

# Smith's Wood Academy

**Address:** Windward Way, Smith's Wood, Birmingham, Birmingham, West Midlands, B36 0UE

**Unique reference number (URN):** 143895

## Inspection report: 13 January 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.

## Expected standard

### Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders' work to improve attendance has been particularly effective. Significant and ongoing work to improve attendance for pupils, including those who may face barriers to their learning or wellbeing is proving successful. Although attendance for many pupils is not at national averages, rates of attendance continue to rise swiftly for groups and individual pupils as a result of this work.

Pupils' increasingly positive behaviour reflects the high expectations that leaders have of them. When behaviour falls short of these expectations, including any bullying, it is dealt with quickly by staff. Pupils are usually polite and respectful as they enter the school grounds. These positive behaviours continue throughout the school day. Pupils know and understand the rules and routines of the school day. They appreciate that staff apply the rules fairly. At break times and lunchtimes, most pupils behave sensibly.

Previously, rates of suspensions have been higher than national averages. However, there has been a demonstrable reduction in the number of suspensions this academic year. Most pupils value the support staff give them. Clear, consistently reinforced behaviour routines ensure that any lesson disruptions are addressed equitably across the school. Pupils who struggle to meet the schools' high expectations benefit from an effective layered approach to understanding their emotions and feelings. This helps them to reflect and adjust their behaviours.

### Inclusion

Expected standard 

Pupils who experience barriers to their learning or wellbeing, including those who are disadvantaged or pupils who speak English as an additional language, are generally supported well. Leaders use the views of pupils and their parents and carers to shape the support they provide pupils. Alternative provision is only used when appropriate and in pupils' best interests.

Staff receive extensive and regular training to support pupils, especially pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This includes the use of 'pupil passports' to identify precise strategies to help each pupil. As a result, staff know, and generally make, appropriate adaptations or adjustments to learning for pupils with SEND or those who have missed periods of education in other settings. Typically, pupils receive effective support in lessons to access their learning successfully. They can explain what they learn and what they need to do to improve to help them to reach their ambitious targets.

The school's use of the pupil premium funding is effective. Those who are disadvantaged are beginning to make improved progress through the curriculum from their starting points. The school uses research-based strategies, and collaboration with other providers, to review which strategies are the most effective to remove barriers for these pupils. These approaches are starting to have a positive and successful impact.

## Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

There have been significant and highly effective changes to the leadership of the school since the last inspection. A new principal, supported by an experienced leadership team, has reinvigorated pupils' motivations to attend school and learn. Leaders have a clear understanding of the further work needed to improve pupils' achievement and teaching. Their renewed vision and ambitious goals are impacting positively across all levels of leadership. As a result, staff understand the school's context, strengths and areas for improvement. They recognise the role that they play in taking appropriate action to improve the school further.

Robust challenge and meaningful support from those responsible for governance sets the tone for how leaders across the school are held to account. Trustees and leaders ensure that statutory duties are met. They pay close attention to detailed evidence about how the school is improving. This is used to identify precisely what needs to be worked on next. Decisions are made in the best interests of pupils, particularly those who face barriers to their learning or wellbeing.

Staff know that their wellbeing and professional development matters deeply to leaders. They value the training that they receive and the opportunities that they have to pursue leadership qualifications. Leaders have ensured that staff and pupils benefit from a happy and collaborative place to learn and work. Staff celebrate with pride their work and how far the school has progressed in recent years. Pupils' current experiences and educational opportunities have been significantly raised by the actions and rigour of leaders across all levels of the school.

## Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Pupils are well prepared for life outside of school and for the next stages of their education and careers. This is because staff carefully teach pupils the knowledge that they need to lead healthy and safe lives. This includes learning about online safety and being alert to the possible impacts of social media use. Pupils who need additional support benefit from a range of strategies to support their mental health and wellbeing. Pupils learn the appropriate information they need about relationships. Leaders ensure that pupils are exposed to core experiences matched against the school values. These include: dedication, integrity and tradition. Pupils are taught about the diversity life in modern Britain. Most pupils can understand and remember this key learning.

There are a wide range of opportunities to develop pupils' talents and interests through performance arts. Pupils generally speak highly of them. Leaders promote these enrichment opportunities well. They put in place carefully targeted interventions to support pupils to take a full part in the life of the school. This is increasing pupils' participation effectively in these experiences. Pupils are helped to contribute in meaningful ways beyond school. For example, leaders are especially proud of the opportunities pupils have to support the local community, such as when the school choir supported the local Christmas lights' switch-on.

The school's careers education is highly effective. Pupils are supported to prepare well for future education, employment or training. Pupils experience relevant encounters with local employers and higher education providers. These increase pupils' awareness and

aspirations for what they can aim to do in the future. Tailored advice enables pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to understand the steps they need to take to achieve their ambitions.

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## Needs attention

### Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils' achievement in national examinations is not high enough. While attainment has begun to show some improvement, it continues to be lower than national average. Too many pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Most recently, leaders' work to improve outcomes for pupils, including those who may face barriers to their learning, is beginning to bear fruit. Pupils are beginning to make more secure progress through the curriculum. However, it is too early to see the full impact of the school's work.

Due to the recent improvements made to teaching, pupils are starting to develop appropriate knowledge and skills. Where this is successful, pupils are supported to secure the key skills and knowledge that they need. Too often, however, pupils continue to have gaps in important knowledge, particularly the use of punctuation and grammar and the spelling of key words. These gaps are not routinely addressed by teachers. As a result, they are not closing quickly. In addition, pupils do not always produce high-quality work. At times, work is incomplete or inaccurate.

### Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders, typically, have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching through regular 'check-ins'. They have prioritised improving the quality of teaching that pupils receive. Leaders are working to improve teaching so that it is consistently effective and meets pupils' needs. Increasingly, teaching across the school supports pupils' learning. However, this is not consistent. Pupils' experiences are uneven as a result. In lessons, teaching is not always adapted or matched to support pupils to secure the knowledge and skills that they need. In addition, the checks made on pupils' learning are not routinely used to inform future teaching to help pupils to make further progress through the curriculum. Pupils who require help to read confidently are supported effectively to secure the skills that they require to become fluent readers. However, the support for pupils to learn some other important knowledge and skills, particularly those needed for writing, is more variable.

Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum that enables them to study a range of academic and vocational qualifications. Leaders carefully consider how the curriculum will support pupils who may have barriers to their learning or wellbeing. The curriculum is suitable for different ages and subject areas, and appropriately ordered, helping many pupils to build their knowledge on prior learning. Teachers are equipped with the necessary subject knowledge to teach across the curriculum areas.

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

Smith's Wood Academy pupils appreciate that their school has improved significantly. Leaders identify barriers to pupils' learning or wellbeing from their starting points. They are increasingly ensuring that such barriers are reduced to support pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to achieve well. Pupils typically receive the additional support that they need, so they can access the curriculum. However, over time, pupils' achievement in national tests has remained low. Pupils have legacy gaps in their knowledge, particularly in writing, that are proving more stubborn to close. Some pupils are not as well prepared for their next steps as they could be.

Pupils are calm and happy around the school. The school is a friendly, respectful community where pupils can be themselves. Pupils and staff share warm relationships. Increasingly, more pupils enjoy coming to this inclusive school. They speak positively about the support and care that they receive from staff. Pupils feel safe and well looked after. Pupils typically behave well around school. Instances of bullying are rare. On the whole, pupils feel that behaviour has improved. Pupils are generally attentive in lessons. Most pupils have a positive attitude to their learning. They are keen to do well. Some pupils do not always focus as well as they might in the classroom. When this happens, staff speak calmly to pupils to remind them of the high expectations.

Pupils have many opportunities to represent the school, for example as part of the school choir. Many pupils enjoy taking part in enrichment activities, such as debate club, the school production and the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. Pupils develop their leadership skills through their roles on the school council. They contribute well to the school community.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that pupils who need to develop their foundational skills, including legible handwriting, correct spelling of key words and correct use of punctuation and grammar, are supported consistently and effectively to do so.
  - Leaders should ensure that staff adapt their teaching and assessment effectively to ensure that pupils receive the support and challenge that they need to deepen their key knowledge and skills.
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## About this inspection

This school is part of Fairfax Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Simon Jones, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Best.

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 HMIs.

## Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the principal, senior leaders, other leaders and staff at the school.

Inspectors also met with the trust, including the chief executive officer and director of education. They also met with trustees, including the chair of the trust board and the chair of the local governing board. Inspectors visited lessons. They looked at pupils' work. They spoke with pupils at different times across the school day and observed behaviour in lessons and around the school site.

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.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The principal took up post in February 2023. Several senior leaders have also started since then.

The school uses five, registered, alternative providers for a small number of pupils.

Principal: Stephen Huntington

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### **Lead inspector:**

Stuart Clarkson, His Majesty's Inspector

### **Team inspectors:**

Nicola Walters, Ofsted Inspector

Darren Bishop, Ofsted Inspector

Paul Halcro, His Majesty's 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 13 January 2026

## **School and pupil context**

### **Total pupils**

**744**

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**

**1,000**

Close to 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: 1,152

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

**64.92%**

Well above 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**

**1.21%**

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

**28.23%**

Well above average

### What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

## Location deprivation

**Above 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
<b>2024/25 (provisional)</b>	18.6%	45.2%	Below
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	16.6%	45.9%	Below
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	7.5%	45.3%	Below

## 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.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>2024/25 (provisional)</b>	32.1	45.9	Below
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	30.0	45.9	Below
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	23.9	46.3	Below

### **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.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	-1.52	-0.03	Below
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	-1.83	-0.03	Below

### **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.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>2024/25 (provisional)</b>	9.8%	25.6%	Below
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	9.9%	25.8%	Below
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	1.9%	25.2%	Below

## 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 (provisional)	28.0	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	25.5	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	20.3	35.0	Below

## 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)	-1.63	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-2.09	-0.57	Below

## 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
<b>2024/25 (provisional)</b>	9.8%	52.8%	-43.0 pp
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	9.9%	53.1%	-43.2 pp
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	1.9%	52.4%	-50.5 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
<b>2024/25 (provisional)</b>	28.0	50.3	-22.3
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	25.5	50.0	-24.5
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	20.3	50.3	-30.0

### 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
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	-1.63	0.16	-1.79
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	-2.09	0.17	-2.26

### 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).

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>2023 leavers (provisional)</b>	71%	91%	Below
<b>2022 leavers (revised)</b>	80%	93%	Below
<b>2021 leavers (revised)</b>	83%	94%	Below

## **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.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>2024/25 (2 term)</b>	13.7%	8.1%	Above
<b>2023/24 (3 term)</b>	14.7%	8.9%	Above
<b>2022/23 (3 term)</b>	19.3%	9.0%	Above

### **Persistent absence**

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

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>2024/25 (2 term)</b>	41.5%	21.9%	Above
<b>2023/24 (3 term)</b>	45.5%	25.6%	Above
<b>2022/23 (3 term)</b>	55.6%	26.5%	Above

## **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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