

Leasowes High School

Kent Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B62 8PJ

Inspection dates 1–2 December 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and other leaders have transformed the quality of education that the school provides since the last inspection.
- Senior leaders in the school have successfully created a shared vision to 'aspire and achieve'. Expectations of what pupils can achieve have risen and the school is improving rapidly.
- The governing body challenges and supports the school well and has made a strong contribution to recent improvements.
- Pupils are making good progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils achieving good GCSE grades, including in English and mathematics, is improving.
- Leaders' high expectations and rigorous checks on the quality of provision have resulted in good teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teachers plan lessons that consist of engaging and interesting learning activities that create conditions in which pupils are eager to learn.
- Working relationships between pupils and teachers are highly effective and support learning well.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite, respectful and courteous. They are proud of their school.
- Pupils feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe in a wide variety of situations.
- Staff, pupils and parents think that personal development and welfare are real strengths of the school, and inspectors agree.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Outcomes in some subjects, including geography and music, do not match those of the best, such as in English and science.
- Gaps still exist between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Although the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved, it is still not high enough.
- Teachers' written feedback does not always help pupils to know specifically what they have to do to improve their work. Teachers do not always provide pupils with the time to reflect on feedback and to act on it.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching and standards in weaker subjects, particularly geography and music, so that they are of the same high quality as in English and science, by sharing the good practice that exists in those more successful areas.
- Improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils so that gaps between their achievement and attendance and those of other pupils are eradicated by:
 - evaluating the impact of the distinct actions taken to close such gaps and maintaining those that have had most success
 - identifying and implementing new strategies that have proved successful elsewhere.
- Ensure that pupils always understand their teachers' marking and feedback and use these to improve their work, as the school's marking policy demands.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, other senior leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and want all pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes. They have established an ethos of respect, positive relationships and aspiration to achieve, which is shared by staff, pupils and parents.
- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They use a wide range of accurate information to create clear plans for improvement. Their approach has led to improvements in teaching and better outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have put in place extensive systems to check on the progress of pupils and the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Middle leaders have responded well to these systems and to increased accountability and now have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their teams. Senior leaders meet regularly with middle leaders to discuss their roles and ensure agreed actions are undertaken. As a result, the quality of middle leadership has improved markedly.
- Staff morale is high and the overwhelming majority who spoke with inspectors or completed the staff questionnaire say that they enjoy working at the school. Staff believe that the school is well led and managed. Leaders successfully motivate and support staff while holding them to account for their performance.
- Leaders use information on teachers' performance effectively to improve the quality of teaching. Leaders undertake regular lesson observations, review pupils' work and examine pupils' progress information. Performance management arrangements are strong.
- Leaders and governors carefully and effectively use the Year 7 catch-up premium, which is money given by the government to help pupils who enter the school behind their peers in English or mathematics. Pupils make progress with their reading, writing and numeracy skills so they catch up with other pupils at the school. Pupil premium funding, which is additional money for pupils who are looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals, has resulted in some improving outcomes for these pupils. However, this improvement has been inconsistent, with interventions having varying levels of impact on improving pupils' progress and attendance. As a result, gaps still exist between the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils at the school.
- Leaders have made sure that teachers are well informed about the particular needs of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs. As a result, teachers plan activities carefully and achievement gaps between these pupils and others are closing.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a range of courses that meet the needs and ambitions of pupils. Effective additional support for English and mathematics is provided to pupils should they fall behind.
- The school offers pupils a wide range of additional activities, including sports and other clubs as well as a variety of other enrichment activities and visits. Together with the formal curriculum, these make a strong contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is committed to the school's vision
 - has a very clear understanding of the priorities for the school, based on regular meetings and frequent visits to the school
 - understands which aspects of the school are not performing as well as others and the reasons for this
 - effectively provides challenge and support to leaders at all levels
 - ensures that strong performance management processes are put in place, and has not been afraid to make difficult decisions by challenging weak teaching to improve the performance of the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have created a culture where all staff in school understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. Nearly all pupils feel safe, and parents agree with this view.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment across all year groups and across most subjects have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Pupils make progress in both key stages as a result of better teaching. Teaching is particularly effective in English, mathematics and science.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to question pupils and deepen their understanding of key concepts and ideas. Pupils are keen to contribute ideas and test out their knowledge, supported by their teachers and their peers. For example, in mathematics, pupils regard 'failure as feedback' and so are willing to attempt very challenging questions, unafraid of giving the wrong answers.
- Staff and pupils have positive working relationships and nearly all pupils want to learn. Pupils regularly give each other constructive feedback on their work in a mature manner and they also make good use of the comments that they receive.
- Teachers have high expectations for pupils' use of subject-specific language and this expands pupils' vocabulary. Teachers provide activities that develop writing and reading within a range of lessons including science. As a result, pupils' literacy skills are improving well. Teachers take a consistent approach to using mathematical skills in a wide range of subjects, which means that pupils' numeracy skills are successfully improving.
- Teachers' accurate assessment of pupils' progress enables them to spot when a pupil is falling behind. Teachers then effectively provide extra help that gets the pupil back on track.
- Teachers and pupils regularly use and review targets that track the pupils' progress along their individual 'flight path'. As a result, pupils know their targets and are determined to achieve them.
- Teachers know their pupils well and most use information about what pupils can and cannot do to plan interesting activities which challenge them. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are usually high. In most lessons, pupils' progress is strong because the tasks provided are challenging; pupils respond positively and are determined to succeed. In some lessons, when teachers have not used the information they have about pupils to full effect, tasks are not as engaging or challenging and this limits the progress that pupils make.
- Pupils and parents believe that teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. Parents comment that their children have made 'tremendous progress' and that 'the school has exceeded expectations'. One pupil said: 'work is challenging in lessons and this helps my progress'.
- Pupils make less progress in a small number of subjects, including geography and music, where some weaknesses in teaching persist. In a small minority of lessons, work is not sufficiently challenging, teachers' questioning does not deepen pupils' learning, and resources do not always engage and enthuse pupils.
- Teachers provide pupils with regular written feedback in line with the school's marking policy. However, some teachers do not provide the specific advice about what needs to be done to improve that the school's policy demands. When this is the case, pupils do not understand what they need to do to improve their work. The school's policy says that teachers should provide pupils with 'dedicated improvement and reflection time' so that they can reflect on and make use of their teachers' feedback. Teachers do not always do this and so pupils do not always put their teacher's advice into practice.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe, and are safe, at school. Pupils follow an extensive programme of personal, social and health education and as a result can describe ways to keep themselves safe from risks including abuse, sexual exploitation, using the internet and extremism.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and they have confidence in the swift and effective manner with which it is tackled by adults in the school.
- Pupils play an active part in the school. Many are subject ambassadors and anti-bullying ambassadors. They take advantage of the wide range of clubs and activities that are available outside lessons.
- Pupils show tolerance and respect for each other. They take responsibility for their actions and they know how to be good citizens through contributing to wider society and life in modern Britain.

- The very small number of pupils who are educated away from the school site benefit from support that meets their particular needs and results in them attending regularly and behaving well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In lessons, pupils listen carefully to staff and other pupils and respond quickly to instructions and requests. Pupils say they get on with their learning without being disrupted by poor behaviour. Inspectors observed a small amount of inattention and chatting in a few lessons, usually because the work set was not engaging or did not have sufficient challenge.
- Pupils move around the building in a calm and orderly manner between lessons and during breaks. They are courteous, pleasant and helpful to adults and each other.
- Pupils show pride in their appearance and their school as they are smart and wear their uniform correctly.
- A small number of pupils who find it hard to meet the school's expectations for behaviour and attitudes towards learning spend some or all of their week at the Greenhill Alternative Learning Campus. As a result, these pupils have improved their attendance and attitudes to learning. None of these pupils has been permanently excluded for two years and all have moved to a college course or apprenticeship when they leave the campus.
- Pupils are punctual when moving between classes, but a little lateness was observed at the end of breaktimes, resulting in later starts and reduced learning time in some lessons.
- Attendance has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now close to the national average. However, absence amongst disadvantaged pupils is higher than the national average and so gaps remain.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils enter the school with levels of prior attainment slightly below the national average. Unvalidated GCSE results for 2015 show considerable improvement in attainment, particularly in the percentage of pupils achieving five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, which is now broadly average.
- Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. The proportions of Year 11 pupils making expected rates of progress have improved markedly since the last inspection. The school's assessment information, and work in pupils' books, confirm that this improvement is continuing for current cohorts of pupils.
- Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs made increased levels of progress in 2015 and the proportion achieving good grades, including in GCSE English and mathematics, rose sharply compared with the previous year. Achievement gaps between pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs and other pupils at similar starting points are closing rapidly.
- The progress of the most-able pupils, which historically has been slower than similar pupils nationally, is now improving rapidly. GCSE core science results for these pupils in the current Year 11, which they took at the end of Year 10, were particularly strong. The school's assessment information indicates that this improving progress is also evident across a wide range of subjects, including food and nutrition, history and religious education.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the English Baccalaureate qualification rose for the third successive year and is now above the national average, reflecting an increased emphasis on academic qualifications in the school. Three in four pupils at the school are entered for qualifications that are required for the English Baccalaureate.
- The very small number of pupils who complete their education at a different location are achieving well. They make progress and achieve qualifications that prepare them well for the next stage of their education.
- Almost all pupils gain places at local colleges and sixth forms, reflecting the effective careers advice and guidance provided and the aspirations of pupils to succeed.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 who join the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy are effectively supported by the 'Phoenix Programme', which focuses on literacy and numeracy skills through a narrower range of subjects than other pupils take. The pupils develop the skills they need to be successful learners and make rapid progress in Year 8, catching up with other pupils by the start of Year 9.

- Progress in some subjects, especially geography and music, is not yet good. The school's tracking of pupils' assessment information shows that a greater proportion of pupils are now making at least expected progress across all year groups because current pupils are benefiting from recent improvements in teaching and learning.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils remains somewhat inconsistent and so the gaps between their attainment and that of their peers have narrowed in some cases but not all. For example, in 2015, the progress of disadvantaged pupils improved in English, but declined in mathematics. The school's tracking of current pupils' progress indicates that 2016 will see improved levels of progress in both subjects, but this remains a key improvement priority for the school.

School details

Unique reference number	103861
Local authority	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10002510

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	707
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill Withers
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Neil Shaw
Telephone number	01384 816285
Website	www.leasowes.dudley.sch.uk
Email address	info@leasowes.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 October 2013

Information about this school

- Leasowes High School is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The school has an above-average intake of pupils of minority ethnic heritage.
- The percentage of pupils who are supported through the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils who are looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is above average.
- The proportions of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs are broadly average.
- The school operates the Greenhill Alternative Learning Campus, which provides support and learning to a small number of pupils who are struggling to cope with traditional settings for learning.
- A very small number of pupils access all of their education with Nisai Virtual Academy Ltd, an alternative provider.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 32 lessons; seven of these were carried out with members of the school's senior leadership team. Lessons visited covered a wide range of subjects and all year groups across the school. Inspectors also observed registration periods and visited the learning support area and the Greenhill Alternative Learning Campus. Pupils' behaviour between lessons and at break- and lunchtime was also observed by inspectors.
- Pupils' work was viewed by inspectors in lessons and separate samples were considered from some subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, teaching staff, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors evaluated the 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also took account of the views of 30 members of staff through online inspection questionnaire responses.
- Pupils met formally with inspectors on four separate occasions. Inspectors also conducted many informal discussions with pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of school documentation, including the self-evaluation and plans, policies, information about outcomes, teaching and behaviour, and minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Rob Hackfath, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alun Williams	Her Majesty's Inspector
Adele Mills	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Bizley	Ofsted Inspector

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