

Inspection of Hopwood Hall School

15 Highfield Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3DU

Inspection dates:

7 and 9 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

At Hopwood Hall School, pupils who have missed a significant amount of their education get a second chance. Teachers take time to build positive relationships that help pupils to re-engage with learning. Pupils' attendance quickly improves because they love coming to this school. Pupils make strong progress once they are familiar with the surroundings and routines.

Pupils are polite and respectful towards others. The school is calm and orderly. Pupils respond positively to leaders' clear behaviour expectations. Behaviour sanctions are rarely needed. Bullying has so far not happened. Pupils forge strong friendships here when previously this may have been difficult for them.

Teachers adapt the curriculum to address pupils' needs. Teachers find out about pupils' interests and hook them into learning through this. However, in some subjects, teachers pursue pupils' interests, but stray too far from the curriculum plans. This means that pupils' learning does not always build logically from what they already know.

Teachers plan regular opportunities for pupils to socialise. At lunchtime, pupils play games, such as table tennis, chess and cards, that help them to develop social skills. Activities such as mock trials help pupils to build the confidence and resilience they will need as adults. Pupils relish the opportunity to engage in this level of debate.

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

Staff know pupils well. They take great care to find out how each pupil learns and how to remove any barriers to learning. Curriculum plans are well sequenced. Teachers adapt their planning to address pupils' needs and appeal to pupils' interests. Some teachers do this well. However, other teachers do not always return to the planned sequence of learning. As a result, pupils' work shows that their learning in some subjects is somewhat ad hoc. Leaders do not check that what teachers are teaching matches the curriculum plans. In those subjects where teachers follow well-sequenced curriculum plans, pupils excel. Pupils are encouraged to try new things. They experience success, sometimes for the first time, particularly in subjects such as science, art and music.

Many teachers have excellent subject knowledge. This is important because many pupils are capable of understanding complex concepts beyond what is expected for their age. All teachers have access to content and ideas through their specific subject association. Some teachers enjoy external support from other experienced teachers of their subject. However, this is not the case in all subjects. As a result, some teachers are not aware of current best practice in their subject.

Leaders are committed to promoting a love of reading. The library is well stocked with a wide range of interesting books. Staff read with pupils regularly. However,

many pupils remain reluctant readers. Teachers assess pupils' reading skills when they start at the school. Staff provide additional support for those pupils who need to improve their reading, spelling and writing. However, teachers' assessment of pupils' reading does not identify gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge. Similarly, interventions do not help correct gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge. Leaders have not prioritised this important aspect of the teaching of reading.

Pupils soon begin to thrive in the inclusive community the school provides. Pupils understand about life in modern Britain through citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. Leaders aim for pupils to be responsible, respectful and active citizens, and they are. Pupils feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues, such as faith, belief and ethics. Teachers help pupils to understand their own identity and build their character. This prepares them well for the next phase of their lives.

Pupils have regular careers sessions starting in Year 7. Pupils often have ambitious career goals. Teachers support them to move on to their chosen destinations. They help pupils choose the right GCSE options to ensure that they can follow their chosen career path.

The proprietor body's commitment to equality underpins life at the school. Pupils learn about and understand different forms of discrimination. They learn about their rights at work to reasonable adjustments. Leaders make sure that pupils learn about relationships and sex education, including LGBTQ+ relationships. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps and for life in modern Britain.

Leaders have ensured that the school is a safe environment and that pupils' welfare is prioritised. Classrooms are spacious with good acoustics and lighting. Leaders have identified any risks to pupils' safety and put in place appropriate risk assessments to mitigate them. Leaders ensure that regular fire safety checks and fire drills are carried out. Fire escape routes and assembly points are clearly signposted.

The proprietor body takes its responsibilities for the well-being of staff and pupils very seriously. Staff feel well supported by leaders. The proprietor body makes sure that all the independent school standards are met consistently. It meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The proprietor body carries out regular checks. It has commissioned an external view of the quality of education. However, leaders do not maintain a good oversight of teaching. As a result, pupils make weaker progress in some subjects than in others.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and takes account of the latest Department for Education guidance. Copies are available to all parents. Staff have regular safeguarding training. They are vigilant in spotting changes in pupils' behaviour. They know the signs that suggest a pupil could be vulnerable. Leaders

are very experienced in supporting families and working with external agencies. Leaders complete and record the required pre-employment checks.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves healthy, both physically and mentally. They know what makes a healthy relationship. Pupils know how to stay safe online. Teachers check pupils' use of the internet to make sure they are safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Some teachers do not deliver the curriculum plans as intended. This means that pupils can miss essential components of learning. Leaders do not check what teachers are teaching. Leaders should ensure that when teachers adapt curriculum plans to meet the interests of pupils, they return quickly to the planned sequence of learning.
- Most teachers do not have access to subject-specific support and training. They are often the only teacher of their subject in the school. This means that they do not benefit from professional dialogue about their subject. Leaders should ensure that all teachers benefit from subject-specific support and training.
- There is currently no systematic approach to the teaching of reading. Leaders have not ensured that teachers have the skills they need to identify and address gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive training to teach systematic synthetic phonics so that any gaps in pupils' early reading skills can be addressed quickly.
- The proprietor body does not check what leaders assert about the quality of education being provided. They provide support but do not explore enough leaders' decision-making, particularly in relation to the curriculum. The proprietors should ensure that leaders' decisions are probed more rigorously so that the quality of education continues to improve.

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

School details

Unique reference number	146780
DfE registration number	330/6045
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10205104
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Hadley Educational
Chair	Richard Sprange
Headteacher	Jill Cornfield
Annual fees (day pupils)	£35,000
Telephone number	0121 285 2851
Website	Not applicable
Email address	jill.cornfield@hopwoodhallschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 24 October 2019

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with social and emotional mental health difficulties, including anxiety, specific learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Prior to the inspection, the lead inspector reviewed published information about the school, including previous inspection reports.
- The lead inspector also reviewed documents sent by leaders, including policies, curriculum plans, the school development plan and school brochure.
- The lead inspector toured the school building and site and checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- During the inspection, the lead inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector spoke to the chair of trustees on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history, geography and citizenship. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed plans for mathematics and visited lessons for some other subjects, including art, music and PSHE.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils at breaktime and lunchtime about behaviour and safeguarding and observed school routines at the start and end of the day.
- Inspectors held meetings with school leaders about behaviour, attendance and exclusions.

- The lead inspector met with the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) coordinator to discuss provision for pupils with SEND. An inspector visited an intervention session.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead in order to discuss the school's safeguarding practice. Inspectors spoke to staff about their understanding of the school's safeguarding policy and practice.

Inspection team

Jane Spilsbury, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Helen Forrest

Her Majesty's Inspector

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