

Mander Portman Woodward Independent College

17 – 18 Greenfield Crescent, Edgbaston, Birmingham, West Midlands B15 3AU

Inspection dates

27 February – 1 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Sixth form provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Exceptional leadership and management have ensured that the school has maintained and further developed its outstanding provision, including in the sixth form.
- The governors and leaders have created a culture where all members of staff strive to offer academic excellence in an environment which supports and challenges each pupil individually.
- All aspects of governance are carried out well. Governors' strategic overview of the school is strong.
- Teaching staff are knowledgeable and highly dedicated to ensuring that pupils' outcomes are the best they can be.
- Through frequent assessment, teachers and leaders keep a keen eye on pupils' progress. Pupils welcome their teachers' feedback. Leaders use the information to identify any pupil who is underperforming. They arrange support quickly so that pupils can catch up without delay.
- Pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, make rapid progress from their varied starting points. Pupils leave the school very well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning due to the high quality of teaching and individual support they receive. They work hard and are determined to succeed. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary.
- The school is a safe and happy place to be. Leaders give safeguarding procedures the highest priority.
- After A levels, the vast majority of students continue their studies in a range of subjects at university. Personal tutors provide effective guidance to individual students on their future chosen pathways. However, pupils and students do not have a broader knowledge of the range of education and work opportunities available to them when they leave the school.
- Leaders have ensured that the school is compliant with all the independent school standards.

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?

- Ensure that all pupils and students have a broader knowledge of the range of education and work opportunities available to them when they leave school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The principal and the senior leadership team are ambitious for their pupils. Their collective experience and expertise ensure that the school benefits from leadership and management of the highest quality. They have made certain that the independent school standards are met. Governors rigorously performance manage the work of senior leaders.
- Members of staff feel valued and morale is high. They reflect on their teaching and share good practice. Professional development is a high priority, and staff benefit from ongoing training in safeguarding. There is a strong focus on ensuring that teaching meets the different needs of pupils and students within the school, including international students and those with SEN and/or disabilities.
- Leaders track and monitor pupils' progress very effectively. On entry, leaders collect information about pupils' previous learning and pupils are assessed to establish their knowledge and skills. Staff set individual targets for each pupil. Teachers and leaders frequently assess pupils, and teachers use this to track pupils' progress and ensure that pupils receive support quickly and appropriately when it is required.
- Leaders are aspirational for pupils and students in the sixth form and are committed to providing an environment in which they thrive and achieve their full potential. This helps them to develop their independence and maturity, learn to take responsibility for themselves and develop a wide sense of their role within the community.
- Leaders and staff provide pupils with high-quality pastoral care. This is particularly effective in helping those who have had poor educational experiences previously. As a result, pupils settle quickly into the school, follow expected routines and work conscientiously to succeed in their learning.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance understand the school's strengths and next steps. Self-evaluation is strong and plans for development are clear and accurate.
- The curriculum offers an extensive range of GCSE and A-level options. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural education takes place in personal education lessons and is also threaded through the curriculum. In a French lesson, the pupils discussed how Easter was celebrated in France, which led on to a discussion and comparison with religious festivals in the Muslim religion. Through taught courses, extra-curricular activities and pastoral support, pupils learn to respect each other, including those with protected characteristics.
- Leaders and teachers work very effectively with parents and carers. Parents are encouraged to come into the school and the principal and other staff always make time to discuss any issues or queries they may have. Although there is a suitable complaints policy, no complaints have been recorded, which is a result of the open communication between staff and parents.

Governance

- Governance is strong. Governors have oversight of three schools across the country; they visit each centre regularly. Board meetings take place consistently and leaders are challenged and supported effectively in all key areas, for example teaching and learning, progress, performance, equality of opportunity, safeguarding, special educational needs provision and health and safety.
- Governors understand their roles and responsibilities well and work with senior leaders effectively. This ensures that the school is a harmonious place, where pupils feel safe and staff work with energy and enthusiasm.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are strong. The school complies with all elements of the independent school standards regarding the safety of pupils, including publishing a suitable safeguarding policy on its website. The designated safeguarding lead is highly effective in his oversight of safeguarding.
- Staff are well trained and confident in their safeguarding role. Staff are trained each year and receive updates on a regular basis, which have included information on child sexual exploitation, e-safety and radicalisation.
- Staff are vigilant and ensure that the safeguarding of pupils and students in the sixth form is a top priority. They say they know every pupil well and know what to do if they notice anything untoward.
- Pupils also know what to do and whom to speak to if they have any concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Strong and respectful relationships between students and staff ensure that classrooms are productive places. The teaching of small groups of pupils allows teachers to plan and deliver individualised learning which has an excellent impact on progress.
- Inspectors observed high-quality teaching, learning and assessment, with the impact of this over time clearly evident in pupils' outcomes. Pupils are challenged to improve. Teachers' questioning skills are highly developed and enable pupils to make connections with prior learning.
- Teachers have confident subject knowledge in their particular fields. Pupils and students in the sixth form benefit from a curriculum delivered by enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers who have very high expectations of progress and engagement in learning. Pupils are very confident about the support they receive in class and in personal tutorial sessions. Extremely constructive relationships in a photography lesson enabled the teacher to challenge the pupils' ideas and pupils to respond clearly and with maturity with their own views.

- Pupils and students in the sixth form are extremely positive about the quality of teaching in the school. They appreciate the one-to-one support that is available when extra levels of challenge are required. Expectations are high, but support is always available to those who need it.
- Teachers explain difficult ideas clearly. They quickly pick up and address any misconceptions. They spend time helping pupils understand subject-specific vocabulary, so that pupils can benefit fully from the lessons and written resources.
- Teachers assess pupils often. This assessment helps teachers to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and to plan lessons to address any emerging weaknesses. Pupils welcome the feedback on how they have done, and use it constructively to improve their work.
- The leader for special educational needs provision provides guidance to teachers on how to support pupils so that they can adapt their teaching accordingly. Teachers act on this advice and, as a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make rapid progress in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Personal tutors and pupils often meet to deal with any challenges or difficulties the pupil may face. Mental health is a high priority. They also discuss pastoral issues, academic progress and plans for the future. Pupils said there was no bullying at the school. Pupils feel safe and secure, grow in self-confidence and become extremely successful learners.
- Pupils welcome the opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities. The debating society meets weekly and pupils have opportunities to participate in charity events, sport at a nearby university, the school council and a national model United Nations challenge.
- The personal and social education programme is for all pupils and students; it takes place once a week. Pupils discuss a variety of topics, for example healthy eating, radicalisation and extremism, gender equality, fundamental British values and poverty.
- Before they join the school, pupils, their parents and senior leaders meet to discuss the pupils' aspirations and choice of subjects. Leaders are very flexible in providing the agreed programme and support any pupil who wishes to change courses if they feel they have made the wrong choice.
- Careers education is effective and impartial. Pupils are well prepared for taking steps towards higher education but there is less information about other opportunities such as apprenticeships.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Expectations of both staff and the pupils themselves are high. Mutual respect underpins all aspects of the school and the way it operates. Courtesy and good manners are expected at all times.

- Inspectors were made to feel very welcome throughout the inspection. Pupils were polite, friendly and keen to explain about the great strides in progress they are making and how positive they feel about attending the school.
- Levels of attendance are not as high as they need to be. Attendance is affected by a small number of students who have specific needs which impact on their attendance. Pupils are followed up with rigour if they are absent and the school does all it can to support them and their families. Pupils are punctual to classes.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress. Teachers and leaders track individual progress rigorously. Assessments of pupils' knowledge and understanding when they join the school and within the first few weeks of joining ensure that progress is accurately measured.
- Academic rigour goes hand in hand with high levels of pastoral care to create an environment where pupils thrive and are motivated to do well. This has an extremely positive impact on attainment and progress. Attainment is above the national average for outcomes in both GCSE and A-level examinations.
- Pupils with SEN and/or disabilities make rapid progress because they receive excellent support and teachers adapt their teaching to meet those pupils' needs.
- Pupils are very articulate and use subject-specific terminology very effectively. Spoken English is well developed within classes; pupils are keen to ask questions when they do not understand and teachers provide detailed responses with support from other members of the class. Pupils are proud of the school and are able to discuss the opportunities they have been given in a very mature manner.

Sixth form provision

Outstanding

- The school's sixth form provision is outstanding. All aspects of outstanding provision reported on prior to this section apply equally to the sixth form.
- Students in the sixth form are most likely to study four subjects and the extended project qualification, which allows them to broaden their studies and strengthen their university applications. They may reduce to three A levels in the second year. Some students come to the school on a retake programme and may attend for one year or two.
- The curriculum in the sixth form is strong and varied. Well-qualified staff teach a range of subjects, including in the sciences and arts. Retention rates are very high.
- The few students who need to enhance their English and mathematics qualifications do so. The school also offers a programme for international students who need to develop their English language further.
- Students complete a programme of study including extra-curricular activities, individual study time and access to support with future careers. Most students in the sixth form aspire to attend university after leaving, and the school is particularly successful at turning that aspiration into reality.

- The majority of students move on to university and enter a variety of degree-level courses, including medicine and dentistry. Staff keenly support students in their applications to university, which includes help with preparing for interviews, attending university summer schools and securing work experience. However, specific information on other opportunities for students to access when they leave the school is more restricted.
- Students are exceptionally well prepared for life at university through the personal and social education curriculum and the ethos of the school, which encourages self-reliance and individual responsibility.

School details

Unique reference number	103587
DfE registration number	330/6079
Inspection number	10039275

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	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	244
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	222
Number of part-time pupils	24
Proprietor	Mander Portman Woodward Ltd
Chair	Nigel Stout
Headteacher	Mark Shingleton
Annual fees (day pupils)	From £19,278 to £20,574
Telephone number	01214549637
Website	www.mpc.ac.uk
Email address	birmingham@mpw.ac.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 – 26 September 2014

Information about this school

- The overarching aim of the school is to develop the confidence, knowledge and skills of pupils. The school aims to ensure that pupils have well-grounded personal and study skills and the self-discipline to thrive.
- The school opened in September 1980 and the numbers of pupils attending has grown. New premises, which will adjoin the school, are planned for September 2018.
- Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds. A number of pupils have had a poor educational experiences before joining the school.
- The vast majority of pupils who attend the school do so as members of the sixth form.
- The school was last inspected in September 2014, when it was judged to be outstanding.
- There are currently seven students who have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not make use of alternative off-site provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out a wide range of classroom visits. During visits, inspectors talked to students about the quality of their work and assessed the progress they were making. Inspectors requested and received further work, which was then scrutinised.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in the classrooms, in the common room and around the school.
- Meetings were held with the principal, the vice-principal, the leader responsible for pupils with special educational needs and groups of staff. The lead inspector held a meeting with the chair of governors.
- Inspectors took account of 10 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire and accompanying free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the views of 14 staff who completed the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils and students through informal conversations as well as holding two formal meetings.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents and policies, including those related to safeguarding and other aspects of the independent school standards. They looked at minutes of governors' meetings, information about pupil outcomes provided by the school, the school's self-evaluation of its own performance and the development plan.

Inspection team

Andrea Quigley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Elizabeth Ellis-Martin

Ofsted Inspector

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