term for the most serious cases of indiscipline, and the rate of exclusion is average. Two pupils have been excluded permanently this academic year.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, and the overall rate of attendance is above average. The attendance of groups of vulnerable pupils is at least in line with that of pupils nationally. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is low.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because the progress of pupils currently in the school, while improving, is not consistently strong. Inspection evidence showed that it remains variable in English, mathematics and science, and is low in modern foreign languages.
- In 2016, pupils left Year 11 having made progress below the national average in the key subjects of English and science, and in humanities and modern languages. Progress in mathematics was average. The attainment and progress of the most able pupils as a group was also below average. However, strong progress in a number of work-related subjects and in computing meant that the progress of Year 11 was average overall. Pupils whose attainment had been low on entry to the school made progress which was above the national average.
- Inspection evidence confirmed the school's information that progress is generally improving more rapidly at key stage 3 than at key stage 4, benefiting from the effective expenditure of the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium and the recent drive to promote reading. In mathematics and in science, progress is slowed when teachers pay insufficient attention to deepening and extending pupils' understanding.
- Outcomes for the most able pupils, including for those who are also disadvantaged, require particular improvement. Information supplied by the school shows that across the school their progress is speeding up, particularly at key stage 3. However, at key stage 4, many of the most able pupils are not on track in a range of subjects to attain the top grades of which they are capable, because teaching has not provided the consistent stretch and challenge required. A great deal of work remains to be done to ensure they fulfil their potential.
- In 2016, the progress of disadvantaged pupils was generally in line with that of their peers in the school. Although their progress was broadly average, they had not caught up and thereby diminished the difference between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally. The school's analysis of the impact of the pupil premium shows that disadvantaged pupils in the younger years are now beginning to make stronger progress, whereas the achievement pattern in key stage 4 remains uneven.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities usually make strong progress from their different starting points. This is because staff are well trained and adept at identifying precisely pupils' learning needs, and checking carefully on the effectiveness of any additional provision. Leaders liaise most effectively with professionals who advise on how to meet specific educational needs.
- Inspection evidence showed that standards in modern foreign languages remain low. Workbooks revealed that many pupils have made little progress because there is no coherent programme of work in which carefully planned activities build on their existing knowledge and skills.
- Historically, outcomes in the humanities subjects have been weak, but inspection evidence showed that standards are beginning to rise rapidly as the quality of teaching improves.

- Pupils' constructive attitudes and good understanding of their future options help to prepare them for the next stage of their education or training. However, current levels of attainment in key subjects mean that many leave school without the most effective preparation for their future careers.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The 16 to 19 study programmes are good. This is because leaders have ensured that courses are well matched to students' needs and aspirations, and the quality of teaching is good and standards are rising.
- Excellent relationships between students and their teachers are at the heart of the sixth form. Students appreciate the individual guidance they receive, including the opportunity to come into school on a Saturday to receive additional tuition. They recognise the efforts of school leaders to ensure they are following courses which are challenging but manageable, and to introduce them to a range of future options, including higher education. Above all they have confidence that, with the support of the staff, they can succeed.
- Strong teaching in the sixth form is characterised by teachers' secure subject knowledge, their ability to adapt the learning to students' differing needs, and precise feedback to enable students to learn from their mistakes.
- Students display a strong commitment to their studies, and work hard. They persevere when work proves challenging. Students see themselves as role models for younger pupils, and have taken the lead, for instance in charity fund-raising.
- Achievement on 16 to 19 courses has risen since the last inspection. In 2016, students who completed both academic and applied courses left school having made progress which was average overall. At GCSE level, the proportion of students who attained at least a C grade for the first time in the sixth form was in line with the national average in English, and above average in mathematics.
- Leaders in the sixth form wisely adopt many of the policies and procedures which operate in the main school. They check carefully on students' progress, and intervene to support any who are at risk of falling behind. Leaders pursue non-attendance rigorously. They set targets for any students who are a cause for concern, and then check regularly on whether these targets have been met.
- Leaders have also steered the character of the sixth form to become one which encourages higher aspiration. They have increased the number of academic courses, and the proportion of leavers who move on to higher education rose to two thirds in 2016. At the same time, staff give equal attention to those students seeking apprenticeship, further education or employment. Almost all students stay on to complete their courses.
- All required elements of the 16 to 19 study programmes are delivered in the sixth form. Extra-curricular activities and enrichment form an important and valued part of students' study programmes. For example, as part of their tutorial programme, students have explored the nature of extremism and the importance of mental health. Leaders are building on the existing programme of work experience to establish groups of students with an interest in particular careers, such as primary school teaching.

School details

Unique reference number	135983
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10021147

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,050
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alex Hopkins
Principal	Kerry Inscker
Telephone number	01902 493797
Website	http://www.swbacademy.org.uk/index.phtml
Email address	enquiries@swbacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 June 2015

Information about this school

- South Wolverhampton and Bilston Academy is an average-sized secondary school, where the number of pupils on roll is growing. It is sponsored by the City of Wolverhampton Academy Trust.
- The majority of pupils are White British. One in eight pupils is of Indian heritage, and other pupils are drawn from several different ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is high.

- In Years 8 to 11, 14 pupils, many of whom have complex medical needs, currently receive full-time alternative provision at the Lawnswood Campus, Wolverhampton.
- In 2016, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 11.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about governors' committees.
- The school does not meet requirements in this respect on the publication of specified information about governance on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 41 lessons. Seven lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed tutor time, and pupils' conduct at break and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, other leaders and class teachers. The lead inspector met with governors and a representative of the academy trust.
- Four groups of pupils, three chosen at random, met with inspectors. Inspectors spoke with a large number of pupils informally.
- The inspectors looked at many workbooks in their visits to classrooms and scrutinised in depth much of the work produced by some of the most able pupils in Year 10 this academic year. They considered a wide range of information about pupils' current and recent performance.
- The inspectors looked at a wide variety of documents, both electronically and on paper. These included development plans, and evaluations of the school's progress; policies; the minutes of governors' meetings; and anonymised information showing how the headteacher manages the performance of teachers. Inspectors scrutinised in detail records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils.
- The inspection team took account of the 44 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, a small number of letters from parents and the comments made by free text. They also considered 76 responses to the pupil questionnaire, and 64 responses to the questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Deborah Smith	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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