

Inspection of a good school: Droitwich Spa High School and Sixth Form Centre

Briar Mill, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire WR9 0AA

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 June 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Senior leaders have high expectations of themselves and others. They are ambitious for their pupils. Most staff share this stance. However, leaders have not ensured that all staff have high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour. While lessons are mainly calm and orderly, some teachers do not engage pupils in their learning effectively or consistently apply the behaviour policy. When this happens, pupils can lose focus and learning time is lost.

Leaders have carefully thought about how they can re-engage pupils with school after the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders have planned an extensive offer to promote pupils' wider personal development. All pupils have access to the range of opportunities to develop their interests and talents. These opportunities include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and numerous off-site visits.

Pupils feel safe in school. They say that they know who to talk to if they are worried about something. If bullying happens, staff resolve this swiftly and effectively. Most pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. However, there is a small group of pupils who do not come to school frequently enough. Leaders have started to address this but it is too soon to see any impact.

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

Leaders' ambition is for all pupils to achieve and thrive. Leaders have identified what pupils should learn in each subject to achieve these high aims. Most subjects, such as science and design and technology, have well-thought-out plans in place. Teachers adapt learning so that all pupils know and remember key knowledge and apply relevant skills. As a result, pupils achieve well.

Leaders have identified the key knowledge that pupils need to know and remember in many subjects. They ensure that new learning builds on what pupils have already been taught. Pupils remember this information well. For example, in science, pupils talk confidently about their work and how it links to previously studied topics. However, in some subjects, leaders have not identified key previously learned knowledge that pupils need to revisit to learn new topics. Where this happens, some pupils, especially the low prior attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not always know precisely what they should be doing, and in what order.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Most pupils meet these and behave well in lessons and around the school site. They are polite and courteous. When routines are clear, pupils make sure they follow them. However, some teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour and what they can do are too low. Occasionally, poor behaviour in lessons goes unchallenged or is not addressed effectively. Internal and external exclusions remain high.

The curriculum offer in the sixth form is strong. Students can choose to study a wide range of subjects. Leaders have carefully planned what knowledge students need to gain in each subject. As a result, teachers focus on recapping important knowledge and help students to commit it to their long-term memory. This works very well. Sixth-form students achieve very well and move on to appropriate destinations. Students are rightly proud of their sixth form.

Senior leaders have focused on pupils' personal development. For example, all pupils receive appropriate and impartial information about the world of work. In addition, there are many opportunities for pupils to pursue their passions or interests outside the classroom. Leaders have made sure that all pupils have access to these. However, leaders have identified that the uptake from pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, is not high.

Most pupils regularly attend school. However, a minority of pupils do not; this includes disadvantaged pupils. Attendance for those pupils is low. Governors and leaders have not acted swiftly enough to address this issue.

All staff are supportive of leaders and feel that leaders are considerate of their well-being. Leaders think carefully about the implications of new strategies on staff workload.

For the next inspection, staff's expectations of pupils, and behaviour and attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, may usefully serve as focuses.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff know how to spot that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Teachers know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. The safeguarding team works well with outside agencies to ensure that pupils are not at risk of harm. Leaders complete all required checks on all staff they employ.

Leaders keep records of any concerns they may have and the actions they have taken. At times, record-keeping is not well organised and easily accessible by all relevant staff. Leaders have recognised this and are putting a new system in place. This does not mean that children are at risk.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff do not have high enough aspirations for, and expectations of, pupils' behaviour and conduct. This means that poor behaviour is not consistently challenged. Pupils are then removed from lessons or excluded and lose valuable learning time. As pupils continue to reoffend, these strategies are not sufficiently effective. Leaders should ensure that their expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct are commonly understood and consistently applied by all staff and that strategies for addressing poor behaviour are more effective.
- Attendance for some pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, remains low. Leaders need to make sure that they engage effectively with families to ensure that those pupils attend school more frequently and learning time is not lost.
- Some learning is not well matched to the needs of pupils, particularly low prior attaining pupils and/or pupils with SEND in some lessons. Consequently, some pupils lose focus and may misbehave. Leaders should ensure that all teachers plan work to meet the needs of all learners.
- Although leaders keep accurate records of safeguarding incidents and cases, these records are not organised well at times. This means that they are not always easily accessible to all relevant leaders. Leaders need to make sure that record-keeping is organised effectively so that all appropriate staff can easily access them.
- Governors and leaders have not acted swiftly enough in the past. As a result, attendance and pupils' behaviour continue to be issues at the school. Leaders and governors should ensure that they act on any identified issues with urgency.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2012.

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	136927
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10226959
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	12 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1253
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	197
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Fisher
Headteacher	Natalie Waters
Website	www.droitwichspahigh.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average size secondary school for pupils in Years 8 to 13.
- The school uses part-time alternative provision for 16 pupils at two registered providers, as well as two other providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors met with senior leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers. The lead inspector held a meeting with governors, including the chair of governors and one trustee. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders and the SEND coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, physical education, design and technology and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors spoke to many pupils during the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke to many staff, including kitchen and support staff, about safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors took account of the parent free-text comments and the responses on Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Inspectors also considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Dan Robinson

Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Steer

Ofsted Inspector

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