

Inspection of Holyhead School

Milestone Lane, Handsworth, Birmingham, West Midlands B21 0HN

Inspection dates: 4–5 February 2020

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The previous 'outstanding' judgement reflected the school's overall effectiveness in December 2013 under the relevant inspection framework at that time.

The new judgement of 'good' reflects the current inspection framework as well as any changes at the school since the last inspection.

The school has not been inspected for seven years, which is longer than the five-year maximum interval between inspections. Changes in school effectiveness may have happened at any point in that period. The long time between inspections is because the law changed in 2011; it made outstanding schools exempt from routine inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Holyhead School, leaders, teachers and governors are committed to improving the life chances of young people. Pupils appreciate this. They speak warmly of the support they receive. Most pupils enjoy school and work hard. They make friends and feel safe. There is a strong climate for learning. Pupils' behaviour is good. Bullying is rare, and pupils are confident that staff will deal with any issues that occur. All parents and carers who replied to the Ofsted survey said their children are happy and safe at school.

Pupils value the wide range of opportunities available to them. They enjoy the various clubs and societies. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the school's commitment to the performing arts.

Staff have expertise in helping the many pupils who speak English as an additional language. These pupils are fully involved in the life of the school. They achieve very well at the end of Year 11.

Academic standards in the sixth form are good. There is, however, some variability in outcomes at the end of key stage 4. In a few subjects, pupils do not always build upon their previous learning. Some pupils do not achieve as well as they could in some GCSE courses.

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

Leaders, including governors, show strong, principled leadership. Staff say they are proud to work at the school. Leaders consider staff's well-being and their workload.

All pupils experience a broad curriculum. Key stage 4 pupils choose from a wide variety of subjects and qualifications. However, there is some variability in the quality of subjects taught. Consequently, pupils do not achieve consistently well in all subjects. Outcomes in mathematics and modern foreign languages are not as strong as in other subjects. Leaders value the contribution that modern foreign languages make to pupils' learning. The proportion of pupils who study the English Baccalaureate has increased.

Leadership of most subjects, including history and English, leads to a well-planned and delivered curriculum. Teachers are knowledgeable and skilled. Relationships with pupils are relaxed and purposeful. This leads to positive attitudes towards learning. Teachers set demanding work which deepens pupils' understanding. Pupils remember and apply core knowledge. Teachers encourage pupils to use technical vocabulary. As a result, pupils' written and oral responses are precise. Where planning and delivery are less effective, pupils' learning is sometimes superficial. They are unable to understand concepts because they have not grasped earlier, related ideas. This prevents pupils from making the best possible progress.

Teachers create a nurturing environment for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They know these pupils and expect them to achieve well. Most teachers use a learning profile sheet drawn up in consultation with pupils. Other strategies to support pupils are more variable in terms of success. Leaders are aware that GCSE outcomes for pupils with SEND need to improve.

Pupils' personal development has a high priority. Pupils study literature and music by authors and composers from diverse backgrounds. Visiting speakers enrich the curriculum. Pupils build their understanding of other cultures. This includes activities such as visits to the theatre. There are school trips, including ones overseas. These activities help pupils broaden their horizons. The school is active in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme. Pupils who are disadvantaged take part in the full range of opportunities provided.

The attendance of pupils is improving over time. Pupils know the school's expectations for behaviour and conduct. The overwhelming majority follow the rules. Behaviour in lessons is positive and productive. Behaviour is less calm at social times and at lesson changeover. There are some instances of jostling and pushing by a small number of pupils. Pastoral systems are strong. This has led to a reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions. However, permanent exclusions have remained above the national average over time.

Students enjoy the sixth form and achieve well. Students speak highly about pastoral and academic support. The sixth form prepares students well for adulthood and life beyond school. During the inspection, the school hosted a careers event. Students and younger pupils who visited asked good questions and left well informed. This helps raise aspirations.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a key strength. Leaders make thorough checks on all adults who work in or visit the school. All staff receive regular training and updates. They spot when pupils need help and support. When leaders need to act, they do so quickly. There are strong systems in place to check and record the safety of pupils. Pupils are safe in school. Leaders' analysis of the potential risks that pupils may face in the local area has informed the teaching of personal safety. Leaders and governors are knowledgeable about their duties to safeguard and protect pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders have not ensured that the curriculum enables pupils, including those with SEND, to build effectively on their previous knowledge. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could in mathematics and modern foreign languages. Leaders have started to take steps to address this. Leaders

need to ensure that the curriculum and the delivery of it enable pupils to master essential knowledge before moving on to more difficult concepts.

- At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to support pupils to improve their behaviour. Inspectors saw no instances of low-level disruption in lessons. However, lessons were sometimes interrupted by boisterous behaviour in corridors. This was caused by pupils moving between classes or out of class. Leaders need to make sure that the few pupils who misbehave at social times and when moving between classes better self-regulate their behaviour.
- Leaders use permanent exclusions appropriately and as a last resort. Nevertheless, the number of pupils who are permanently excluded is too high. Leaders need to explore additional strategies to reduce this number.

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	137034
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10133462
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,316
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	266
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dominic Bradley
Principal	Ross Trafford
Website	www.holyheadschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at James Brindley School and Titan St George's 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 principal; several other members of the school's senior leadership team; the special educational needs coordinator; curriculum leaders; teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair and vice chair of the governing body.

- We spoke with many pupils and sixth-form students formally and informally throughout the course of the inspection.
- The inspection focused in detail on English, mathematics, history and modern foreign languages. We met with curriculum leaders and teachers from these subjects, visited lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at their work.
- We took account of the 38 responses to Ofsted’s Parent View survey.
- We considered a range of school documentation, including the school development plan, policies, information on attendance and exclusions and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- We met with leaders about the school’s safeguarding procedures. We reviewed policies and records relating to safeguarding, attendance and children who have left the school.
- The lead inspector scrutinised the school’s records of recruitment checks made on all staff.

Inspection team

Nigel Griffiths, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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William Keddie	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
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