

Inspection of The James Hornsby School

Leinster Road, Laindon, Basildon, Essex SS15 5NX

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 October 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel part of The James Hornsby 'family'. Positive relationships between pupils and staff contribute to pupils feeling safe and happy. Pupils feel well supported by the staff in their school. They know that if they report a concern of any kind, staff will act on it. Bullying is dealt with effectively.

Pupils behave well. Almost all pupils meet leaders' high expectations of behaviour. The school is calm and orderly. Classrooms are purposeful learning environments. Staff work hard to improve the attendance and behaviour of the small group of pupils who struggle to meet expectations. Staff help these pupils to re-engage with learning.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects. Staff encourage pupils to aim high. Pupils leave the school well prepared for future learning or employment.

Pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, trips and activities. Leaders ensure everyone can take part if they want to. Activities help pupils to follow or develop new interests. They also help pupils to experience things at school that they might not do otherwise. Pupils learn about diversity and respect for others in a range of contexts. They discuss issues like equality and difference maturely.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that helps prepare pupils for life. Staff share leaders' vision for the school and have high aspirations for pupils' achievement.

In a wide range of subjects, leaders have organised the curriculum well. Their plans identify the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn and ensure that pupils' knowledge builds from lesson to lesson. School leaders know the small number of subjects where this not yet the case.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They explain things clearly to pupils. Teachers check regularly on pupils' understanding. Subject leaders use this information to adapt their curriculum plans so that pupils revisit the important knowledge they need to remember and use. Staff feel valued and well led. They have embraced opportunities for training and development. Pupils make strong progress in most subjects.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers ensure that learning for pupils with SEND is appropriately challenging. Most pupils with SEND receive the help they need to make strong progress across the curriculum. A few teachers do not make the best use of the information available to them to adapt activities to help some individual pupils. Pupils who struggle with reading get effective support to improve their knowledge and skills. This helps them to access the full curriculum.

Leaders' promotion of pupils' personal development is a strength. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, respect for the cultures and beliefs of others, and issues such as discrimination. Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Leaders ensure that these opportunities are open to all pupils. About a fifth of pupils involved in the school production are pupils with SEND, for example.

All pupils experience a well-considered careers education programme. Pupils receive high-quality, impartial advice about their options for future study and careers. They can make informed choices about what they will do after they leave the school. Leaders have ensured that more pupils take GCSEs in subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. This provides pupils with the knowledge they need for a wide range of further study and future careers.

Pupils respond positively to leaders' high expectations of behaviour. This helps learning to flow smoothly. The school's curriculum support centre helps pupils who find it hard to make the right behaviour choices to improve their behaviour. Leaders use the trust's Zenith Minds staff to provide expert support for those pupils who have more complex emotional needs or have missed long periods of education. This helps pupils to re-engage with learning.

Trustees have recruited more expertise to the local governing body. Governors have a thorough understanding of many aspects of the school's work, such as improvements to the curriculum. They hold leaders closely to account for these areas of their work.

Leaders use alternative provision appropriately. They are analysing information on behaviour, attendance and pupils leaving the school with increasing rigour. Leaders are using this information to target more precisely provision for individual pupils with social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs. However, the systems and processes to ensure that this is making the difference intended are not fully developed. Governors provide less challenge about this area of leaders' work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are vigilant for the signs of harm and abuse. They receive regular training and updates to keep their knowledge up to date. Staff are confident to recognise and pass on concerns. Leaders act swiftly and work hard to ensure that pupils get the help that they need to stay safe.

Trustees and governors ensure that the checks required before someone works in the school are carried out thoroughly.

Pupils feel safe. They are confident that staff will act on any concerns promptly. Pupils learn about keeping safe online and developing positive, healthy relationships with others.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In many subjects, curriculum plans identify the important subject knowledge that pupils should know and organise the teaching of this knowledge in a logical way. In a small number of subjects, plans are less well developed. Pupils find it harder to remember and show understanding of the knowledge they have learned. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans consistently identify the important knowledge that pupils should learn and order this in a way that helps pupils to know and remember more.
- Pupils with SEND access the full curriculum and work towards the same challenging learning goals as their classmates. Some pupils with SEND do not receive the support that is specified in their learning support plans. Leaders should ensure that staff receive clear guidance so that teachers adapt their plans well to meet the needs of all pupils with SEND.
- Leaders have made use of available information to review the use of alternative provision, particularly for pupils with SEMH needs. Leaders are still developing systems to review the impact of new arrangements and the extent to which these are meeting pupils' needs well. Leaders and governors should ensure that they evaluate the effectiveness of new arrangements, and in particular the Zenith Minds provision, precisely to further refine support for those pupils with more complex SEMH needs.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	138865
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10199766
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	911
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stewart Taylor
Headteacher	Tammy Nicholls
Website	www.jameshornsby.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 and 18 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The James Hornsby School is a broadly average-sized secondary school. It is part of the Zenith Multi-Academy Trust. The board of trustees delegates some of its responsibilities to a local governing board.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing. There have been two changes in headteacher. The current headteacher took up her post in January 2021. Senior leaders have been appointed to their roles in the past 24 months. Most faculty leaders have taken on their roles since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) is above average. The proportion of pupils with SEND not in receipt of an EHC plan is also above average.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Children’s Support Service (CSS) Langdon Hills, Basildon and BEP Academy. Both providers are registered and inspected by Ofsted.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with a trustee, the chair of the local governing board and the chief executive officer of the Zenith Multi-Academy Trust. Inspectors had telephone discussions with a local authority representative, an external consultant used by the school and with leaders of BEP Academy and CSS.
- To evaluate the quality of education, inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, design technology, geography, languages and science. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, spoke with pupils and staff, and listened to pupils reading. Inspectors looked at pupils' work, reviewed curriculum plans and visited lessons in a range of other subjects.
- To check on the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including school policies, procedures and records. Inspectors checked staff members' understanding of how to keep pupils safe from harm and spoke to pupils. The lead inspector met the designated safeguarding lead to discuss their work and review examples of the actions taken to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered the 69 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. Inspectors also met with a group of non-teaching staff and with early careers teachers.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. Inspectors met with several groups of pupils and spoke to pupils when visiting lessons to gather their views on the school.
- Inspectors analysed the 78 responses, including 52 free-text comments, to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. The lead inspector also considered two telephone calls from parents and carers. A complaint about the school received after the inspection was also considered.

Inspection team

Paul Wilson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Katherine Douglas	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kay Leach	Ofsted Inspector
Kathryn Herlock	Ofsted Inspector

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