

The Dormston School

Mill Bank, Sedgley, Dudley, West Midlands DY3 1SN

Inspection dates

22–23 November 2016

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 strong leadership of the headteacher, the senior team and governors has improved the school since the last inspection.
- Leaders have created a positive culture of care and achievement appreciated by pupils and staff.
- Pupils now make good progress from their different starting points.
- Teaching is good. Teachers use their subject knowledge well when planning lessons. Teachers adhere to the school's clear marking and feedback policy.
- Teaching has improved in mathematics. However, not all teachers provide activities that take sufficient account of pupils' previous knowledge, skills and understanding. Work for the most able pupils sometimes lacks the challenge to reach their full potential.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. They take pride in their work and the majority behave well at school.
- Pupils are very welcoming to visitors and speak positively about the school. Older pupils recognise the improvements made over the past few years in the quality of teaching, standards of behaviour and the school environment.
- Governors are highly effective. They hold leaders to account and are fully committed to the school. Governors are proud of recent developments and ambitious for further improvement.
- The school maintains strong relationships with parents. This has led to improved pupil attendance. A small number of disadvantaged pupils have lower levels of attendance.
- Pupils, particularly at key stage 4, value the support they receive in helping them make decisions about future careers.
- The school works effectively to ensure that pupils are safe. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue the drive to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils by:
 - intervening even earlier following a pupil's absence
 - forging closer links with parents to emphasise the clear connection between attendance and achievement.
- Take steps to improve further the quality of teaching across the school and in mathematics so that:
 - more pupils, especially the most able, make rapid progress through being challenged and supported appropriately
 - all teachers provide activities that build upon pupils' previous knowledge, skills and understanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and his committed senior team adhere to the school mission of 'Respect, Commit, and Achieve' in their determined drive for an inclusive and rapidly improving school. They are clear about the gains made and equally aware of what still needs to be done to sustain these.
- The school's positive ethos can be seen in the way that pupils and their parents are welcomed to the school. This includes the 130 new pupils who joined Years 8, 9 and 10 in September following the closure of a local school. New pupils told inspectors that they are safe at school and are treated equally as well as others. Pupils feel progress is being made in helping them adapt but they do not yet feel fully assimilated. The headteacher and senior team liaise closely with this new group of pupils and are fully committed to their success.
- Leaders have tackled weaknesses in teaching identified in the previous inspection with determination. Improvements made in teaching are now having a strong impact on current pupils' progress, which is now stronger than in the past. Although pupils are achieving well, the progress of the most able, especially in mathematics, is not as good.
- Leaders have recruited effective teachers and created a close-knit, determined community. The drive to provide high-quality teaching and learning has also been underpinned by effective systems, challenge and relevant training. Teaching and non-teaching staff who met with inspectors are unanimous in their support for leaders and the positive direction in which the school is moving.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is effective and clearly focused upon monitoring areas which will have the greatest impact upon pupils' outcomes. Leaders have high expectations and conduct regular reviews of teaching, learning and the quality of pupils' work. High-quality training is offered to support teaching staff.
- Newly qualified teachers who met inspectors said they appreciate the support given both professionally and in terms of being made to feel welcome in the school. Staff state that weekly training sessions on relevant topics are making a positive difference to pupils' experiences.
- Leaders take firm and decisive action to improve teaching. Rigorous improvement targets are set for those staff whose work does not meet the required standards. Pay progression is withheld if not merited.
- Middle leaders are positive about the senior leadership team and the strategic plan for the school. Middle leaders are held to account well by senior leaders and governors and are involved closely in decision-making across the school.
- Leaders are making more effective use of the extra funding received for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those entitled to the pupil premium. Analysis of the reasons for spending and evaluation of its impact are becoming more sophisticated. More work needs to be done, however, on improving the attendance of a small minority of disadvantaged pupils.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and appropriate. It is leading to better outcomes through improved teaching and a range of courses which meet the needs and aptitudes of pupils. The

headteacher is committed to offering relevant qualifications to pupils, allowing them to progress to the next stage of their education. This is seen, in part, through an increase in the number of pupils gaining the English Baccalaureate qualification.

- A wide programme of extra-curricular activities is in place. This includes orchestra, book club, archery, drama, sport and subject-specific opportunities. Pupils are also involved in charity work to focus upon those less fortunate than themselves.
- The school communicates effectively with parents. There are regular letters home from the headteacher. Parent governors told inspectors that parents appreciate this contact. The school website is informative, accessible and contains all the required information.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school. Leaders cover current and topical issues in assemblies and tutor time. In addition, leaders understand developments within the local region and respond quickly and effectively where required to contribute to a harmonious community.
- The school environment supports the ethos of the school. Pupils' diversity is celebrated in events such as 'Year 9 Culture Day' and racial awareness assemblies. The school has an impressive heritage map display where pupils are encouraged to indicate the parts of the world from which they and their families originate.

Governance of the school

- Governance is highly effective. The chair of the governing body is knowledgeable and capable. He leads a strong team of enthusiastic and effective governors who are committed to, and well informed about, the school.
- Governors undertake their strategic and statutory functions effectively and are involved in the life of the school where appropriate.
- Governors hold leaders to account and know the impact of their work. This includes employing effective teachers, oversight of the performance-management system and using the budget to improve facilities for pupils, including the Year 11 restaurant.
- Governors are rightfully demanding. One governor told an inspector, 'We can only be good governors if we are given the right information.'
- Governors effectively challenge the school about the performance of pupils who are looked after by the local authority. There is a named governor who liaises closely with staff about pupils' welfare and progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff work together to create a culture of safeguarding across the school, fostered through regular training and updates, displays of information in prominent areas and regular contact with parents. Clear processes ensure that when concerns are raised, they are swiftly passed on to senior staff who liaise with the relevant agencies. There are good links with the local police, community representatives and groups who are used to support the culture of safeguarding encouraged by the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils benefit from good teaching. Lessons are well planned to engage pupils in productive learning activities. As a result of this and leaders' robust strategies to tackle any potential underachievement, pupils are making good progress and learning well across the school.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils result in a conducive learning environment. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and learning time is rarely wasted.
- A positive atmosphere in classrooms effectively promotes pupils' learning. Many pupils are eager to offer ideas and are not afraid to make mistakes. Pupils told inspectors this is typical in lessons.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers use their good subject knowledge to ask questions that deepen pupils' thinking. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson, the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, were challenged to think hard about a topic.
- Teachers use praise well to develop learning. In Year 7 in art, for example, pupils were commended for working effectively throughout the lesson.
- Most teachers follow the school's marking policy and pupils often respond positively to comments in their books. Pupils can explain how the results from regular testing across all subjects enable them to understand their progress towards achieving their target grades.
- The school has adapted its approach to assessment to take account of the new performance measures for schools. School leaders have kept parents well informed about changes in Years 7 and 11. The overwhelming majority of parents who replied to Parent View felt they received valuable information about the progress of their children.
- Teachers often provide pupils with different levels of challenge. However, not all teaching ensures that pupils are provided with the tasks that help them to build well on what they already know and can do. This is particularly the case in mathematics. Some pupils, especially the most able, are not challenged or supported to approach more difficult work. This prevents pupils from making more rapid progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities said they appreciated the extra help they get in lessons as this enabled them to make progress. They also appreciated the specialist one-to-one support they receive.
- The school's drive to improve literacy across all subjects is effective. Pupils undertake many extended writing tasks across the curriculum. Teachers adhere to the school's expected practice of marking which has a clear focus upon spelling and grammatical accuracy.
- Reading is supported across the curriculum. For example, in design and technology, both weaker and stronger readers could access the subject-specific textbooks and clearly explain their understanding to inspectors.
- Teachers regularly set homework across the curriculum. The overwhelming majority of parents say pupils have appropriate homework for their ages.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils who are looked after by the local authority are closely monitored and supported by

designated staff.

- Pupils told inspectors they feel safe at school. They say bullying is rare and dealt with by teachers effectively if it occurs. Pupils explained how assemblies and tutor times teach them how to keep safe in a range of situations. These included being mindful of the dangers of alcohol and drugs through following healthy lifestyles and being safe in a range of situations, for example in relationships.
- Through the teaching of curriculum subjects, the school's safeguarding ethos is well promoted. For example, information and communication technology promotes e-safety awareness and religious education plays a central role in the 'Prevent' agenda, which educates pupils about the dangers of extremism.
- Pupils have a good understanding of democracy and experienced this first-hand through participation in the recent school referendum on membership of the European Union. A few pupils are involved in the school council and Dudley Youth Council Parliament. Programmes to embed further pupils' understanding of British values form part of the school's development plan.
- Pupils generally take pride in their work and their school. Pupils look smart in their school uniform. Internal school buildings are well looked after and free from graffiti and litter. Some pupils approached an inspector after a lesson observation and said, 'We hope you are enjoying our school.'
- Most pupils display positive attitudes to their learning. Occasionally, when lessons are less inspiring, pupils can lose focus and not make the gains of which they are capable.
- The school works very effectively with all three alternative providers. The school ensures that safeguarding and child-protection procedures are safe and secure. Pupils' attendance is shared daily and there is a fortnightly review of behaviour.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils who spoke to inspectors said behaviour was good around the school and in classes. Pupils in Year 11 told inspectors, 'We know the boundaries.' Almost all parents who completed Parent View felt their children were safe at school. These positive views were supported by inspectors' observations of pupils' good behaviour in formal and informal settings.
- Pupils understand the school's high expectations and this can be seen in improved behaviour. On some occasions, however, pupils do not follow the clear behaviour code and this results in exclusions.
- An inspector observed a very well-managed meeting of the 'Anti-Bullying Ambassadors', effectively chaired by a pupil. Although pupils feel bullying is not a major issue in the school, ambassadors aim to reduce it even further by making themselves approachable as peer mentors to all pupils.
- A small group of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who met inspectors said they felt safe in the school and that the school had undergone much change and was now better. They were less positive about behaviour. They said some lessons were occasionally disrupted by the poor behaviour of a few pupils.
- Arrangements to promote attendance are good and are given a high priority. Attendance for

most pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, have improved. Heads of house and pastoral managers all take their lead from the headteacher, who strongly emphasises the link between good attendance and effective learning. Attendance figures are prominently displayed around the school. Rewards are used to incentivise regular attendance. Pupils told inspectors they were aware of these and value the incentives on offer.

- Leaders acknowledge that more needs to be done to ensure that a small minority of disadvantaged pupils attend as regularly as their peers. The school now aims to intervene earlier to challenge any absence from pupils about whom it has concerns and to liaise more closely with parents to emphasise the impact of attendance upon future life chances.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the last inspection, pupils' outcomes have improved. Pupils now achieve well across the subjects and key stages. Standards by the end of Year 11 have been on a rising trend in many subjects, including business studies, graphics, English language, English literature, geography, history, drama and the performing arts, additional science and physics. In 2016, the proportion of pupils gaining good GCSE passes in English and mathematics increased and was above average. This represents good progress from pupils' previous starting points. School data, pupils' books and inspection evidence also confirm that the progress of pupils currently in the school is good.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils has improved markedly since the last inspection. For example, although there was a substantial increase in the proportion of all pupils who gained good grades in the English Baccalaureate in 2016, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils gaining this qualification almost trebled.
- Effective use of the pupil premium, along with the improved consistency of the quality of teaching and effective tracking of disadvantaged pupils' progress, have all contributed to their improved achievement. The difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers is diminishing as a result. Their progress is particularly strong in science, art, computing and physical education. A small number of disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as they could, however, due to lower attendance.
- The achievement of the most able is improving and their progress is good across a range of subjects. The school has targeted this group of pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, to ensure that they reach the highest grades. More appropriate work is now set for pupils with higher starting points. However, the progress of the most able pupils is not always as quick as it can be, particularly in mathematics. Sometimes, pupils are not encouraged to challenge themselves with the tasks that make them think harder or do not take advantage of the opportunities presented.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Evidence in pupils' work in class and books across a range of subjects confirms that the dip in results in 2016 is on track to be reversed.
- Other groups of pupils, including pupils who are looked after by the local authority and those attending alternative provision, also do well. In 2016, all pupils attending alternative provision moved on to employment, training or further education.
- In 2016, pupils did better in English than in mathematics. Inspection evidence confirms that

this reflected previously weaker teaching. Teaching in mathematics is now better for current pupils. Even so, leaders acknowledge that the drive to improve numeracy provision across the school has not been as well developed as in literacy. Pupils still see numeracy as belonging primarily in the subject area of mathematics. Work is already underway to address this.

- Pupils achieve well in reading. Pupils who are eligible for funding under the Year 7 catch-up programme, for example, are supported effectively. These pupils make good gains in improving their reading ages. Across all year groups pupils read widely, often and for pleasure. There is a waiting list for some books which have been recommended by teachers.
- Pupils are now better prepared for progression beyond secondary school. In 2016, 44% of pupils moved on to study at A level. This is a significantly higher proportion than in previous years. Pupils receive highly effective and independent careers advice and guidance. Pupils at key stage 4 explained how the school had helped them make decisions on their future, including in relation to college, training and apprenticeships. Pupils also say the week's work experience offered in Year 10 helps them plan for the future.

School details

Unique reference number	103855
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10020007

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1081
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	George Craig
Headteacher	Ben Stitchman
Telephone number	01384 816 395
Website	www.dormston.dudley.sch.uk/
Email address	data@dormston.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 November 2014

Information about this school

- The Dormston School is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- In September 2016, 130 new pupils joined the school in Years 8, 9 and 10 following the closure of a local school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school uses three alternative providers of education: Dudley College, Education Development Services as part of Holly Hall Academy and Cherry Tree Learning Centre.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- An average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in parts of 41 lessons, some of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors reviewed a range of pupils' books and folders.
- Inspectors attended an assembly, visited a number of form periods, spoke to pupils informally in the canteen, observed a meeting of the school's anti-bullying ambassadors and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, support staff and pupils from all year groups, including some of those who joined the school in September.
- An inspector conducted a telephone interview with a representative of an alternative provider.
- The lead inspector met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at the start and finish of the school day, in lessons and around the school at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered a range of school documentation including the school's self-evaluation documents, the school development plan, quality-assurance records, information about the progress of all pupils, records of behaviour, bullying and attendance, safeguarding documentation and minutes of meetings.
- The 40 responses on Parent View were considered. There were no responses to the staff or pupils' surveys.

Inspection team

Nigel Griffiths, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Bianka Zemke	Ofsted Inspector
Rob Steed	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Kent	Ofsted Inspector

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