

# Inspection of Wixams Academy

Green Lane, Wixams, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK42 6BA

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Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 2024

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
The quality of education	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The interim headteacher of this school is Chris Stainsby. This school is part of Knowledge Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Ian Hunter, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Suzie Hobart. There is also a Director of Education, Hywel Jones, who is responsible for this school and was chief executive officer of the predecessor trust, Bedford College Academies Trust.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Most pupils enjoy attending Wixams Academy. They attend regularly. There are many opportunities for personal development. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities and visits, including trips abroad. There are increasing opportunities to contribute to the development of the school through roles, such as the junior leadership team.

Most pupils now understand and follow the school's clear behaviour expectations in lessons. The school is generally calm and orderly. Pupils usually treat each other and staff with respect. However, some pupils are frustrated about the way a small number of pupils speak to others. Bullying does happen occasionally, but staff usually deal with this effectively. Pupils are kept safe here.

Pupils often experience skilful teaching in lessons. However, this is not always the case. The curriculum is generally well planned but there are inconsistencies in how well it is delivered. As a result, pupils learn better in some subjects than in others.

Sixth-form students benefit from small classes, specialist teachers and interesting lessons. As a result, students work hard and are very engaged in their learning. Students develop their skills through leadership and mentoring. They receive valuable guidance, including careers information, to prepare them well for their next steps.

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

The school's curriculum clearly sets out what pupils should know and understand, and how this knowledge builds up over time. However, the level of ambition across subjects varies. Leaders recognise that the Year 7 and Year 8 curriculum content in some subjects has not provided a secure foundation for key stage 4. The time available to study key stage 3 content is being increased.

In some subjects, skilled questioning is used to check pupils' understanding. However, this is not consistent, particularly in the lower years of the school. This means gaps in pupils' knowledge are not always identified. As a result, pupils are not always sure about what they have learned. The quality of their work varies. In some subjects, the expectations of staff are not high enough. This means pupils' understanding is not developed as thoroughly as it should be.

The reading intervention programme for those pupils who require reading support is having some limited impact but lacks precision. It does not always meet the needs of pupils who struggle with reading. Leaders recognise this and are taking steps to address it.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are generally well supported. Their needs are accurately identified. Teachers have the information

they need to adapt their teaching. However, pupils with SEND experience the same inconsistencies in the curriculum delivery as their peers.

The quality of education in the sixth form is stronger than the main school. The curriculum matches students' needs and aspirations. Teachers have stronger subject knowledge and higher expectations. There is impressive support for students' mental health and well-being.

The school's behaviour policy now sets out clear expectations. Pupils move around the school in an orderly way. Social times are calm. However, all staff do not consistently apply behaviour expectations. Leaders know there is still work to do to help pupils' focus positively on their learning. The school provides strong pastoral support and works closely with many families. This has helped reduce serious behavioural issues and secure good attendance.

Personal development across the school is a strength. The personal, social, health and economic curriculum is well structured. It is closely linked to pupils' needs. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to stay safe. However, some younger pupils do not always apply their knowledge about diversity, equality and the protected characteristics.

An impressive range of visits, activities and clubs help pupils to develop their talents and understanding of the world. Leaders make sure that all pupils can access these opportunities. However, the monitoring of pupils' participation is at an early stage. The well-planned careers programme includes helpful independent advice and guidance. There are opportunities to meet potential employers.

Governance is in a period of transition. The local advisory body has been strengthened with additional expertise since the previous inspection. However, local governors and trustees have not always been sufficiently challenging.

Leaders across the school want the best for pupils. They know what needs to be improved. Progress has been made in some areas. The school and the trust recognise that the school is not yet where it should be. They know there is work to do to gain the full confidence of parents.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- While pupils' general conduct has improved, there are still inconsistencies in how effectively the school's behaviour systems are applied by staff. The school should

continue to train and support staff to use the school's behaviour policies and processes consistently.

- Assessment is not always used well. In some subjects, effective strategies to determine exactly what pupils know and whether they are ready to move on are inconsistent. As a result, pupils do not always fully understand what they have been taught. The school should review the way in which assessment is used to improve its consistency and impact across all subjects.
- There are inconsistencies in how effectively the planned curriculum is delivered. Where expectations are low, or where strategies fail to engage pupils, they lose focus and can display poor attitudes towards their learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers have the training and support they need to understand how to adapt and teach the curriculum well.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144595
<b>Local authority</b>	Bedford
<b>Inspection number</b>	10318641
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	933
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	90
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Suzie Hobart
<b>Headteacher</b>	Chris Stainsby
<b>Website</b>	wixamsacademy.co.uk
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	29 and 30 March 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school has undergone substantial changes in leadership since the previous inspection. A chief executive officer was appointed in September 2022. The previous headteacher left the school in October 2023. A substantive headteacher has been appointed to start in April 2024.
- The school was previously one of two schools in the Bedford College Academies Trust (BCAT). BCAT merged with Knowledge Schools Trust (KST) on 1st March 2024. The former chief executive officer of BCAT is now director of education for the combined trust.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has grown significantly and opened its sixth-form provision in September 2022.
- The school makes use of three registered alternative providers.

- 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 met with the interim headteacher, other school leaders, the chief executive officer, director of education and other leaders of the trust, and the chair of the local advisory body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history and music. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum and visited lessons in some other subjects. They also reviewed school policies, leaders' evaluations and development plans.
- 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.
- Inspectors spoke with a wide range of pupils, including single-sex groups to understand what it is like to be a pupil in this school. Inspectors reviewed 95 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with members of staff to discuss the school's work and considered 58 responses to the confidential Ofsted staff survey.
- To consider the views of parents, inspectors reviewed 174 responses and 123 free-text comments submitted to Ofsted Parent View.

## Inspection team

John Constable, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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