

Inspection of The Earls High School

Furnace Lane, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3SL

Inspection dates: 15–16 January 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. Teachers try hard to make lessons interesting and use good resources to help pupils learn. Teachers care about all pupils and they help them to do well in school. Pupils get lots of opportunities to study practical subjects like music, technology, art and dance. They achieve well.

Leaders are very ambitious for pupils' wider development. They are determined that The Earls High School should produce well-rounded, responsible young people who can excel in sports, the arts or other areas of interest. There are many opportunities beyond the school curriculum, including after-school clubs, sports fixtures and visits.

The new headteacher and leadership team have acted quickly to improve behaviour. There are new systems in place to help teachers make sure that no-one disturbs learning in lessons. The corridors are narrow and it can be difficult to move around, but most pupils behave sensibly. Pupils told us that they feel safe in school. They are also taught how to keep themselves safe outside school. Bullying is not tolerated and when it happens it is always dealt with quickly, firmly and fairly.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to plan a curriculum that carefully builds pupils' knowledge and understanding. The curriculum prepares pupils well for GCSE examinations, although in some subjects leaders have amended their approach so that pupils will do better. It also gives them opportunities to try challenging activities and enjoy their learning. The curriculum is equally ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Teachers present new learning clearly, often in an engaging and interesting way. However, they do not consistently check that pupils understand their learning, so sometimes pupils' misconceptions or weaknesses in understanding are not corrected.

Pupils have lots of opportunity for reading. Pupils in Year 7 and 8 have weekly silent reading in their tutor groups. Some Year 11 pupils read with younger pupils and weaker readers are supported well with extra lessons.

Most pupils achieve well across a range of subjects, including those pupils with SEND. Last year, pupils did not make good progress in science and English. Boys generally do less well than girls. Leaders have carefully analysed the reasons for this and have put steps in place this year to support all pupils in reaching their potential.

Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Pupils have a weekly personal development lesson, supplemented by weekly assemblies and form periods. The curriculum aims to build strength of character and pupils spoke enthusiastically about the Earls High School's Gold award. This requires pupils to complete a number of activities around culture, sport, health and community. Music

is often used to help develop pupils' cultural or spiritual understanding. For example, all Year 7 pupils participate in a song competition where entries are sung in a different language.

Leaders' high expectations for behaviour are evident in school policies, in assemblies and in posters displayed throughout the school. Staff and pupils tell us that the insistence on an orderly start to lessons through the 'do now' strategy has led to a considerable improvement in behaviour in lessons. Leaders also now provide pupils with support to improve their behaviour. Pupils are now much less likely to be removed from lessons or excluded from school.

Most pupils attend school regularly. However, a small group of disadvantaged pupils are absent from school too often. This has an impact not only on their attendance but also on their ability to keep up with their schoolwork and make good progress.

Leaders have drawn up a comprehensive improvement plan. They have selected sensible priorities. They have put in place structures and systems that will allow effective delivery without placing undue pressure on staff. The local governing body and school leaders value the support of the academy trust, particularly in the opportunities it offers to identify and share good practice.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding leader is knowledgeable and ensures that the school's comprehensive policies are effectively implemented. Training is well planned and delivered regularly. Staff know what to do if they have a concern. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn about staying safe online and good mental health. Pupils are confident to approach staff if they have any worries or concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all teachers have a clear enough view of how well pupils are understanding what is taught. Therefore, teachers are not able to use this information to help inform their teaching to help pupils embed and use their knowledge fluently. Senior leaders are planning a series of training activities to help teachers review ways to check learning.
- Pupils made less progress in English and science last year than they did in their other subjects. Subjects leaders have identified the issues that affected progress last year linked to the curriculum and have drawn up subject action plans. These now need to be carefully implemented.

- Some boys are not achieving as well as they should. Senior leaders are aware of this and have begun to develop actions that will challenge boys to do better and take more pride in their work and academic achievements.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Leaders know that if pupils do not attend regularly, they will not make the progress that is expected of them. Leaders need to continue to develop strategies to improve attendance and embed the practice that is already having an impact.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137812
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10133463
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1197
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joanne Williams
Headteacher	Jamie Fox
Website	www.earlshighschool.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Earls High School converted to become an academy school in January 2012. When its predecessor school, The Earls High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall. The school joined the Stour Vale Academy Trust in 2017.
- The school currently uses full- and part-time alternative provision at the Cherry Tree Learning Centre, ContinU+, Impact Education, Envirohort and the Link Academy.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- We met with the headteacher and members of the school leadership team. We spoke with pupils, both formally and informally, about their work and school life. We met with the chair of the trust and the chair and one other governor from the local governing body.

- We evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding at the school. The school's single central record was reviewed. We met with the designated safeguarding lead, scrutinised safeguarding documentation, and spoke to pupils and staff.
- We looked in detail at English, mathematics, science, modern languages, PE and music. In these subjects, we held meetings with subject leaders and with small groups of teachers, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils.

Inspection team

Deborah James, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Gwen Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Rob Steed	Ofsted Inspector
Clare Considine	Ofsted Inspector

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