

# Smestow Academy

URN: 149635 | Inspected: 11 November 2025

## 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.

## Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils learn the curriculum well. Throughout the school, staff identify key gaps in pupils' knowledge and make sure that these are addressed. Pupils' attainment in national examinations at the end of key stage 4 is in line with national averages. Their overall progress, including for disadvantaged pupils, is better than national averages. Teachers make sure that sixth-form students achieve well in their subjects, mastering the foundational knowledge they need to succeed on post-16 courses. The progress students make from their starting points is in line with national averages. There is effective support for those pupils who are not yet confident, fluent readers. However, pupils' speaking and writing skills still need some further development. Leaders know this and have plans in place to address it. Pupils achieve the qualifications and wider skills they need to move successfully on to their next stages of education, employment or training.

## Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have made significant changes to the curriculum since the school became Smestow Academy. Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum that enables them to study a range of academic and vocational qualifications. Leaders are working to ensure that teaching is consistently effective and meets pupils' needs. The curriculum is generally taught well. Staff have received effective training to help them follow the 'Smestow teaching principles'. They use shared strategies which help pupils to understand what is expected of them as learners. In many lessons, especially in key stages 4 and 5, teaching is highly effective. For example, staff carefully check what pupils have understood. They make any adaptations needed to address misconceptions or help pupils to learn more independently. However, this is not consistent across the school. The school ensures that pupils still developing their reading skills get prompt support to become fluent readers. Pupils' reading skills are supported and developed well across the curriculum. However, there is not the same, consistent focus on the development of writing and speaking skills. This means that some pupils do not deepen their thinking or apply their learning as well as they could.

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## Inclusion

### Expected standard

Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), those who are disadvantaged, those known (or previously known) to social care and those who are in the early stages of learning English are supported well. The school has systems to identify pupils' needs and effective strategies are put in place to reduce any further barriers to their learning and/or well-being that they face. This includes thoughtful use of external agencies where appropriate. The views of pupils and of their parents and carers are used to shape the support that the school provides for pupils. Leaders keep a close eye on how well vulnerable pupils are doing, both academically and personally. The school's focus on getting to know pupils' individual needs and/or barriers has resulted in impressive improvements in pupils' behaviour and attendance rates. Staff receive regular training about how to support these pupils, especially those with SEND. They know how to make appropriate adaptations or adjustments to learning for pupils with SEND or those who speak English as an additional language. However, they are less clear about the specific support some disadvantaged pupils may need in lessons. Post 16 provision

Expected standard Following a number of significant changes to its post-16 provision, the school offers a curriculum and range of qualifications that are broad and well-matched to students' interests and aspirations. Since the school became Smestow Academy, there is limited outcomes information available for the sixth form. However, examination grades and the high quality of work produced by students show that they are progressing well from their starting points.

Students who may face barriers to their learning, for example those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are supported well in lessons. Students are motivated and keen to improve their knowledge. They make good use of the helpful feedback given by their teachers. They develop the study skills and confidence that will support them as they move on to their next stages in education, employment or training. Thanks to useful, personalised advice and guidance, students know what they need to do to realise their ambitions. There is a well-considered programme on offer to enhance and enrich pupils' academic learning. Students value the care and support they receive from staff. In return, they are keen to make an active contribution to the school and are great role models to younger pupils.

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

There have been significant improvements at the school since it opened as Smestow Academy in January 2023. Pupils and staff speak about the culture shift that has happened and why they feel happy to come to school. This has contributed to the improvement in pupils' behaviour and attendance. This is a friendly, respectful community where pupils are able to be themselves. Pupils feel safe and are confident that any concerns they may have will be taken seriously because this is a 'telling school'. They value the support they receive, including in the 'support hub'. They are impressively open about topics that matter to them, for example the importance of looking after their mental health. Pupils who may face barriers to their learning and/or well-being know that the school will try to help them overcome these. This is especially the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are in the earlier stages of learning to speak English. Pupils have a positive attitude to their learning and are keen to do well. They are attentive in lessons and can get on with their tasks without disruption. Many pupils produce good-quality work and achieve examination results in line with national

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outcomes. Many pupils take up the extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities available to them. They appreciate that some of these take place before school as that makes it easier for them to attend. These activities and breakfast club mean that the school is buzzing from well before the bell rings. Many pupils take on leadership roles in the school because they know the importance of contributing to their community. They pride themselves on their charity fundraising, for example for BBC Children in Need. From Year 7 to Year 13, everyone is helped to become the best version of themselves.

## Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff know the specific barriers disadvantaged pupils face in lessons and are able to support them effectively so that they achieve as well as they can.
- Leaders should ensure that all pupils secure the foundational writing and speaking skills needed to successfully apply and deepen their learning across the curriculum.
- Leaders should ensure that all staff confidently and consistently make changes and adaptations to planned learning, including making adjustments 'in the moment', in response to how well pupils have understood their learning.

## Leadership and governance

### Strong standard

The new trust and school leaders have quickly identified what needed improvement, resulting in significant progress at the school. They have worked on these priorities with an absolute focus on getting things right for all groups of pupils. This is why there have been rapid improvements in attendance, behaviour and the number of pupils securing passes in GCSE English and mathematics. Leaders at all levels want to do their best for pupils. Robust challenge and meaningful support from those responsible for governance set the tone for how leaders across the school are held to account. Trustees and leaders 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. Staff know that their well-being and professional development matter to leaders. They value the professional learning they receive from the school, the trust and from being enabled to pursue leadership qualifications. Their voice is heard when key decisions are being made. Everyone is rightly proud of the part they are playing in the improvements at Smestow. Leaders have ensured that this is a happy place to learn, work and thrive together. Personal development and well-being Strong standard Pupils flourish at Smestow. A thoughtfully designed personal development programme is embedded across all areas of school life. The school has made sure that this programme reflects the needs, interests and aspirations of the school community. As such, pupils see it as relevant and a valuable part of their education. Pupils are knowledgeable about important topics such as healthy relationships, staying safe online and mental health. They talk openly and articulately about these areas. They develop a deep understanding of all that it means to live in modern British society. They eagerly share their views and listen to each other respectfully. They are proud to share their own cultures, and to learn about different backgrounds. This contributes to the culture of respect that permeates the school. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and interests. These include the arts and many different sports. Pupils

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explain how taking part in activities such as school productions develops their confidence and resilience. Pupils can also develop their academic interests beyond the subjects that they study through links with universities. Leaders remove barriers so that all pupils can make the most of these opportunities, including those who are disadvantaged. This includes some pupils taking study trips abroad. The school wants all pupils to develop a sense of personal responsibility and leadership skills. Pupils are eager to contribute to the school and wider community. Many apply for formal leadership roles including form captains, prefects, librarians and ambassadors. The school's careers education is highly effective. It prepares pupils well for future education, employment or training. Pupils have meaningful encounters with local employers and higher education providers. These increase pupils' aspirations for what they can do in the future. Tailored advice enables pupils to understand the steps they need to take to achieve their ambitions. Expected standard

## Attendance and behaviour

**Strong standard**

Leaders have created a culture where pupils know what is expected of them. Pupils willingly meet these high expectations. They behave very well in lessons, at social times and as they move around the school site. They apply themselves well to their learning. Pupils treat staff and each other respectfully and kindly. Everyone knows that bullying or discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated here. Older students in the school have particularly positive attitudes and set a clear example to younger pupils. If pupils do need to be reminded about an expectation, for example about their uniform, they respond positively to the prompt. On the rare occasions when pupils do not make the right choices, staff help them to reflect on their behaviour and do better next time. The effectiveness of this support can be seen in the significant reduction in the number of suspensions over the last year. The school's work to improve attendance has also been successful. Attendance is in line with national averages and is even higher for disadvantaged pupils. The work to improve attendance for some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been particularly effective. Attendance for all groups of pupils continues to rise.

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**For detailed performance data including disadvantage gap analysis, historical trends, and comparison tables, visit the school's profile on WhatSchool:**

<https://whatschool.ai/en/school/smestow-academy-wolverhampton>