

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Royal School, Wolverhampton

Penn Road, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV3 0EG

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 March 2025

Outcome

The Royal School, Wolverhampton has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The principal of this school is Tom Macdonald. This school is the only school in a single-academy trust. The principal is also the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Neil Lloyd.

What is it like to attend this school?

It is notable how much pupils enjoy coming to The Royal School. This is because the school provides a wide set of rich opportunities for all pupils. As one pupil, typical of many, stated, 'students from all backgrounds are given opportunities to lead, grow and progress'. Inspectors agreed that this accurately describes this school, from the primary setting to the sixth form.

Pupils take significant pride in the diversity of the school community, which includes some pupils who have very recently arrived in the country. They understand the school's expectations for how they should behave and treat each other. Typically, these expectations are met, which contributes to the school being a well-ordered and tolerant community. In lessons, pupils concentrate and want to do their best because they understand the importance the school places on this.

Through the curriculum and wider opportunities for their development, pupils understand that there are high expectations for their achievement. They strive to meet these expectations and speak highly of the support they receive from their teachers, which enables them to do so. This support is a noteworthy feature of the school, from the induction of the youngest children into the early years, to the advice and guidance students in the sixth form receive which helps them to access ambitious destinations when they leave.

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

The school has revised its curriculum extensively. This curriculum design is now in place and is being refined as it is reviewed. The curriculum across the school is ambitious for all pupils. Increasing numbers of pupils are now opting to study a modern foreign language at GCSE. This has led to an increase in the number of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. The school has adopted, and is embedding, a new approach to early reading. This enables pupils to rapidly learn key sounds and how they correspond to groups of letters. Pupils who find reading more challenging benefit from effective support to improve.

Pupils achieve well. Teachers typically select tasks that build on what pupils already know. This means that pupils learn the curriculum in a logical order. In addition, teachers generally check the understanding of pupils well, meaning that misconceptions or gaps in understanding are spotted and closed. That said, there are some inconsistencies in the teaching of the curriculum which can mean that some pupils learn less effectively. This is typically when misconceptions are not addressed, or the selection of activities to extend pupils' understanding does not build on what pupils already know. These inconsistencies, although not common, can be found in the primary phase, as well as higher up the school. In the sixth form, students' secure knowledge means that they can engage with more-complex concepts with appropriate fluency.

The school has developed its provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils have their needs identified clearly. The school ensures that staff have useful information about these pupils and that they use it well. All of this helps to ensure that the delivery of the curriculum is appropriately adapted for pupils with SEND. They achieve well.

Pupils' attendance is high. The school uses clear processes and systems to review and check absence, including for more vulnerable pupils. The school ensures that pupils and their families, in all phases of the provision, understand the importance of regular attendance.

The school has reviewed its approach to behaviour in both the primary and secondary phases. In the primary phase this has had a focus on play and positive interactions. This has helped pupils to learn mutual respect and how to take turns. In the secondary phase, the school has adjusted its behaviour policy to ensure clarity for pupils and staff. These revised expectations have been embedded with the result that pupils are more focused in lessons. The school monitors the impact of its policy closely and puts in place support for those pupils who need it. Within both the primary and secondary phases, there remain a small number of pupils who find it harder to meet the school's high expectations for their conduct. As a consequence, these pupils are more likely to experience sanctions, including suspensions, which means they miss out on important learning.

The school is rightly proud of its very extensive offer for pupils' personal development. This includes dedicating significant time to extra-curricular activities across the week. Leaders monitor the uptake of these opportunities closely to ensure that more-vulnerable

pupils benefit from them. Leaders ensure the offer is of a high quality. Pupils speak in very positive terms of the many sporting opportunities, the combined cadet force, the board games club, and arts and crafts activities. There is extensive preparation for pupils' future destinations, meaning they are well prepared for life beyond the school.

The trustees have an in-depth understanding of the school, thanks to close scrutiny of the information leaders provide and external reviews. Trustees are ambitious for the continued development of the school's provision. The school has reviewed 'The Royal Way', the professional development programme that it provides to support best practice in teaching. This is starting to ensure even higher levels of consistency in the quality of teaching. Staff report high levels of pride in their work. They appreciate recent changes to the way that leaders engage with them, and the fact that leaders consider their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of pupils, often more vulnerable pupils, find it harder to meet the school's revised high expectations for their behaviour. This means that they are more likely to be suspended from school, missing valuable learning time and personal development opportunities. The school should ensure that the new behaviour policy continues to be applied consistently well by staff and that there is ongoing and effective support for those pupils who find it hardest to meet the school's high expectations for their behaviour.
- On occasions, the teaching strategies adopted do not give pupils the opportunity to practise and apply what they know, or to close gaps in their understanding. This means that a minority of pupils build a less secure body of knowledge over time. The school should ensure that it continues to provide guidance and support to enable teachers to select or adapt the most appropriate teaching strategy to help pupils to learn the curriculum as the school intends.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded

inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in July 2019.

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	143101
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10344092
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,505
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	277
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Neil Lloyd
Principal	Tom Macdonald
Website	www.theroyalschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	2 and 3 July 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is the only school in a single-academy trust. The principal also acts as the CEO of the trust.
- The school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school has boarding facilities for up to 82 pupils, with 60 pupils boarding at present. The last social care inspection of this facility was in October 2023.
- The principal was appointed in September 2024.
- 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

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- As part of this inspection, the inspectors met with senior leaders, subject leaders, teaching staff and other employees in the school. Inspectors also talked informally to pupils to gather information about school life. The lead inspector also met the chair and vice-chair of the trust. Minutes of trust meetings were scrutinised.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors discussed with leaders and pupils the school's extra-curricular activities, enrichment programme and the careers and personal development programmes.
- The inspectors reviewed the school's behaviour and attendance records with school leaders. Two alternative provisions were contacted by telephone by the lead inspector.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including plans to improve the school.
- The inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils, and responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses

Inspection team

Andrew Madden, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Luke Bridges	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Grady	Ofsted Inspector

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