

John Willmott School

Reddicap Heath Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B75 7DY

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

- Leaders and governors have been too slow to address falling standards. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Current improvements are leading to better teaching and progress. Initiatives are not yet fully embedded to aid consistency of practice.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. This is because plans to improve their progress are not good enough. Leaders' evaluation of their actions and spending lack sufficient scrutiny.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not enabling pupils of middle and high ability to make good progress. Where teaching is improving, for example in Year 7, pupils' basic skills are developing well.
- Teachers do not have consistently high enough expectations of pupils. Consequently, too many pupils are not confident learners and many do not attain the standards of which they are capable.
- The leadership of the curriculum has not been effective in supporting good outcomes.
- Although exclusion rates are falling slowly, leaders are not ensuring that pupils self-regulate their behaviour. At times, behaviour is too boisterous and low-level disruption hinders other pupils' learning.
- Despite some marginal improvements in attendance, too many pupils do not attend regularly. Too high a proportion are persistently absent. These absences have a detrimental impact on pupils' achievement and involvement in school life.
- While some subjects in the sixth form, including mathematics, business studies and chemistry, secure positive outcomes, overall achievement is too variable. Not all students in the past followed the correct courses.

The school has the following strengths

- The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership (ATLP) multi-academy trust's support ensures that foundations for improvement are in place.
- Less-able pupils make good progress.
- The headteacher is unwavering in her commitment to improve the school. Her work in addressing serious staffing and financial difficulties has been successful.
- Pupils feel safe at school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - increasing rates of improvement across the school
 - ensuring that leaders routinely evaluate the impact of funding to support disadvantaged pupils' achievement and attendance
 - ensuring that all staff have high expectations so that pupils become confident and engaged learners who achieve to the best of their abilities
 - ensuring that the key stage 3 curriculum equips pupils with the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to attain the standards of which they are capable.
- Improve the quality of teaching across the school by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan lessons that take account of pupils' different abilities and ensure that tasks are neither too difficult nor too easy
 - provide work that stretches and challenges pupils so that they do not become disengaged or waste valuable learning time
 - plan tasks that not only keep pupils busy but deepen their learning and knowledge
 - ensure that homework is regularly completed to improve pupils' learning.
- Improve pupils' behaviour in lessons, and at social times, by ensuring that teachers and leaders apply the school's behaviour policy consistently.
- Improve attendance by evaluating the impact of existing strategies to ensure that they are effective.
- Improve outcomes in the sixth form by eradicating variability across departments and ensure that sixth-form students are studying the correct courses.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders, including governors, have not acted with enough urgency to address all areas of weakness identified at the time of the last inspection. However, improved leadership and organisation of the school's work has led to improvements in teaching, pupils' progress and attendance, but the pace of change is not fast enough to ensure that a good education is provided.
- The headteacher and governors have faced substantial challenges. There has been a period of turbulence in staffing and difficulties in recruitment and finance. Changes to staffing for both standards and financial reasons were made. Senior leaders and governors were resolute in appropriately addressing the budgetary and school outcome concerns that were needed if the school was to improve. In December 2017, 16 members of staff left and there was a major restructuring of leadership from January 2018. Although too late for those pupils in Year 11 who left in 2018, these staffing changes are beginning to improve standards.
- The school receives a substantial amount of additional funding to improve the quality of education for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have not spent this money well, nor have they accounted for its lack of impact in reports to governors. Moreover, leaders' expectations about what disadvantaged pupils could achieve are too low. Leaders, up until this inspection, were measuring disadvantaged pupils' progress against non-disadvantaged pupils in their own school. This latter group underachieves and thus the benchmark was too low. Leaders did not realise how poorly disadvantaged pupils performed.
- Leaders' work to improve outcomes for Year 7 pupils who join with lower literacy and numeracy skills is effective. Extra funding is spent well, as most pupils are on track to meet their targets.
- Middle leaders, including those who joined or took on new roles relatively recently, are ambitious, committed and realistic about weaknesses to be addressed. Improvements are being made and the right actions are being taken, but initiatives are not yet fully embedded to aid consistency of practice. This view is supported by inspection evidence. While not a disharmonious staffing body, middle leaders and teachers have concerns about some leadership practices which they shared openly with inspectors. These related mainly to feeling that more consistency is required around supporting teachers in their management of pupils' behaviour.
- Leadership of teaching is improving. Staff speak highly of the continuing professional development opportunities offered, including those via the ATLP. Staff also point to the positive impact of the relatively new teaching and learning strategy, which is improving teachers' skills and accelerating pupils' learning. Older pupils also articulated how well this new approach supports their learning.
- The key stage 4 curriculum is suitably broad and balanced, with a focus upon academic subjects. Better organisation, more coherence of provision and more effective teaching are improving pupils' learning. Leaders are in the process of reviewing the key stage 3 curriculum, which has not equipped pupils with the skills and knowledge they require for GCSEs.

- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. They appropriately learn about democracy, the rule of law and the importance of multiculturalism.
- A host of extra-curricular activities are offered to pupils to improve their personal development and enjoyment of school life. Most of these take place at lunchtimes because over 80% of pupils use school transport to get home. Activities include a film club, library club, numerous sports and meditation activities. Several school trips have taken place this year. Pupils have visited Bletchley Park, Whitmore Lakes and Leeds Medical Museum. All of Years 10 and 11 will see a performance of 'Macbeth' at the theatre. On the day the inspection was announced, several sixth formers were meeting Michelle Obama in London.
- The ATLP multi-academy trust has worked with leaders and teachers for several years. While progress has been too slow in the past, there is clear evidence that the work of the trust is now a critical factor in improving the school. This includes in support for leaders, training for governors and subject-specific support at a classroom level. Also, pupils have their work moderated and standardised to confirm that teachers' assessments are accurate.
- Leaders say that they are held to account by members of ATLP and the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP), and that they also receive appropriate support to drive improvement and leaders' effectiveness. Inspectors' scrutiny of documentation shows that ATLP and BEP are involved closely to help leaders review practice and analyse performance information effectively to inform intervention. The view of BEP and ATLP, shared with inspectors, is that the quality of education requires improvement and there is still much to do to move the school to good. Inspection evidence confirmed that this is indeed the case.
- Leaders' own data, scrutinised by inspectors, confirms increased engagement with parents and carers and growing parental satisfaction with the work of the school. A third of the parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, however, would not recommend the school to others. Parental concerns include pupils' behaviour and frequent changes of teaching staff.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school's strengths, its main weaknesses and what actions must be taken so that the quality of education and standards improve quickly. They now have a grip on the key issues to be addressed and have not shied away from addressing current weaknesses through effective intervention. They have been instrumental in ensuring that the school increasingly lives 'within its means', taking difficult decisions to streamline staffing and improve finances. The school's budget deficit has been reduced quite markedly.
- Governors receive good training through the ATLP. They are aware of their statutory duties and fulfil them.
- Governors are not doing enough to ensure extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils is spent well. Funding is spent on activities that have not made a difference. The impact of initiatives has not been monitored effectively. This said, achievement for disadvantaged pupils is now improving because teaching is meeting pupils' learning needs better. Nevertheless, the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and all pupils nationally is too wide.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All pupils spoken to by inspectors said that they feel safe at school at all times and in all areas. Of the parents who responded to the online questionnaire, a very large majority confirmed that their children feel safe in school. Although most staff agree that pupils are safe, they have concerns about pupils' boisterous behaviour at times.
- There are effective systems and procedures to keep pupils safe. The designated safeguarding leader is watchful, well trained and vigilant of the needs of pupils. This includes good knowledge of individuals and potential safeguarding risks in the wider community that are suitably assessed. There are secure records to show that all staff have been properly vetted for their suitability to work unsupervised with children.
- School policies take account of the most recent government guidance and they are implemented effectively. Staff understand what to do if they have any safeguarding concerns. Pupils' welfare and safety are fostered well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not ensured that pupils make consistently good progress. There was much ineffective practice in the past and inconsistencies in teaching quality remain across years and within subjects.
- When teaching has less impact, it is not carefully planned to help pupils make good progress. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations. Teachers do not set work that is securely based on what pupils already know, understand and can do. Pupils, particularly those of middle ability and the most able, are not consistently challenged to make rapid progress.
- Teachers at times set tasks which are uninteresting. The work set does not provide pupils with enough information to think about and deepen their learning and understanding. When this happens, pupils quickly become inattentive and some engage in disruptive behaviour. Teachers and pupils are aware of clear procedures for managing this poor behaviour, but during the inspection staff did not apply these consistently. Some staff told inspectors that there is too much variation in the way senior leaders respond to their requests for support with behaviour management.
- The headteacher, supported by governors and the ATLP, has made improving teaching, learning and assessment a top priority. New systems have been introduced which are increasingly being embedded across the school, albeit with too much variation in how they are applied by teachers. Nevertheless, teachers are clear in their view that these new systems, as well as working with colleagues from the ATLP, are beneficial to them in helping to improve their teaching practice.
- The new teaching and learning 'toolkit' introduced aims to promote consistency of teaching and a more challenging curriculum. There are now higher expectations for the quality and presentation of pupils' work, and for pupils to display improved attitudes to their learning. Teachers do not yet apply the new system with sufficient consistency and rigour. As a result, although pupils are achieving better, there is still room for further improvement.

- The quality of teaching in English is now typically strong. Teachers display good subject knowledge. This, combined with positive relationships with pupils, leads to learning that is both productive and enjoyable.
- Teaching to support less-able pupils' needs is effective. Less-able pupils make good progress over time and work in the books of current students confirms this to be the case now.
- In the past, teaching in mathematics and science was poor and the curriculum in both subjects was not fit for purpose. Inspection evidence confirms that teaching is improving in both subjects. The new schemes of learning provide greater challenge, and pupils are currently making better progress in both subjects. Where teaching has the most impact in these subjects, pupils are encouraged to problem solve and teachers' questioning is effective.
- The written feedback provided by teachers is increasingly in line with leaders' expectations. Where this occurs, pupils receive constructive and helpful comments. At worst, feedback is not evident in books.
- Homework is set regularly but not completed by enough pupils. Therefore, pupils miss opportunities to consolidate their learning or prepare for work to come. Leaders have not yet established an effective system of tracking missed homework.
- Parents receive useful information about how their children are performing at school. Most parents feel that their child is taught well and making good progress. Parents are, however, less positive about certain aspects of teaching. A third of parents, for example, feel that their children do not receive appropriate homework.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning are not consistently good. In some lessons, low-level disruptive behaviour, coupled with some teachers' inconsistent application of the behaviour policy, hinders learning. Some pupils remain off task and disturb the concentration and work of others, particularly when activities are undemanding or do not engage pupils' interest.
- Some pupils feel that there is too much bullying, while others said there was little. A minority of those who raised bullying as an issue felt that teachers are too slow to tackle it. Inspectors' analysis of school information confirms that issues are relatively rare, clearly recorded and followed up well.
- Most pupils show respect for others' views and ideas. The school is inclusive, and pupils are very accepting of diversity. There is, for example, only a very low incidence of discriminatory behaviour reported. Also, observations of pupils in lessons and at break and lunchtimes saw the majority working and socialising together well.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are taught about how to be safe. This includes sharing information about potential risks of child sexual exploitation, knife crime, gangs and radicalisation. Pupils are also knowledgeable about how lessons help them understand the potential dangers they face online.

- Pupils receive clear guidance on the importance of British values and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. These are delivered in assemblies and through lessons, including religious education and LORIC (Leadership, Organisation, Resilience, Initiative and Communications). The school environment has suitable messages promoting healthy living and positive thinking.
- There are strong links with a range of external agencies to support pupils' emotional and mental health. Where there is direct involvement by pupils with these groups, their well-being is monitored closely.
- Although outcomes have been weak, pupils are now adequately prepared to cope with the next stage of education, training or employment.
- In addition to disadvantaged pupils receiving high-quality careers advice, leaders have committed to provide pupils a 'pathway of experiences'. This includes theatre trips and a residential experience. Although in its early stages, this programme shows an improving picture of leaders' commitment to improving the overall quality of education for disadvantaged pupils.
- Those pupils at alternative provision, of which there are currently seven, have their attendance and progress monitored closely by school staff. These pupils are on suitable courses. As a result, their attendance and engagement are improving.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is a very mixed picture. Some teaching is well structured and encourages pupils to work independently, in groups and always with respect for others. This was seen consistently in English and LORIC lessons. Inspectors saw pupils being attentive and engaged. They also saw pupils enjoying each other's company at break and lunchtimes, including having pleasant conversations with staff. All pupils spoken to by inspectors were polite.
- Pupils wear their uniform smartly and respect their environment. Inspectors saw little evidence of litter and no graffiti nor damage to equipment.
- There are pockets of challenging behaviour in some classes and around the school. While most pupils are respectful of staff, inspectors did see some isolated incidents of rudeness by pupils towards staff, including senior staff. There is some inappropriate behaviour in corridors and around the school. Most pupils have a generally negative view about behaviour.
- A third of parents do not feel that the school ensures that pupils are well behaved. Also, most staff feel that pupil behaviour is not yet good. Most concerns raised by staff focused on pupils' conduct during social times and lesson change-over.
- Behaviour is improving because, for example, pupils respond positively to the structure provided by the new teaching-and-learning strategy. The rate of improvement, however, is not yet fast enough.
- Although improving slowly, neither attendance nor persistent absence are yet at national averages. Leaders have developed an ethos that attendance is everyone's responsibility. This is beginning to have an impact. There is not enough focus on refining and applying the most successful strategies more consistently.

- Temporary and permanent exclusions remain above the national averages. Current evidence shows some improvement. The number of referrals to the internal exclusion unit has not increased as fixed-term exclusions have fallen. This evidence points to behaviour overall improving, but it is not yet good.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- A legacy of poor teaching, low expectations, challenging behaviour and high absence rates led to pupils' outcomes at GCSE being weak in 2017 and declining further in 2018. Pupils made much less progress than those in other schools. In 2018, this included girls who previously had made good progress.
- The work to improve teaching and pupils' behaviour is beginning to pay off for current pupils. This is particularly evident from the standard of work in pupils' books across all year groups. While there is a more positive picture of pupils achieving more than pupils previously, inspection evidence confirms leaders' views that progress for current pupils requires improvement.
- There is too much variation in current outcomes. For example, despite overall improvements in the progress of current pupils, leaders' own records show that disadvantaged pupils do not do as well as they should. This is particularly evident in Year 10 across almost all subjects.
- Teachers' development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across different subjects does not support pupils' progress effectively, apart from in Year 7. While inspectors saw evidence of the 'do it now' questions which have literacy and numeracy as a focus, leaders' own evaluation of this area of their work is basic and it is not possible to see any overall impact.
- Less-able pupils are supported well. These pupils have made good progress over time, and this continues for pupils currently at the school. Teachers' planning of work for pupils of middle and higher ability, however, does not focus enough on their specific needs. At times, there is insufficient challenge and pupils become disengaged. At other times, and less often, work is too difficult and pupils lack focus.
- The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is inconsistent. Pupils are making better progress in Years 7 and 8 than at key stage 4. This is because of a legacy of weaker teaching in the past, which is now being addressed. While leaders provide strong evidence of good pastoral support for these pupils, their evaluation of their progress is less detailed.
- During the inspection there were internal examinations taking place for Years 11, 12 and 13. Inspectors took the opportunity to analyse the standard of pupils' work and the usefulness of teachers' feedback by looking at marked examination papers. Inspectors reviewed the examination papers of the most-able Year 11 pupils in English and mathematics. Pupils displayed good levels of knowledge and understanding and applied these well under examination conditions. Teachers' feedback on the work produced by pupils under examination conditions will help develop pupils' understanding further.
- The very large majority of parents feel that their children make good progress.
- Current outcomes in the sixth form are higher than in the rest of the school and have been so over time. Progress at AS was low in 2017, however, and over 40% of Year 12 students left the school.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Results and sixth-form numbers have been variable. While current standards and numbers are higher, until recently there has not been a continual focus upon the quality of teaching, advice and guidance in the sixth form, particularly in Year 12. Senior leaders have not analysed outcome data or destinations for sixth-form students as closely as they do at key stage 4.
- There were poor retention rates between Year 12 and 13 last academic year. Too many students made poor progress at the end of their first year of A-level study. This was because teaching was not strong enough. Also, although breadth was offered to students, a number started AS courses which were not suitable for them. Students were, however, tracked to their new destinations.
- Leadership of the sixth form has improved. In the recent past, however, leadership in the sixth form was weaker. This is because low AS outcomes in Year 12 occurred when current leadership was not in place. The sixth form is now better organised, outcomes are more positive and numbers have recovered. Attendance is high and lateness rare. Students understand how to keep themselves safe, and behaviour is good.
- Current leaders in the sixth form have a realistic view on standards and show ambition for further improvement. Leaders acknowledge that there is too much variability across subjects, and vocational subjects perform better than academic courses, but prompt intervention now takes place to address underperformance.
- There are wide-ranging non-examination activities available to sixth-form students. These include university visits, work experience, visiting speakers and opportunities for charity work. These enable students to develop their social, personal and employability skills. Students are now well prepared for future education, employment and training through effective careers advice and guidance.
- Students who need to retake English and mathematics GCSE have timetabled lessons in both subjects. These students make good progress in gaining grade 4 and higher.

School details

Unique reference number	103522
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10056082

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
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	987
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Claxton
Headteacher	Tracey Peters
Telephone number	0121 378 1946
Website	www.jws.bham.sch.uk/
Email address	enquiry@jws.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 January and 26 February 2016

Information about this school

- The ATLP multi-academy trust is providing support and guidance to the school.
- The school is an average-sized secondary school with sixth-form provision.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average and the proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as their first language is average.
- A small number of pupils attend full-time alternative provision at St George's, Albion Foundation and East Birmingham Network Academy 2.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation. This included the school’s strategic framework, the post-Ofsted improvement plan, minutes of meetings, school policies, information about pupils’ attainment and progress, behaviour, attendance, and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons and parts of lessons across a wide range of subjects and key stages. Some of these lessons were observed with senior leaders. The lead inspectors attended an assembly. Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour between lessons, at breaktimes, lunchtimes and as they left at the end of the day.
- Inspectors evaluated the work in pupils’ books and folders. This included in lessons across a range of subjects and year groups. Inspectors also analysed completed practice examination papers.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector met with governors, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also met with representatives of The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, The Birmingham Education Partnership and members of the school canteen.
- The views of parents were considered through 163 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, including 23 written responses. Inspectors also spoke with two parents on the telephone.
- Inspectors considered the views of 79 members of staff who completed Ofsted’s online survey. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke with many pupils in lessons, at breaktimes and at lunchtimes.

Inspection team

Nigel Griffiths, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Rob Steed	Ofsted Inspector
David Buckle	Ofsted Inspector

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