

# Palfrey Girls School

72 Queen Mary Street, Palfrey, Walsall, West Midlands WS1 4AB

## Inspection dates

27 February–1 March 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not routinely checked the accuracy of information on pupils' progress. The information for secondary pupils has not been accurately recorded, monitored or validated.
- Middle leaders' checks on the quality of teaching have not been thorough enough. As a result, not all teachers have received precise feedback and guidance on what they need to do to improve.
- Leaders have not ensured consistent application of the school's assessment policy. As a result, teachers' written and verbal feedback is variable in quality and does not help pupils to improve their work.
- The quality of teaching in the Reception class is variable and does not consistently promote all areas of children's learning and development.
- The lines of accountability are unclear. Since the last inspection, there have been a lot of changes to leadership. As a result, the interim executive board took responsibility at various points. This has contributed to some aspects of leadership and management being underdeveloped.
- A minority of teachers do not use the information about pupils' previous learning to plan lessons that build on what pupils already know. The challenge for the most able pupils in both the primary and secondary phases is inconsistent.
- The teaching of mathematics is variable across the curriculum and does not consistently provide pupils with opportunities to solve problems or apply their skills. This results in a few pupils repeating work that is too easy.

### The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school. Leaders have made some improvements, including ensuring that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders and staff have established a safe culture. Pupils feel safe and they are safe.
- The school provides rich opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Pupils' personal development and behaviour are good. Pupils display positive attitudes to their learning.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

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

- Improve the impact of leadership and management on teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes by:
  - making sure that middle leaders accurately and consistently check the quality of teaching and provide precise feedback for teachers to help them improve their practice
  - ensuring that middle leaders use the information from their checks on the quality of the school's work to inform subsequent actions that raise standards in the area for which they have responsibility
  - making leadership roles and responsibilities and lines of accountability clear
  - ensuring that the school's self-assessment is evaluative, sharply focused and informs actions on key aspects of school improvement, including teaching and learning
  - making sure that the school's information on pupils' progress is routinely monitored and validated to ensure that it is accurate
  - ensuring that all staff consistently apply the school's assessment policy.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the whole school to ensure that all teaching over time is consistently good or better by:
  - making sure that teachers use the information they have on pupils' ability and progress to plan appropriate learning activities that provide challenge and match the individual needs of pupils and improve their outcomes
  - improving the teaching of mathematics to ensure that all pupils have opportunities to apply their knowledge and understanding in solving increasingly challenging problems
  - making sure that teachers' questioning deepens pupils' understanding effectively
  - ensuring that higher level challenge is consistently provided for the most able learners
  - making sure that the teaching in the Reception class is matched appropriately to the ages of the children so that they consistently develop new skills
  - further developing the outdoor play area so that children have extended opportunities to explore and investigate their surroundings.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Since the last inspection, the proprietor has formed an interim executive board to address the weaknesses across the school. The board has made significant changes to the leadership team, including the appointment of a new acting headteacher. The interim executive board has recently appointed a team of middle leaders. They have an understanding of how the school needs to improve. However, their work is not having a quick enough impact on improving teaching and learning. As a result, a minority of pupils have not made good progress due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching over time.
- The majority of the staff say that the school is well led and managed. They say it has improved since the last inspection. Although leaders and governors have made progress towards improvement, there is still work to do in establishing a secure, skilled leadership team that is able to drive further improvements to the quality of teaching and learning and in pupils' progress.
- The school's own self-evaluation lacks rigour, is overly descriptive and lacks an evaluative focus. Leaders have based their assessment on meeting the independent school standards, which are now fully met. The self-assessment and subsequent action plan do not have a sharp enough focus on key school improvement aspects, such as teaching and learning or leadership and management. Consequently, teaching and learning and leadership and management require improvement.
- A minority of leaders do not consistently use the school's systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning, nor ensure that staff consistently apply the school's policies. For example, leaders have not ensured that the school's assessment policy is consistently applied. As a result, this small group of middle leaders have been unable to improve the standards in the areas for which they have responsibility consistently.
- The curriculum has been improved since the last inspection. It is broad and balanced and now provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils. In key stages 2 and 3, pupils follow the national curriculum and in key stage 4, pupils are able to study a range of GCSEs, including English, mathematics, science, history, geography and art.
- Leaders have created positive opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Pupils are able to access a range of enriching experiences that they may not ordinarily have the opportunity to access. They speak positively about school visits, including to local museums, art galleries and Bletchley Park, all of which were linked to the curriculum. Pupils enjoyed a multi-faith day where followers of different faiths including Sikhism, Judaism and Buddhism visited the school to talk about their beliefs. A multi-cultural day also provided pupils with opportunities to meet people from other countries including Poland and Afghanistan. They sampled international cuisines and learned about traditions such as national dress, dances and singing. A number of pupils were chosen to represent the school as ambassadors for the Anne Frank project. They enjoyed this opportunity and spoke highly of the experience.
- Since the last inspection, opportunities for pupils to read have been improved. Links have

been made with the mobile library to ensure that pupils are able to access a wider range of texts and genres. Pupils enjoy these visits, which have provided opportunities to read for pleasure. The school's information for primary-age pupils shows that pupils' reading is getting better and the majority of pupils' reading ages have improved.

- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is effective. Baseline assessments are carried out quickly when pupils arrive at the school. Teachers swiftly identify pupils who are at risk of falling behind and make appropriate referrals to the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo). The SENCo is currently working with a very small number of pupils. Interventions are evaluated on a half-termly basis and the school's information shows that the majority of these pupils have made good progress from their starting points and are working at similar standards to their peers.
- The school's assessment information for pupils in Years 7 to 9 has not been routinely or rigorously monitored by leaders and lacks accuracy. This has had a negative impact on the planning of teaching and learning, as teachers have not been able to use accurate information to plan lessons that are matched to the needs and abilities of all pupils. In some cases, this has resulted in lack of challenge for some of the most able pupils. Systems used in primary classes and in Years 10 and 11 provide a more accurate report of pupils' progress.

## **Governance**

- The arrangements for governance are effective.
- Since the last inspection, the proprietor has formed an interim executive board. The chair of the board has recently taken responsibility for operational leadership of the school, as well as chairing the interim executive board, and line managing the senior school staff. This has resulted in many improvements. For example, the school now meets all of the independent school standards. However, on occasion, these arrangements have also led to unclear lines of accountability, which has contributed to some important aspects of leadership and management being underdeveloped.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. This aspect of the school is well led and managed. The school's safeguarding policy takes into account current government requirements. The policy is published on the school's website.
- Leaders and the proprietor have created a safe culture. The proprietor has provided training for all staff in identifying signs of abuse, neglect and harm. They are aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism and are highly vigilant in spotting changes in behaviour.
- Reporting systems are robust. Nothing is left to chance when it comes to the safety of pupils. Concerns are acted upon quickly and referred to external agencies where necessary, ensuring that the right support for vulnerable pupils is identified. Pupils know how to raise concerns and are confident that teachers will resolve any problems. Pupils feel safe and they are safe. Parents and carers have no concerns about safeguarding.
- There are clear protocols in place for pupils taking holidays out of term time. Leaders take this seriously and follow any requests with parental meetings to ascertain reasons and to

ensure that pupils are safe.

- The processes for staff recruitment are rigorous; the headteacher is trained in safer recruitment and is involved in all staff appointments. The checks on staff's and volunteers' suitability to work with children are rigorous and detailed.
- Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe. Leaders have engaged with external agencies to provide workshops on the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons help pupils to understand healthy relationships, dangers and risks on the internet. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. Staff reinforce this work through weekly assemblies, which cover a range of themes including anti-bullying. There is an online system where pupils can share worries and concerns with staff members anonymously. Staff immediately pass these to the designated safeguarding leaders, who use this information to inform the content of assemblies.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. The appointment of new staff has helped to strengthen some aspects of teaching. The quality of teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and pupils make good progress. However, some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning have not yet been fully addressed.
- Teaching is not consistently based on what pupils can already do and what they already know. This is because a few teachers do not use information on pupils' prior learning to plan lessons that are matched to pupils' ability. Teaching does not always challenge the most able pupils. As a result, not all pupils do as well as they can.
- Some of the teaching in the school is effective. For example, in lessons where teachers have taken into account prior information about pupils, teachers plan learning well and pupils make good progress. Teachers' questioning develops pupils' deeper understanding and encourages pupils to extend both their thinking and vocabulary. In these sessions, pupils respond well to higher level challenges and thrive on encouraging verbal feedback that raises their confidence and boosts self-esteem. This was particularly evident in Year 7 history, where pupils were actively engaged in higher level discussions about the Battle of Hastings.
- In lessons where planning has not considered the needs and abilities of all pupils, progress is slower as the tasks are not pitched appropriately to meet the needs of all pupils. Staff expect all pupils to complete the same work, resulting in lack of opportunities for the most able to work in greater depth and to develop deeper understanding. This was evident in some science lessons where the most able pupils had completed work quickly and had to nothing additional to do while waiting for other pupils to reach the same stage.
- The teaching of mathematics is not yet consistently good. Teaching in both primary and secondary phases has focused on content and developing pupils' understanding of mathematical facts through repeated tasks and practice. While this has effectively developed their basic skills and mathematical fluency, a minority of pupils are unable to apply their knowledge or solve problems by thinking for themselves. Consequently, pupils are not consistently mastering more difficult and abstract concepts. The majority of pupils who met with inspectors said that they do not like mathematics as they find it boring.

They said that they prefer English where they are able to have discussions and talk about their work.

- The school has developed the teaching of phonics since the last inspection through raising expectations. Frequent teaching sessions and the regular practice and reinforcement of sounds are supported by a high ratio of adults who are helping pupils to develop key skills in identifying words and reading texts. The school's information shows that strategies have a positive impact and that the vast majority of pupils make progress from their starting points. There are opportunities to promote speaking and listening skills throughout the curriculum. Where this is most effective, there is a positive impact upon pupils' communication skills.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- In the secondary phase, where there are only girls, the school provides inspirational careers guidance. Pupils benefit from weekly focused careers lessons, which external visitors further enhance. Pupils said that before this, they had no idea that such opportunities were available to them. Pupils are ambitious, and many have firm ideas about their next steps. Some Year 11 pupils have already been offered places to study at local colleges. Last year, all Year 11 leavers progressed to further education or training.
- The school's PSHE education curriculum is broad and balanced. Lessons take into account the needs of the pupils at their various ages and ensures that they understand and recognise the potential risks within the neighbourhood. Pupils learn about stranger danger, road safety and how to keep safe online. They are aware of the risks of radicalisation and say they would tell staff immediately if they had any worries.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There are high expectations around behaviour and conduct; this is consistent throughout the school. Pupils' attitudes towards their learning, their peers and their teachers are consistently positive. This is also the case when teaching is less challenging. Pupils remain focused and committed to completing the tasks. This is exemplified by the presentation of work in books, which is very orderly and evidences commitment to learning.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. Incidents of negative behaviour or the use of derogatory language are exceptionally rare. On occasions, some pupils' behaviour is compliant. In these classes, they do not readily engage in debate and discussion, and therefore the communication skills and self-confidence of a few pupils are not as well developed as those of their peers.
- Pupils engage in group tasks well. They show respect and consideration for the views and opinions of others. They challenge one another in classes where staff present them with problems to solve. Secondary pupils socialise at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They mix in a range of peer groups and behave appropriately. Primary-age pupils play sensibly in gender-mixed groups. They are well supervised by a high ratio of vigilant staff. They enjoy opportunities to play outside and have access to a large indoor hall when bad

weather prevents outdoor play.

- The school has effective systems in place for the recording and monitoring of behavioural incidents. The school's information shows that the incidents are isolated and of a low level. However, they are followed up with rigour by the headteacher and the records show that this work has a positive impact upon behaviour. On the rare occasions that more serious incidents occur, the school is quick to inform parents and involve them in actions to improve their child's behaviour.
- Attendance for a small number of pupils is lower than average. Owing to low numbers of pupils over time, this has affected the overall school attendance rates adversely. Leaders are quick to identify pupils who are at risk of absence. Staff use effective measures to encourage regular attendance. These include contacting home on the first day of absence, home visits, collection from home and regular liaison with parents and, where appropriate, the local authority. The school's information shows that, over time, this work has had a positive effect on improving pupils' attendance and punctuality. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has dropped considerably.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement varies across the key stages and within subjects. Pupils' progress depends on the quality of teaching they receive. For example, in English and history, pupils receive effective teaching and make good progress from their starting points. However, where teaching is less effective and teachers' expectations are too low, including for the most able, pupils do not do as well. For example, in Year 9 science, the work does not consistently develop pupils' scientific enquiry and investigative skills to develop higher level understanding. As a result, a few pupils say that the work is too easy and complete it quickly.
- In the vast majority of cases, pupils arrive at the school with starting points considerably lower than those of children of a similar age. This is particularly the case with the development of communication skills. The school's initial assessment information confirms this. Throughout the primary phase, pupils' speaking and listening skills develop well and pupils are well prepared for secondary education.
- Pupils also arrive with reading and writing skills lower than those expected for their age. Where teaching is effective, staff promote correct spelling and reinforce literacy skills effectively. Pupils make better progress over time and the work in pupils' books shows that pupils learn from their mistakes and improve their spelling. In contrast, pupils in some other classes do not make as much progress as they could due to repeated mistakes, which staff do not correct.
- The work in books show that pupils' progress is variable across the curriculum. The small number of pupils who have been absent do not always catch up with the work they have missed, resulting in gaps in learning and limited progress over time.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make better progress than pupils in other areas of the school. Information provided by the school, and verified by inspectors, shows that pupils in key stage 4 do well. For example, in 2017, a large majority of pupils achieved grades 9 to 5 in GCSE English.
- The school's information for pupils in Years 7 to 9 has not been verified. A minority of



pupils in these year groups are not being challenged enough and are not making progress as quickly as they could.

- Outcomes for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are improving as a result of well-planned strategies and interventions that are regularly reviewed. In the majority of cases, the school's information shows that pupils do as well as other pupils of similar ages. The SENCo has a clear understanding of the pupils' needs and monitors their progress regularly. Pupils make good progress as a result of this provision and successfully acquire new skills and knowledge.

## Early years provision

## Requires improvement

- There are a small number of children in the Reception class. Upon entry, children's starting points are quickly assessed using standardised early learning tests. The vast majority of these children arrive at the school with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age. In particular, their speaking and listening skills are often not well developed.
- Leaders have introduced a new tracking system to monitor children's progress from their starting points. This information shows that the majority of children in Reception are on track to meet outcomes typical for their age. This demonstrates that children make good progress while in Reception.
- The early years leader is new in post and in a short period has gained an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. There has been a focus on improving the quality of teaching. Although some progress has been made in developing the curriculum, teaching is still not consistently well matched to the ages and stages of the children.
- The indoor learning areas are spacious and stimulating. Children have a range of opportunities to engage in a variety of teacher- and child-led activities. Outdoor areas are regularly used and children have opportunities to explore the surroundings. Leaders rightly recognise that the outdoor area could be developed further.
- The arrangements for keeping children safe in the early years provision are effective and meet statutory requirements. Staff have a good level of training linked to safeguarding, including child protection and paediatric first-aid training. Children are safe and looked after well. The school has recently improved relationships with parents and carers by introducing breakfast meetings and providing regular opportunities for parents to come into school to discuss their child's progress. The majority of parents are happy with the information they receive from the school.



## School details

Unique reference number	104267
DfE registration number	335/6008
Inspection number	10038827

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	124
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mr Bashir Lorgat
Chair	Mrs F Kholwadia
Headteacher	Stella Cofie Dede
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,500 (secondary) £1,050 (primary) £500 (Reception)
Telephone number	01922 625510
Website	<a href="http://www.palfreygirlsschool.org">www.palfreygirlsschool.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@palfreygirlsschool.org">admin@palfreygirlsschool.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	29 September–1 October 2015

## Information about this school

- Palfrey Girls School is an independent Muslim day school for pupils aged between four and 16 years. The primary phase and Reception Year admit both boys and girls. They are taught in mixed classes. The secondary phase admits only girls.
- The school opened in October 1993 and is housed in a former residential home. The school is registered for 242 pupils. There are 124 pupils on roll, 87 pupils in the secondary phase and 37 in the primary phase, of which five are in the Reception Year.
- Since the previous inspection in October 2015, there have been changes to leadership. Two previous headteachers have left. The acting headteacher has been in post since

September 2017. The proprietor has also formed an interim executive board to oversee operational management of the school and to oversee governance.

- The vast majority of staff in post at the last inspection no longer work at the school.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school offers secular and Islamic education.
- The school's last full inspection took place in September 2015. The school was judged inadequate with a number of regulatory failings. Subsequent monitoring visits took place in July 2016 and October 2016. An emergency inspection also took place in May 2017.
- Little Stars Nursery shares the same site and some resources. One staff member works across both sites, but the nursery is independent of the school and is inspected separately.
- The school's vision, values and aims include: 'We aim to develop our students to fulfil their potential intellectually, socially, economically and culturally to demonstrate to themselves, their families and the wider community that social deprivation, gender or ethnicity need be no barrier to the highest levels of achievement'. In addition, 'Tolerance and understanding of other values and beliefs are at the heart of our ethos to equip our students to play a vital role in building a more cohesive society, both nationally and globally'.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out over two and a half days with one day's notice.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the interim executive board and other board members. They also met with the headteacher, and senior and middle leaders, including the SENCo and those responsible for safeguarding and teaching. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils in the primary and secondary phases.
- Inspectors observed lessons in English, mathematics, science, history and physical education in all year groups. The inspectors also reviewed the work in pupils' books across all subjects.
- Inspectors toured the premises of the school and examined key policies, including those related to safeguarding, curriculum, behaviour, complaints and anti-bullying.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the attendance and admissions registers, the school's information on pupils' achievements and behaviour, complaints logs and procedures for recording bullying incidents.
- The inspectors reviewed the parental feedback received through Parent View. A total of seven responses were received.
- The inspectors considered 14 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Michael Onyon

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018