

William Edwards School

Stifford Clays Road, Stifford Clays, Grays, Essex RM16 3NJ

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- There are inaccuracies in the school's information regarding the attendance of a small number of pupils who access off-site provision. These pupils are not accessing full-time education, contrary to the school's official records.
- Outcomes in humanities are a weakness in the school's provision.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) but without an education, health and care (EHC) plan are not as consistently well supported as those with an EHC plan.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not yet making consistently good progress by the end of Year 11.
- Leaders and the trust do not have a precise understanding about the difference that the additional funding is making to disadvantaged pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour.
- The trust does not challenge leaders precisely enough about standards in the school, including for disadvantaged pupils.
- On occasion, monitoring at senior and middle leadership level lacks precision and rigour. For some newer leaders, it is also too soon to see the impact of their work.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has invested in a rich curriculum offer that allows many pupils to access a wide range of opportunities. This is a strength in the school's work.
- Most teaching, learning and assessment are good. More pupils are securing better standards in a number of subjects where outcomes were weaker last year.
- The pastoral system provides high-quality support for pupils on a day-to-day basis. Most pupils who spoke to inspectors were effusive about their experience in school.
- Behaviour is securely good. Most pupils work hard in lessons, are keen to do well, and are polite and respectful.
- Pupils are positive about the multiple and varied opportunities there are for them to get involved in the school community and that they have a 'voice' in their educational experience.
- The chair of the trust has a clear resolve to raise standards meaningfully in trust schools. He is actively seeking expertise to add capacity to the trust as it grows.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - clarifying the roles and responsibilities of leaders in monitoring off-site provision, so that all statutory and school information is up to date and accurate
 - ensuring that pupil premium funding improves the progress, attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged pupils in key stages 3 and 4
 - increasing monitoring and evaluation of the impact of leaders' work in raising standards for pupils with SEND but without an EHC plan
 - ensuring that all middle and senior leaders are precise in monitoring and evaluating the impact of their work in raising standards in the school
 - increasing the rigour with which the trust is holding leaders to account about additional funding, such as the pupil premium, and about wider standards in the school.
- Improve pupils' achievement, by ensuring that:
 - effective teaching, learning and assessment are effective in continuing to diminish the differences between the progress, attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged pupils and other, non-disadvantaged, pupils nationally
 - teaching, learning and assessment in history and geography are consistently effective, so that pupils achieve well in key stage 3 and are better prepared for key stage 4
 - leaders use accurate information to review and increase the provision for the small numbers of pupils who are not accessing full-time education.

An external review of the use of pupil premium funding 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 are not sufficiently curious to investigate what their information tells them about the impact of their work, or where there are possible weaknesses in the school's work. This is causing the trust and leaders to have an overly positive view of the quality of some aspects of the school's work.
- There is a lack of coherence and accuracy in leaders' information about a small number of pupils who attend off-site provision. The school's official information about the attendance and educational access of these pupils is not accurate. This is not providing leaders and the trust with accurate information about the quality of provision for these pupils.
- Leaders lack rigour in their use and evaluation of the pupil premium funding. Leaders do not have a clear rationale for how they are using this funding, especially the large proportion that has previously been used for 'staffing' where some staff are already employed by the school. Although there has been some action taken following the 2017/18 outcomes, there is a lack of urgency and precision in this work to address the weaknesses that remain in disadvantaged pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour.
- Leaders' monitoring of reported incidents of bullying is imprecise. Leaders were not initially clear during the inspection as to why there were differences in their own reported numbers of incidents. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were very confident that staff dealt with bullying appropriately. However, leaders are not challenging themselves routinely to consider whether there is more that they could be doing to support pupils in the school, and the accuracy of what they are reporting to the trust.
- Leaders' monitoring of the classroom-based provision for pupils who have SEND but do not have an EHC plan is not yet fully embedded. Staff are more confident in their application of the strategies for pupils who have EHC plans than for those pupils who do not. As a result, some pupils who have additional needs but do not have an EHC plan are not as well supported in lessons and over time.
- Despite weaknesses in leaders' evaluation of the Year 7 catch-up funding, the school's use of this money is, in practice, supporting pupils from low starting points to get a good start in key stage 3. A significant portion of this funding is being used for bespoke lessons for pupils in Year 7, including for some pupils with SEND. Pupils who met with inspectors are making good strides in their literacy and reading through this intervention work.
- Some leaders are imprecise in how they are identifying and monitoring standards in their areas of responsibility. The school has faced some challenges to recruit leaders in recent years. The headteacher has managed this creatively, developing leaders in-house where possible. New subject and senior leaders have identified issues that require action. However, their work is still relatively new. They do not know yet the impact of their work in building on the foundations established by the headteacher to raise achievement.
- The headteacher has placed emphasis on empowering and supporting staff who are new to the profession. These staff are supported well. As a result, staff retention

remains steady, despite challenges to recruit in the local area. Leaders and the trust place emphasis on 'growing their own' teachers and staff for the future. They work closely with the teaching school alliance to achieve this.

- The headteacher has invested heavily in the school's curriculum offer. The breadth of curriculum opportunities available at the school is a real 'gem' in the school's offer to its pupils. Alongside a broad range of technical, academic, creative and physical subjects, the school's wider curriculum is extensive. The school's on-site vocational provision for subjects such as construction means that fewer pupils tend to attend off-site provision to meet their needs, interests and aspirations.
- There is wide-ranging access to opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, extensive sporting, drama and dance clubs, speak-out challenges, charity work, trips and visits. A large and increasing number of pupils engage in these opportunities. For example, on the second day of the inspection, over 150 pupils arrived early at school to take part in extra-curricular sporting opportunities.
- The curriculum supports pupils to develop roles as responsible citizens in British society. The Year 7 creative curriculum, the extended school day on Monday, 'focus days' and assemblies highlight vital issues such as democracy and equality, as well as providing pupils with essential personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. This work is supporting most pupils positively to be thoughtful and well-developed young people in British society.

Governance of the school

- The trust has not challenged leaders sufficiently on the weaker standards achieved by Year 11 pupils in 2018. Trustees have too readily accepted limited evidence about why pupils' progress was weaker in this year group.
- The trust does not know enough about how leaders are using the additional funds that they receive for disadvantaged pupils. The trust does not know precisely enough whether this funding is improving pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour.
- The trust is not routinely challenging leaders about the accuracy and depth of information that they provide. For example, trustees did not question the school's information about there only being one reported case of bullying in 2017/18 in the whole of the school. The trust is too reliant on information provided to them by leaders.
- The chair of the trust has a more rigorous view of school improvement, and the standards that should be achieved by disadvantaged pupils. He has worked to develop capacity within the trust to ensure its financial probity and future capacity. He has recruited trustees with skills and expertise to undertake these roles. He is actively seeking further capacity at trust level to challenge leaders about educational standards.
- The trust has created a local school advisory board (LSAB) to support the trust's work. This advisory body has only recently been established. Much of its work is in its early stages and cannot yet be measured.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All required checks are carried out when recruiting new staff to work with pupils.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe, both online and in the wider world. They access a number of lessons, such as the Year 7 creative curriculum, assemblies, 'focus days' and additional PHSE time on Monday afternoons. Pupils say that they feel safe, and that there are staff whom they can go to when they are worried about things.
- Staff training is appropriate. Staff understand and use the school's internal reporting system appropriately. A few staff are less confident about their understanding of issues relating to county lines drug dealing and gangs.
- Although not always recorded accurately on the school's management information system, leaders do have evidence of the checks made on pupils who access off-site provision to ensure the safety of this small number of pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are typically good across the school.
- Teachers have a thorough understanding of their subjects and the age ranges they teach. They use this knowledge to plan learning that helps pupils to develop new knowledge and skills. Teachers plan assessments and activities that allow pupils to practise their learning in a variety of ways.
- Teachers have positive relationships with pupils based on respect. Pupils are clear about what is expected of them. Rare examples of poor behaviour are usually managed effectively. Most pupils make the most of their learning time and respond to staff's instructions quickly and appropriately.
- Teachers use a good range and depth of questioning to explore pupils' answers. Teachers are confident to develop pupils' initial responses through increasingly probing questions. This was a particular strength seen in English, mathematics and science, as well as in wider curriculum subjects, such as food technology.
- Pupils who need to catch up are being well supported through Year 7 bespoke lessons. This includes pupils with SEND. This teaching is supporting pupils to read and develop their literacy skills. Consequently, more pupils can access the wider curriculum on offer because they are gaining the basic skills that they need.
- Literacy and reading are important at William Edwards School, and are actively promoted by staff and leaders. Pupils enjoy reading, read aloud in lessons, and read widely both in and out of school. This is encouraged across subjects, and most notably through reading programmes in key stage 3. This is helping pupils to widen their spoken vocabulary.
- Pupils who have an EHC plan are well supported to learn effectively. Teachers and adults provide bespoke support that is clearly aligned with pupils' identified needs. On occasion, this support is not as precise and effective for pupils who have additional needs but do not have an EHC plan.

- Some less effective teaching, learning and assessment do not plan precisely for pupils. This is especially, but not exclusively, in humanities. On these occasions, pupils lose interest in the work and presentation deteriorates, particularly for boys.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors from across year groups appreciate the high-quality pastoral care provided by school staff and leaders. Pupils feel very well looked after by pastoral teams when they have concerns or need help. Pupils feel that staff are vigilant and dedicated, and 'go the extra mile' to support pupils' personal and academic needs.
- A significant proportion of pupils are proactive members of the school council, the school's student executive group and the 'pupils as listeners' (PALs) group. These groups, alongside the head boy and head girl, act as positive role models to other pupils in the school. These articulate and thoughtful groups of pupils represent the ideas of their peers in the school, and champion different causes and charities.
- Most pupils say that bullying is rare. All pupils that spoke to inspectors said that when it does occur, it is dealt with well by staff. Pupils say that the school is a safe place, and that they feel that pupils' differences are valued and appreciated by staff and pupils alike.
- Parents and carers and pupils are positive about the off-site alternative provision provided to a small number of pupils. Although safeguarded, these pupils are not accessing full-time education. Senior leaders and the trust were not fully aware of this at the time of the inspection.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour around the school is calm. Pupils are punctual to lessons and ready to learn. Most pupils engage in their learning and respond to staff instructions quickly. As a result, lessons start promptly, and few lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour.
- Most staff promote positive relationships. Most pupils follow their example in the way that they treat each other and staff in the school. Pupils are courteous, confident and kind. They express themselves articulately and interact with one another well during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The school's use of fixed-term and permanent exclusions, although rising, remains lower than average. The school uses its own internal behaviour systems, such as isolation, appropriately for the small numbers of pupils who do not adhere to leaders' expectations of behaviour. Pupils say that behaviour is mostly good, but that on occasion, some teachers are not consistent in how they apply the behaviour systems to different situations.

- Published information about pupils' attendance, and pupils' views, indicates that pupils value their education and attend well. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is below average, although school information suggests that this is gradually improving.
- The inaccuracies found in the recording of the attendance of a small group of pupils mean that leaders do not know where they need to intervene to improve the attendance of these pupils, or the impact of these inaccuracies on the school's overall published attendance figures.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The progress of pupils in Year 11 has varied significantly over the last three years. Leaders are not sharp in how they are accounting for this variance in pupils' outcomes, and in how they are securing consistently better outcomes for current pupils in all areas of weakness.
- In 2018, pupils made progress that put the school in the bottom 40% of schools. This was a significant contrast to the strong progress made by Year 11 pupils in 2017, which was above the national average. Weaknesses in pupils' progress in 2018 were widespread. The most able and disadvantaged pupils made less progress than their peers nationally across several subjects. The overall progress that pupils made in science, languages, history, geography and the 'open' wider subjects was also weak.
- While standards in science and languages are improving, the standards in history and geography remain a stubborn weakness in the school's outcomes. Pupils have too many gaps in their knowledge from key stage 3, which teachers are attempting to address in key stage 4.
- The small proportion of pupils who are educated off site in key stage 4 are not all accessing full-time education. Leaders' work to monitor and review pupils' outcomes is not rigorous enough.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils remains a relative weakness. Current Year 11 pupils are making better progress, but disadvantaged pupils are still not achieving the standards of which they are capable, most notably in Years 8 and 9.
- Pupils receive helpful advice about the different opportunities available to them at the end of key stage 4. The full-time on-site careers adviser provides insightful and impartial support about colleges, apprenticeships and employment. A high proportion of pupils go on to appropriate next steps to successfully complete their studies.
- A large proportion of pupils are supported well through the school's extra-curricular provision. Consequently, they leave the school with numerous forms of accreditation and experience, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Last year, a cohort of pupils managed to achieve the high accolade of the Gold award in the summer holidays.

School details

Unique reference number	137214
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10085483

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 converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,260
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	John King
Headteacher	Simon Bell
Telephone number	01375 486000
Website	http://williamedwards.org.uk/
Email address	admin@wes.swecet.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- William Edwards School is larger than the average-sized secondary school. When its predecessor school was inspected by Ofsted in 2010, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school converted into an academy in 2011. It became the lead school in the South West Essex Community Education Trust (SWECET) in 2015.
- Responsibility for the school's performance lies with the trust board. There are currently four other schools in the trust. The trust is also sponsoring the creation of a free school, which is due to open in September 2020.
- Following the inspection of the predecessor school, a new headteacher took up post in 2010. He remained in this position, while also becoming chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, until September 2018.

- The current headteacher took up the permanent role as headteacher from September 2018. Prior to this, he had been the head of school, supported by the headteacher/CEO.
- The school is part of the Thurrock Teaching School Alliance (TTSA).
- The school uses two off-site providers for a small number of pupils as part of its curriculum provision. These are Impulse Leisure in Corringham and Choice Training in Dagenham.
- This inspection began as a no formal designation inspection of an exempt school under section 8 of the Education Act. This was because of concerns about standards and the leadership and management of standards at the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook learning walks and reviewed pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, welfare, achievement, attendance and behaviour at the school. They also reviewed information related to children looked after, and off-site provision.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chair of the trust, the CEO and another trustee. They also held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- Inspectors also held a meeting with a group of staff who are new to the teaching profession.
- Inspectors reviewed the 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire. No free-text messages were available.
- Inspectors spoke to staff throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with four groups of pupils. All inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and at break- and lunchtime.
- Inspectors observed pupils' conduct at breaktimes and lunchtimes, as well as between lessons.

Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Liz Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Nutman	Ofsted Inspector
Diana Osagie	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Leonard	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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