

# WMG Academy for Young Engineers (Solihull)

Chelmsley Road, Chelmsley Wood, Birmingham B37 5FD

## Inspection dates

27–28 February 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The executive principal, the dedicated leadership team and the Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG) have, in a short time, created a school in which the ethos of 'business like – business led' prevails. The school has a workplace feel to it. Pupils benefit from many opportunities to engage with prestigious employers.
- Leaders know their school very well and have an accurate view of the school's strengths and aspects to improve. They address quickly any areas that fall short of their high expectations.
- During their time at the school, pupils make strong progress from their different starting points, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- The school's curriculum is carefully planned and reviewed regularly to meet its aim of creating young engineers of the future. It is employment-need driven and highly effectively underpinned by employability skills and pupils' personal development. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps.
- Pupils display a business-like attitude. They dress smartly, behave professionally and work hard. Pupils are highly complimentary of the many opportunities afforded to them to engage with potential future employers.
- Teaching in mathematics is not always as good as it could be. Leaders know this and are taking robust action. With support from governors and colleagues from within the trust, improvement strategies are beginning to have a positive impact and teaching is improving.
- Pupils, staff, parents and carers are unanimous in their praise for leaders and the pastoral care provided. As a result of pastoral work, exclusions have reduced sharply, and pupils' attendance has increased markedly. Both figures are now at least in line with national averages for all groups of pupils.
- The sixth-form provision is strong. The curriculum is planned effectively, and students achieve well on courses that match closely their career aspirations. As a result, they move on to a range of destinations. A notable number go on to apprenticeship placements.
- Some teachers do not routinely provide work that is sufficiently challenging for most-able pupils. Consequently, these pupils do not yet make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not address pupils' literacy mistakes quickly enough or provide opportunities for them to write at length. As a result, some pupils' written work is not extensive enough or shows mistakes that are being repeated over time.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers routinely:
  - plan tasks and provide work that challenges and stretches the thinking and learning of the most able pupils so that they make the progress of which they are capable
  - address misconceptions in literacy in pupils' work so that they do not become errors over time
  - provide pupils with opportunities to write extensively across a range of different subjects.
- Further improve the quality of teaching in mathematics so that it leads to better progress in this subject.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Since the school opened in September 2016, the executive principal together with senior leaders and the WMG trust has successfully set the school's ethos of 'business like – business led'. The school has a clear purpose of educating young engineers of the future. Together, they have raised aspirations and introduced highly effective systems and robust structures. For example, the school benefits from partnerships with a range of prestigious partners that are actively engaged in the education of pupils.
- Leaders are unwavering and untiring in their drive for excellence. They review regularly their own and colleagues' performance and actively engage with other schools to work collaboratively on improving outcomes for pupils. They know the school's strengths and few remaining weaknesses and work effectively to address any underperformance they identify. For example, leaders recognised that engaging more employers from a wider field of engineering other than automotive engineering was an issue. Consequently, leaders addressed this, and current partners include National Grid, Arup and Rolls-Royce, for example.
- The school's curriculum is a clear strength of the school. Leaders have designed it based upon employment needs and pupils' interests and abilities. All pupils complete a qualification in one of the school's specialist subjects of engineering, manufacturing or product design. The curriculum is underpinned highly effectively by the teaching of employability skills and pupils' personal development. Consequently, the school has a business feel to it and pupils speak about being treated like they would be in a work environment.
- Morale at the school is high. Teachers are proud to work at the school; they are fully engaged in leaders' vision and the school's ethos. Teachers are supportive of leaders and all enjoy working at the school. As a result, relationships at the school between staff and pupils and pupils themselves are professional, respectful and conducive to a positive learning environment.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is effective. Senior leaders accurately evaluate and analyse the quality of teachers' work. They act quickly to address any underperformance they identify. As a result, teaching is strong. Staff are unanimous in their praise for the many training and professional development opportunities afforded to them. However, the quality of teaching in mathematics is not consistently as good as it could be. Leaders have recognised this and have taken action to address it. For example, colleagues from other schools within the trust are providing targeted support. As a result, teaching in mathematics is improving.
- Middle leaders form a dedicated and focused group of professionals. They take an active role in evaluating and monitoring teachers' and pupils' performance. They ensure that teachers moderate work with colleagues in other schools to assure themselves of standards and accurate assessment information.
- The school's work to provide pupils with careers information, advice and guidance is highly effective. It has a positive impact on pupils' decisions about their destinations. For example, pupils have many opportunities to engage with a range of potential

employers and universities. Pupils go on to a variety of positive destinations that match their aspirations and career choices. As a result of this work, a notable number of pupils are successful in securing apprenticeship placements at these businesses. Pupils are prepared exceptionally well for their next steps in education, training or the world of work.

- Senior leaders use and evaluate effectively the impact of any additional funding they receive, including the pupil premium and funding to support pupils with SEND. For instance, targeted one-to-one support and timely interventions are planned carefully and reviewed regularly for their impact on pupils' outcomes. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND make good progress during their time at the school.
- Leaders have created a truly inclusive school in which everyone is supported and cared for. Pupils and staff feel safe and valued. Leaders' work on equipping pupils with employability skills and developing their personal growth is very effective. As a result, all pupils who spoke with inspectors would recommend the school to a friend and almost all parents would recommend it to another parent.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance at the school is strong. The local governing board (LGB) knows the school well and has a clear view of the strengths and those areas the school needs to improve further. They are dedicated to and passionate about the school and possess many strengths. They bring a wealth of relevant experiences and expertise, especially from the business sector, to their roles.
- Members of the LGB have high expectations of the school's performance and strive for a school where pupils are happy, receive an excellent education and become employable engineers of the future. They ensure that a wide range of prestigious employers engage with pupils so that they gain a clear insight into future career options.
- Governors provide an effective balance of support and challenge to the school's leadership team. They use information gathered through visits to school, as well as from reports provided by leaders, to ask challenging questions in order to bring about further improvements.
- The LGB discharges its statutory duties with diligence. Members monitor the school's budget carefully. They check that safeguarding arrangements are robust and ensure that the school has the access to employers and specialist equipment needed to fulfil its specialist engineering and manufacturing aims.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff work together to create a strong culture of safeguarding for all pupils which permeates the school. It is underpinned by regular training and frequent updates on local, regional and national issues for every member of staff. All staff say that pupils' welfare and safety are their priorities.

- The safeguarding and pastoral teams work highly effectively with relevant external agencies when required. Staff are persistent when they are concerned about a pupil's welfare and follow up concerns with these agencies as necessary. Leaders complete appropriate employment checks and keep accurate records.
- All pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in school. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They understand the risks surrounding online safety, gang culture and social media, for example.
- Leaders assure themselves that the specialist working areas within the school are safe environments, effectively risk-assessed, and that pupils are trained regularly on the safe use of the specialist equipment. As a result, pupils are safe in the use of and knowledgeable about the equipment with which they work.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Leaders monitor effectively the quality of teaching across the curriculum and provide good support and targeted training when required. As a result, teaching has improved and is strong. As a result of leaders' actions and better teaching, pupils make strong progress, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. However, there remains some variability in the quality of teaching in mathematics. Leaders have identified this and have effective plans to address this issue.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and foster respectful relationships. They have strong subject knowledge and a clear enthusiasm for their subjects that they pass on to their pupils. Teachers plan lessons that incorporate a range of innovative resources and specialist equipment to stimulate pupils' interest and curiosity. Pupils enjoy learning and are very complimentary about the school's specialist work areas.
- Leaders have introduced an effective and reliable system of collecting information about pupils' progress. The information is tracked by middle leaders and shared with senior leaders. This process helps everyone to follow a clear line of accountability. Furthermore, leaders and teachers are able to put timely and effective interventions in place to help pupils catch up and close any gaps in their knowledge. Consequently, current pupils' progress is strong and continuing to improve.
- Teachers know their pupils well and give ongoing verbal feedback that helps them to move their learning on. They check pupils' understanding well and provide support and intervention when pupils fall behind. Pupils speak highly of the support they receive in lessons and feel well supported to do their best. One pupil said, 'Teachers here care about how well we do and want us to do our best.'
- Leaders regularly assess pupils' progress and use this information to identify priorities for staff training. Teachers work closely with colleagues from other schools within the trust to share best practice and they frequently moderate pupils' work together. This helps everyone to reach a common understanding about the expected standards of GCSE examinations, for example. Staff are unanimous in their praise for the many training and professional development opportunities afforded to them.
- Pupils with SEND receive targeted support. Their progress is monitored and reviewed carefully so that leaders can intervene when appropriate. As a result, pupils can access their learning effectively and make the progress of which they are capable.

- Some teachers do not routinely plan tasks that challenge the thinking or deepen the learning of the most able pupils. When this happens, these pupils find work too easy and their progress slows.
- In some lessons, teachers do not address pupils' literacy mistakes quickly enough or give them opportunities to write extensively about their learning in a range of subjects. Consequently, pupils' work includes little extended writing and the work that is there can be marred by literacy errors that keep being repeated over time.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The pastoral support provided by the school is a strength. Pupils, parents and staff are unanimous in their praise for the help, support and guidance pupils receive when they need it.
- The school is rightly proud of its inclusive ethos, where every pupil is valued and cared for. Pupils say that bullying is very rare. They have every confidence that when it does occur it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.
- Leaders plan the curriculum carefully to ensure that pupils have substantial access to the world of work and interact effectively with the school's business partners. They place great emphasis on the development of pupils' employability skills, such as teamwork, problem-solving and effective communication. For example, during the inspection the school ran an assembly centred around these skills and linked them effectively into the world of engineering. Another aspect is employers' involvement with educating pupils. For instance, business leaders visit the school and speak to pupils about interview skills, give them mock interviews and hold presentations about their businesses.
- Pupils have a good understanding of current and topical issues such as knife crime, online risks and gang violence, for example. Pupils benefit from regular learning about the most current safeguarding issues through assemblies and the school's personal, social and health education programme. Pupils are knowledgeable about these issues and talk about them with maturity and confidence.
- Pupils have many opportunities to explore leadership positions through the school's 'student leadership forum' (SLF). They gain knowledge about fundamental British values, such as democracy, through electing members onto the SLF. All pupils and parents say that they value the personal development opportunities pupils receive. Leaders' work to ensure pupils' personal development is strong. They ensure that pupils have a secure knowledge of topical and social issues. Pupils speak about these with maturity and respect. For example, pupils spoke with confidence about how they have changed and become young professionals since they joined the school.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and learning time is rarely wasted. Behaviour during

social times and in corridors at lesson changeover is calm and orderly. All the pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that the behaviour around school and in lessons is good. Parents who responded to Parent View and staff who completed the staff survey agreed that behaviour is good.

- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Staff supervision is effective while at the same time allowing pupils the opportunity to self-regulate their behaviour. Pupils spoken to during lunchtime, for example, said that 'we are trusted to get it right'.
- Pupils wear business dress and look smart. They are friendly, courteous and respectful of each other and staff. They are proud of their school and look after the school environment. As a result, the school's buildings are free from litter and graffiti.
- Staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy. As a result, fixed-term exclusions have reduced sharply and are now below the national average. This sanction had a positive impact on managing pupils' behaviour, as repeat fixed-term exclusions are almost zero.
- Attendance for all pupils, including groups of pupils, is at least in line with the national average. This is because leaders have addressed effectively any low attendance in the past. Owing to the strong relationships that are evident at the school, pupils enjoy their learning and do not want to miss time at school.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils enter the school in Year 10. Therefore, published outcomes for pupils do not take full account of the progress pupils make during their time at the school. Because of this, leaders benchmark-assess all pupils upon entry to the school and use that information to track carefully how well they are progressing. The information gathered shows that pupils, including those with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress from their different starting points during their time at the school.
- Pupils' entry examination information shows that they join the school with below-average prior attainment. Leaders have devised effective intervention techniques to address these shortcomings. For example, the school's reading programme provides effective support and, as a result, pupils catch up.
- Disadvantaged pupils have historically underperformed. Leaders have recognised this and have put targeted and individualised interventions in place. As a result, current disadvantaged pupils' progress has improved. For example, in 2018, 22% of disadvantaged pupils achieved a grade 4 or above in English and mathematics; the school's assessment information shows that current pupils are achieving better.
- Pupils make particularly strong progress in the school's specialist subjects, for example in manufacturing. This is because of effective teaching and pupils benefiting from a range of teaching strategies that engage their interests. The progress pupils make in English has improved. Current pupils make strong progress because teaching is effective and leaders track carefully how well pupils are achieving. Pupils do not yet make the same strong progress in mathematics or science. Leaders have identified this and have detailed plans to address these shortcomings. Consequently, pupils' progress in these subjects is beginning to improve although more remains to be done.
- Pupils follow a highly appropriate curriculum which is well designed to prepare them



exceptionally well for their next steps in education or training. A greater number of pupils now stay on at the school's sixth form. Leaders use the information they have about pupils to plan individually designed GCSE pathways. This, paired with excellent careers advice and guidance, ensures that pupils receive high-quality information. Consequently, the number of pupils who leave the school and go on to further education, employment or apprenticeships is high and rising further.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Leadership of the sixth form is good. Leaders demonstrate strong capacity and ambition for further improvement. They are accurate and precise in their evaluation of teaching and learning and are implementing a range of strategies to promote greater progress by students, particularly on academic courses. The progress students make on vocational and applied courses is strong while the progress students make in academic courses is rapidly improving.
- The sixth-form provision enables students to study on academic or vocationally applied courses to suit their needs, abilities and interests. Course information on the pathways is detailed and informative, setting out clearly course entry requirements. As a result, almost half of Year 11 pupils stay on and join the sixth form.
- Teachers have high expectations and good subject knowledge, and know their students well. They have relevant technical expertise and proficiency in the specialist subjects they teach. Teaching is strong in most subjects, underpinned by effective questioning and regular assessment and feedback. Teachers use students' answers well to challenge misconceptions and encourage them to achieve a greater depth of understanding. Occasionally, some students are too reliant on the teacher for guidance and feedback rather than developing more independent ways of working.
- Students value the quality of education they receive and are very supportive of the sixth form. Their behaviour is excellent, and students are complimentary about the support and many opportunities they receive. Leaders' work to develop students' personal development is effective. Students are taught about relevant employability skills and have many opportunities to meet with or work alongside potential employers.
- Employer engagement is very strong. Students benefit from employers' active participation and involvement in the sixth form and the school as a whole. Leaders have developed the curriculum well to enable students to gain the qualifications that they need to move on to employment, apprenticeships or higher education.
- Careers advice and guidance are excellent. Students benefit from work experience and work-related learning. As a result, students are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps. A notable number of students move onto higher apprenticeships with partner employers. However, the planning and scheduling of work experience for students could be sharper. Students do not always have a secure understanding as to their work experience entitlement and, in a small minority of cases, are unsure as to when in the school year it is planned or will occur.
- Leaders and managers have successfully prioritised the development of students' skills in English and mathematics. Those that have joined the sixth form without a strong pass in their English and/or mathematics GCSE are effectively supported. As a result, outcomes for students resitting their GCSEs are high.



## School details

Unique reference number	142900
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10053547

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	University technical college
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	323
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	146
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mike Wright
Executive Principal	Katharine Tague
Telephone number	01212 893 556
Website	<a href="https://solihull.wmgacademy.org.uk/">https://solihull.wmgacademy.org.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:Solihull.info@wmgacademy.org.uk">Solihull.info@wmgacademy.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- This school is an academy. It is part of the WMG academies trust. The school is a university technical college in collaboration with the University of Warwick, specialising in engineering and manufacturing. Governance of the school is provided by the local governing board.
- The school is smaller than average. The majority of pupils are of White British origin.
- The proportions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with support for SEND are above average. The number of pupils on an education, health and care plan is average.
- The school does not provide any off-site alternative provision for any of its pupils.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation. This included: the school’s self-evaluation and action plans; school policies; and information about pupils’ attainment and progress, behaviour, attendance and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors visited lessons in all key stages in a wide range of subjects, some jointly with senior leaders. They observed pupils’ behaviour between lessons, at breaktime and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors evaluated the work in pupils’ books and folders across a range of year groups and in the sixth form when visiting lessons.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with governors, including the chair of governors, senior and middle leaders, and teachers, including those that are new to the school or newly qualified.
- The lead inspector met with a trustee who is also an employee at the University of Warwick and held a telephone conversation with the chair of the board of trustees. An inspector also met with a number of employers who are actively engaged in the school.
- The views of parents were considered through the 26 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, as well as the 22 free-text comments parents provided.
- Inspectors considered 30 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors held numerous discussions with a large number of pupils and considered one response to the online pupil questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Rob Steed	Ofsted Inspector
Victor Reid	Her Majesty’s Inspector

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