

# Inspection of a good school: Selly Oak Trust School

Oak Tree Lane, Selly Oak, Birmingham, West Midlands B29 6HZ

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Inspection dates:

15 and 16 November 2022

## Outcome

Selly Oak Trust School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to Selly Oak Trust School. They feel happy and safe. They benefit from positive and productive relationships with staff and with their peers. Pupils feel that they are part of a team that makes up the school community. They talk about staff and pupils working together for the benefit of everyone.

Pupils believe that they attend an 'accepting' school. They feel included, and engage with views that are different from their own in a thoughtful manner. Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that staff and other pupils would help them to resolve any concerns that may arise.

Opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests are of exceptional quality. Pupils enjoy rich experiences in a coherently planned way. Pupils participate in a range of clubs, including art, gardening and various sports.

Pupils benefit from a well-designed curriculum, many work-related experiences and high-quality careers education. As a result, they have high aspirations of what they can achieve in adult life. All Year 11 pupils move on to further education and most stay at the school's excellent sixth-form provision. Many young people move into paid employment after they have left the school.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. It aims to give pupils the knowledge, skills, confidence and experiences to allow them to thrive in adult life. It is well structured and sequenced so that pupils can build on prior learning to deepen their knowledge. Pupils study a wide range of academic and vocational subjects to help them to prepare for future learning and life beyond school.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They present information clearly and use questions well to check pupils' understanding and consolidate learning. Teachers use assessment to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and inform future learning. The provision is strong in most subject areas, but it is less well developed in modern foreign languages (MFL).

Staff benefit from effective training to improve their practice. New teachers and staff teaching outside their main areas of expertise are supported well.

The curriculum is designed to help pupils know more and remember more over time. Sometimes, teachers use effective pedagogical approaches, such as practical materials, to help pupils understand abstract concepts. This is not always the case. For example, in mathematics, some pupils found it very difficult to understand place value without such resources.

Leaders prioritise reading to help pupils access the full curriculum. Staff deliver phonics sessions very well. Pupils use the sounds that letters represent to decipher words. Pupils understand the importance of reading. They are encouraged to read regularly, use the school's well-stocked library, access high-quality textbooks and develop a love of reading. Most pupils are confident readers by the time they leave the school.

Staff help pupils remember key words and often model the use of appropriate academic language. However, staff do not always insist on pupils using subject-specific terms. A few members of staff do not consistently use spoken English correctly.

Opportunities for pupils' personal development are exceptional. The rich curriculum prepares pupils for life in modern Britain and promotes positive characteristics. For example, activities, such as those undertaken by the school's Navy Cadets, help pupils to develop self-discipline, confidence, resilience and tenacity and to cultivate their leadership skills. The curriculum also purposefully enhances pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and provides pupils with opportunities to visit places that they may not otherwise experience. Pupils talk enthusiastically about going to the theatre and visiting HMS Raleigh.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They help pupils to behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils consistently follow clear routines. Staff use appropriate strategies to help pupils regulate their own behaviour. The number of incidents of poor behaviour has declined.

Most pupils attend regularly, but some pupils are absent too often. This means that they miss out on their learning. The school does not have clear systems in place to help pupils to catch up with their work when they return.

Leaders are considerate of staff's workload and well-being. Staff enjoy working at the school and the vast majority feel supported and listened to. Staff believe that they can raise concerns and, where possible, leaders will act. They value their professional development and feel motivated and respected. The school received a national award for its workplace well-being in June 2022.

Governance is strong. Governors use their experience and knowledge to ensure that the school has a clear vision and strategy. They ensure leaders manage resources well and they hold leaders to account for the quality of education that they provide.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture that supports the arrangements to identify pupils who may be at risk effectively and swiftly provide the support that they need. Staff have a thorough knowledge of safeguarding. They are well trained and know the procedures that they must follow to help to keep pupils safe. Records are well kept. There are robust arrangements in place to ensure that staff are recruited safely, and allegations are dealt with appropriately.

Pupils feel safe in school. They also learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including at home, in the wider community and when using the internet.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Some pupils do not attend regularly. Staff do not always ensure that pupils catch up with what they have missed through absence. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should strengthen their work with pupils, families and other agencies to improve pupils' attendance and ensure that staff help pupils to catch up when they return to school.
- Some staff do not use the most appropriate resources or promote the use of relevant academic language to help pupils to learn. This means that some pupils do not progress through the curriculum as well as they might. Leaders should ensure that staff use the most effective pedagogical approaches to help pupils understand abstract concepts and use academic language to help pupils to learn.
- Leaders' plans for MFL are still at an early stage of implementation. Pupils do not learn as well in MFL as they do in other subjects. Leaders should take further action to ensure that appropriate provision in MFL is as well embedded as it is in other subjects.

## **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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2017.

## **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.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103613
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10240496
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Foundation special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	388
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	99
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	John Cloughton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Eaton
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sellyoak.bham.sch.uk">www.sellyoak.bham.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	6 and 7 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- In October 2020, the deputy headteacher became the headteacher.
- The school uses three registered alternative 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 the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers, subject leaders, groups of staff and five governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke to a representative of an alternative provider by telephone.
- Inspectors met formally with groups of pupils and spoke with pupils in their lessons and around school. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during social times.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, talked to staff, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also visited other lessons on the second day of the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements. They spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding. The lead inspector met with the designated lead and deputy safeguarding lead. He reviewed the school systems and single central record.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation, minutes of meetings of the governing body and documentation relating to behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the 'free-text' comments. They also took account of the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Simon Mosley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ellen Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

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