

# Wolgarston High School

**Address:** Cannock Road, Penkridge, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST19 5RX

**Unique reference number (URN):** 145381

## Inspection report: 12 May 2026

|                    |           |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Exceptional        |           |
| Strong standard    | ● ●       |
| Expected standard  | ● ● ● ● ● |
| Needs attention    |           |
| Urgent improvement |           |

### ✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

### How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

## Strong standard

### Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard 

As a result of very effective support, intelligent leadership and high expectations, pupils' attendance and behaviour are strong. Attendance is above the national average for similar schools and has been over time. This positive attendance is also the case for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Whenever a pupil's or a group of pupils' attendance falls, leaders quickly find out what the problem is and support pupils to improve their attendance.

Pupils at Wolgarston behave very well. Leaders have ensured that pupils have a clear understanding of expectations around behaviour and how they ought to treat one another. These expectations make clear that any prejudicial behaviour is not tolerated. Where pupils struggle to meet the school's high expectations, leaders work effectively and positively to support pupils to behave better. Pupils say that bullying is infrequent and that they are confident in the ability of adults to help where needed. In class, pupils get down to their work quickly. They follow teachers' instructions consistently well. The rate of suspensions is low and decreasing. The number of pupils who have more than one suspension is very low.

### Post 16 provision

Strong standard 

Leaders have developed a high-performing post-16 provision that prepares students very well for their next steps. Students achieve very well in their examinations as a result of high expectations and a culture of hard work in the sixth form. Students particularly benefit from their teachers' strong subject knowledge, which means that teachers can explain complex concepts with ease.

There is an appropriate range of wider opportunities for sixth-form students. Students value the personal development curriculum in the sixth form, which supports them to be ready for adult life. They get engaged in the wider life of the school, help lead the school's charity events and enjoy discussion groups. Students in the sixth form set a great example for pupils in the lower school.

As a result of high standards of achievement, students have lots of choices for their next steps. Regardless of what they choose to do, the support they receive is very effective. Students go on to employment, apprenticeships and university. The proportion who sustain their destination is well above the national average.

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## Expected standard

### Achievement

Expected standard 

Typically, pupils develop their important reading, writing and mathematical knowledge well. In lessons, they learn the curriculum content they need to go on to more challenging tasks.

The school helps those pupils who join the school with weaknesses in their literacy and numeracy to catch up.

Over time, many pupils' achievements in national assessments have been excellent. This very high level of attainment and progress has not been maintained. In a small number of subjects, pupils' recent attainment has been weak. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is in line with that of their peers nationally. In the past, it has been well above.

As a result of effective support, pupils are well supported to make suitable next steps. The proportion of pupils who go on to suitable, sustained destinations is well above the national average.

## Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed the curriculum appropriately so that pupils in Year 9 complete the end of their key stage 3 curriculum. This supports pupils' readiness to undertake key stage 4 study confidently.

Leaders at all levels have a very accurate view of the quality of teaching, having thoroughly evaluated pupils' achievement over time. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent. Generally, teachers have the skills to make sure that pupils who face barriers to their learning understand the content of the lesson. However, this is not as consistent as it could be. Leaders' work to improve this is appropriate and is already having a positive impact.

Where pupils arrive at the school with weak reading, writing and mathematical skills, the school takes action to support these pupils to catch up. Leaders recognise that work in this area could be even better organised and precisely matched to pupils' needs.

There has been some turbulence in staffing in some subjects recently. This has led to weaker teaching in these areas. Leaders' plans to limit the impact of this are appropriate and effective.

## Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders are passionate about supporting pupils who have additional needs. They identify pupils' needs when they join the school and work well with external agencies when necessary. Teachers plan lessons that are ambitious for all pupils and which take into account pupils' individual needs. As a result, pupils with barriers to their learning, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, typically receive the help and support they need to be successful.

Leaders systematically review their use of additional funding for pupils who are disadvantaged. Where strategies are not having the desired impact, leaders are quick to change. Leaders at all levels recognise that disadvantaged pupils do not always achieve as well as their peers in school. They have carefully evaluated what disadvantaged pupils need to be successful and have trained staff to better meet these pupils' needs. This training is relatively recent but is already having a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils who are known to social care are supported well. Leaders show great determination and tenacity to ensure that these pupils get the help and support they need from the range of organisations supporting them.

The school uses alternative provision effectively to help pupils reintegrate into school.

## Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

The trust, school leaders and those responsible for governance have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need to improve. They have identified the slip in key stage 4 outcomes, both overall and in a small number of subjects. Those responsible for governance and the trust are supporting leaders effectively to make the improvements that are required.

Leaders have chosen the right priorities to help the school develop and have made sure that they manage change carefully. For example, the improvements in teaching for more vulnerable pupils are already having a positive impact without unnecessarily increasing teachers' workload.

The vast majority of staff say that they feel proud to work at the school. They feel that the school supports them in managing pupils' behaviour effectively and considers their workload well.

Leaders have designed professional development that matches the school's development priorities. Most staff feel that this professional development is making them more effective in their work.

The majority of parents value the work of the school highly, seeing the positive impact the school has on their children's lives.

## Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a personal development curriculum, which helps pupils deepen their knowledge over time. The curriculum takes into account the specific context of the school and its pupils. When pupils join the school, the curriculum teaches them explicitly what the school's expectations are and the importance of fundamental British values. Leaders adapt this curriculum by listening to what pupils need and identifying when there are patterns in pupils' needs. When it is appropriate, leaders bring specialist speakers and groups into the school to enliven the curriculum further. This means that pupils' knowledge of important topics is well developed.

All pupils have a comprehensive education that evaluates different beliefs, cultures and traditions. This helps pupils to understand the lives and beliefs of people outside of the immediate community.

Lessons on personal development are enhanced through regular opportunities for discussion. This means that pupils have time to develop their ideas and listen to others' thoughts on important topics. The curriculum includes work on risks in a range of online and offline situations, guidance on how pupils can keep themselves safe, how to build strong

relationships and how to seek support when they require it. This helps pupils feel confident to seek wellbeing support should they need it.

Leaders have identified some pupils with particular needs who need extra support with their personal development. These pupils have personalised, highly effective support so that the personal-development curriculum meets their specific needs. As a result, these pupils are being very well prepared for life after school. They learn how to keep themselves safe, become more resilient and build strong relationships with their peers.

The school offers pupils a wide range of enrichment activities, which all pupils take part in. Recently, pupils have enjoyed an animal therapy day, for example.

## **What it's like to be a pupil at this school**

Pupils at Wolgarston have positive relationships with each other and staff. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Their excellent attendance and positive attitudes to learning show this.

Bullying is rare. The school listens carefully to pupils' views and is proactive in responding to this feedback. The school regularly adapts the curriculum where pupils ask for, or need, extra lessons on topics that are important to them.

Pupils feel confident to speak to an adult if they have any concerns. This means that pupils feel safe in school because they have someone to help them if they have any problems.

Over the past two years, there has been some turbulence in staffing. As a result, pupils' achievement in some subjects is not as positive as it could be. However, overall, pupils achieve well at Wolgarston. This means that they gain the skills and qualifications they need to go on to positive destinations including the school's sixth form.

Students in the sixth form achieve highly. They form excellent relationships with their teachers and enjoy the challenges of a highly studious environment. They go on to a wide range of positive destinations.

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## **Next steps**

- The school should continue to sharpen teachers' practice through the professional learning programme so that vulnerable pupils' progress continues to improve.
  - Leaders should develop interventions that more precisely support pupils to develop reading fluency and accuracy.
  - Leaders should continue to monitor and limit the impact of change on staff workload and wellbeing.
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# About this inspection

This school is part of the Penk Valley Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Trevor Sutcliffe, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mark Roberts.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with pupils, staff, school leaders, trust leaders and those responsible for governance during the inspection.

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.

The school uses three alternative providers. None of these providers are registered.

Dan Boden: Headteacher

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## Lead inspector:

Dan Owen, His Majesty's Inspector

## Team inspectors:

David Hermitt, Ofsted Inspector

Niall Gallagher, Ofsted Inspector

Darren Bishop, Ofsted Inspector

Trudi Young, Ofsted Inspector

# Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 12 May 2026

# School and pupil context

## Total pupils

**834**

Below average

### **What does this mean?**

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

### **School capacity**

**860**

Below average

### **What does this mean?**

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

### **Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)**

**14.66%**

Below average

### **What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

### **Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan**

**1.44%**

Below average

### **What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

### **Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support**

**11.51%**

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

| Year            | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (final) | 47.1%       | 45.4%            | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final) | 50.2%       | 45.9%            | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final) | 58.5%       | 45.3%            | Above                          |

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

| Year            | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (final) | 47.6        | 46.1             | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final) | 49.2        | 45.9             | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final) | 52.1        | 46.3             | Above                          |

## Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

| Year            | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2023/24 (final) | 0.38        | -0.03            | Above                          |
| 2022/23 (final) | 0.64        | -0.03            | Above                          |

## Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

### Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

| Year            | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (final) | 13.3%       | 25.8%            | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (final) | 37.9%       | 25.8%            | Above                          |
| 2022/23 (final) | 33.3%       | 25.2%            | Close to average               |

### Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

| Year            | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (final) | 34.8        | 34.9             | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final) | 41.4        | 34.6             | Above                          |
| 2022/23 (final) | 44.4        | 35.0             | Above                          |

### Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

| Year            | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2023/24 (final) | -0.28       | -0.57            | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final) | -0.13       | -0.57            | Above                          |

### Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

### Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

| Year            | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2024/25 (final) | 13.3%       | 53.1%                            | -39.8 pp                |
| 2023/24 (final) | 37.9%       | 53.1%                            | -15.2 pp                |
| 2022/23 (final) | 33.3%       | 52.4%                            | -19.1 pp                |

### Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

| Year            | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2024/25 (final) | 34.8        | 50.4                             | -15.6                   |
| 2023/24 (final) | 41.4        | 50.0                             | -8.6                    |
| 2022/23 (final) | 44.4        | 50.3                             | -5.9                    |

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

| Year            | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2023/24 (final) | -0.28       | 0.16                             | -0.45                   |
| 2022/23 (final) | -0.13       | 0.17                             | -0.30                   |

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

| Year                   | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2023 leavers (revised) | 96%         | 92%              | Above                          |
| 2022 leavers (revised) | 95%         | 93%              | Average                        |
| 2021 leavers (revised) | 97%         | 94%              | Average                        |

# 16 to 18 performance

## A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

| Year            | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (final) | 35.83       | 35.00            | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final) | 39.22       | 34.38            | Above                          |
| 2022/23 (final) | 40.57       | 34.16            | Above                          |

## A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

| Year              | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (final)   | 0.1         | 0.0              | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (revised) | 0.4         | 0.0              | Above                          |

# Absence

## Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

| Year             | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (3 term) | 6.9%        | 8.4%             | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 7.2%        | 8.9%             | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 7.1%        | 9.0%             | Below                          |

## Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

| Year             | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (3 term) | 18.1%       | 23.4%            | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 20.3%       | 25.6%            | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 19.4%       | 26.5%            | Below                          |

## Our grades explained

### Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

### Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

### Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

### Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

### Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

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