

Inspection of Highfields School

Boundary Way, Penn, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV4 4NT

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 October 2021

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Highfields is a welcoming and inclusive school. Pupils are happy. They feel safe, well cared for and valued as individuals. Bullying is rare. When it does happen, pupils say that staff are quick to sort it out. Pupils are respectful towards each other. There are strong relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils know that adults want the very best for them. Newcomers, including incoming Year 7 pupils, appreciate the welcome and support given to help them settle quickly into the life of the school.

Behaviour is exemplary. In lessons, the calm and focused atmosphere helps pupils work productively. Teachers have extremely high expectations of pupils and these are well understood. Pupils arrive in the morning ready and keen to learn. They move around the school sensibly and are courteous to visitors.

At Highfields, leaders believe in educating 'the whole child'. They place high importance on personal development and want all pupils to become 'proud, active members of Highfields school'. This vision permeates the school.

Sixth-form students act as good role models for younger pupils. Leaders work hard to ensure that there is a wide variety of after-school clubs and sports and these are welcomed by pupils.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They know the school's strengths and what they need to do to improve. They work with staff to continually develop the quality of education on offer. There is a strong, shared vision and a commitment to further improvement. Leaders and staff want pupils to achieve the best they can.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. They are rightly proud of their school and wear their uniform with pride. Pupils care about each other and their school. They feel safe.

In almost all subjects, including English and history, the curriculum is carefully planned. There is a clear sequence of learning, which helps pupils to build on what they have previously learned. For example, in history, pupils learn about the local area before they study the Tudors. In English, particularly in the sixth form, pupils learn about the time period in which writers lived. This deepens their understanding of the poetry and novels they study.

Most subject plans set out the detailed knowledge and skills that pupils will learn. Plans, such as those in design technology are ambitious. In modern foreign languages, however, the curriculum at key stage 3 is not as ambitious as other subjects.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They present this clearly so that pupils know more and remember more. Most teachers check pupils' understanding and

deal with misconceptions as they occur. In mathematics, however, sometimes teachers do not check quickly enough what pupils know and can do. This means that pupils move on to new learning before they are ready.

There is a strong culture of reading across the school. Teachers are passionate about reading. They help pupils understand why reading is important. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to read aloud in lessons. Pupils carry books with them and read often. Leaders provide help to pupils who struggle to read fluently.

Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well thought out, including in the sixth form. Leaders have an incisive understanding of individual needs. The inclusion team provide additional and personalised support for vulnerable pupils. Pupils with SEND have full access to the curriculum and achieve well.

The curriculum for personal development is outstanding across all key stages. Pupils value the exceptional range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer. Pupils comment that 'it's not just what happens in the classroom that is important'. Participation in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh award, history, badminton and guitar clubs is extremely high. Pupils learn about beliefs and opinions that are different from their own. All pupils feel very well supported by the school and know who to go to if they have a problem. Leaders create a positive climate where all pupils irrespective of race, gender or religion can flourish.

Leaders ensure that pupils receive high-quality careers advice and guidance. There are strong links between subjects in the school and how they contribute to the wider community. For example, pupils taking catering also prepare food to be given to a group of veterans from the Rotary Club. Pupils experience a wide range of visits from external speakers about different careers. Students in the sixth form also receive timely information about their next steps in employment, training and higher or further education.

The trustees support the school well. They celebrate the many strengths of the school, but also challenge leaders to continually improve. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities very well and keep up to date with appropriate training and development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding is a high priority. The highly skilled safeguarding team work closely with staff and external agencies to help protect vulnerable pupils. Leaders are very quick to follow up any concerns that are raised. They ensure that pupils get the support they need promptly. Good support for pupils' mental health and well-being is provided. Leaders know the local

safeguarding risks. They understand how these risks affect pupils, including in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In mathematics, teachers do not always check pupils' understanding effectively. Errors and misconceptions are not identified quickly enough. Sometimes, this leads to pupils not being as secure in their learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers routinely and consistently check that pupils understand before moving on to something new.
- At key stage 3, teachers are not ambitious enough about what pupils should know and understand in modern foreign languages. This means that pupils do not experience a wide range of topics and this limits their vocabulary. Leaders should ensure that the planned curriculum in modern foreign languages equips pupils effectively with the knowledge and skills needed for the next stage in their learning.

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	142317
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10201058
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	1664
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	313
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Keith Sedgebeer
Headteacher	Graham Tate
Website	http://www.hswv.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	10 October 2018

Information about this school

- The school is the only school currently in the Highfields multi-academy trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive information about the full range of education and training options open to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history, design technology and modern foreign languages. They visited lessons, looked at work in books and met with curriculum leaders. They also spoke with pupils about their work.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and a range of senior leaders. They also met with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding, attendance and behaviour and personal development. They also met with the school's special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector also met with trustees, including the chair of the trust and the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors checked a range of school documentation and policies, including pupils' safeguarding records.
- The responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, were analysed, along with the 75 free-text comments that parents submitted. Inspectors gathered the views of staff and pupils through meetings and in informal conversations.

Inspection team

Neil Warner, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tim Bassett	Ofsted Inspector
Clare Considine	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Walters	Ofsted Inspector
Herminder Channa	Ofsted Inspector

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