

Inspection of Wednesfield Academy

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

Inspection dates:	25 and 26 February 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of the school is Joe Phillips. This school is part of the Matrix Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Lynsey Draycott, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sir Mark Aspinall.

What is it like to attend this school?

Wednesfield Academy is a highly inclusive school where everyone is valued and where expectations for pupils to achieve well are high. As a result, the majority of pupils work hard and achieve well. Pupils and staff embody the school's values of respect, resilience and pride. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and respectful. Pupils speak positively about the support they receive from staff and enjoy their learning. Pupils feel safe and say they are happy in school.

There is a purposeful atmosphere around the school. Pupils focus on their learning well. The majority of pupils show respectful and positive behaviours during structured lesson times. During unstructured times, such as breaktimes and lunchtimes, they behave sensibly. If pupils lose focus in lessons or their behaviour is not acceptable, staff speak with them to explain the school's high expectations. This maintains the very positive behaviours around the school.

The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. This includes mental health and well-being. Pupils can clearly explain their understanding of diversity and equality in society. Leadership opportunities include sixth-form student literacy and numeracy mentors and pupil mental health ambassadors. Pupils regularly take part in activities such as Combined Cadet Force and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

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

The school has undergone a significant period of change and development since the previous graded inspection. This includes a change of academy trust and changes to staff in senior, subject and pastoral leadership. The school has rapidly raised expectations around learning and behaviour and has developed a highly ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils achieve well and are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. However, this ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum has not yet led to consistently improving outcomes, in all subjects, by the end of key stage 4.

Students in the sixth form are positive about their learning experiences and the wider opportunities the school provides. The school continues to expand its ambitious curriculum in the sixth form. Sixth-form teachers engage students in challenging and independent learning. While some students achieve well, the school knows which areas of the curriculum continue to need further development. Students make a significant contribution to supporting the school, including through student leadership roles. These include mentoring and supporting younger pupils.

Most teachers use assessments well, check what pupils know and ensure that pupils understand what they have to do. Teachers use activities at the start of lessons to help pupils recall and build on their learning. Pupils say this helps them to remember the most important information. However, some teachers do not always check pupils' understanding well enough. Some teachers do not consistently adapt the learning to

address pupils' misunderstandings or missing knowledge. This means that some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. This can limit progress through the curriculum.

Where learning is ambitious, teachers help pupils to build on key subject knowledge very well over time. For example, some teachers ask probing questions to challenge pupils. However, some teachers do not always develop pupils' knowledge and understanding as fully as they might. Sometimes, teachers do not always ask pupils in-depth questions to promote appropriate discussion between them. This means that some pupils are not able to demonstrate their depth of knowledge nor fully extend their understanding of different topics.

The school identifies and supports pupils with SEND well. Teachers use 'passports' effectively to adapt their teaching to meet these needs. This ensures that pupils access the same ambitious curriculum. The school has developed strategies to effectively support pupils who are not confident readers. Specialist teaching rapidly addresses weaknesses in pupils' understanding of phonics, grammar and comprehension. Alongside this, the school continues to effectively promote pupils' reading widely and often.

The majority of pupils display excellent self-control and highly positive attitudes to learning. Occasionally, a reducing number of pupils do not always follow the school's high behaviour expectations. For these pupils, this can impact their progress and their enjoyment of school. School attendance is high, including significantly high attendance in the sixth form. There are robust systems in place to support absent pupils to catch up on their work quickly.

Pupils' well-being is at the forefront of leaders' vision, including promoting pupils' positive mental health. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, receive extensive information on 'next steps' through high-quality careers guidance. The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is well designed and sequenced. Pupils are taught about topics such as healthy relationships and online safety well. However, in some lessons, some teachers do not consistently present the information effectively nor discuss with pupils in sufficient depth why the information is important.

All leaders, including those responsible for governance, understand how the school's local context impacts pupils' learning and attendance. The trust has provided bespoke, targeted and rapid support to develop the school. Trustees provide effective challenge alongside this support. The school and the trust have implemented a well-thought-out professional development programme for staff. Staff feel very well supported and consulted about policy changes. Staff are appreciative of how their workload and well-being are considered.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff do not consistently check pupils' understanding of what has been learned and what they can remember. As a result, some gaps in pupils' knowledge are not identified and addressed effectively, limiting their progress through the curriculum. The school should ensure that staff understand how to check pupils' learning and address any gaps or misconceptions.
- Some staff do not always promote and develop appropriate discussions between pupils. This means that some learning does not allow pupils to gain a deeper understanding of the subject. The school should ensure that, across all subjects, different approaches to learning, such as questioning to promote discussion, give pupils the opportunities to develop a greater depth of knowledge.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	141245
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10344041
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 sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,022
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	81
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sir Mark Aspinall
CEO of the trust	Lynsey Draycott
Headteacher	Joe Phillips
Website	www.wednesfieldacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 June 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Matrix Academy Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision that a small number of pupils attend part time.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements

(quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, French, history, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also looked at the curriculum, lessons and pupils' work in other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the school's curriculum and improvement planning.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day as part of their evaluation of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour. Additionally, inspectors spoke to pupils to discuss their views about school life.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the directors of learning, teachers, support staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with the chair, the vice-chair and other trustees. The lead inspector also met with the CEO and the director of school improvement for the trust.
- The lead inspector met with two parent representatives from the 'parent advisory forum'.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the free-text responses. They also took into consideration the online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Stuart Clarkson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Gwen Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Tim Hill	His Majesty's Inspector
Jane Epton	Ofsted Inspector

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