

Inspection of The Polesworth School

Dordon Road, Dordon, Tamworth, Staffordshire B78 1QT

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 February 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

The Polesworth School is a community school where pupils prosper. Pupils have a great sense of pride in belonging to this inclusive school. Staff know their pupils well and this enables positive relationships to thrive. Leaders work relentlessly to put the pupils' best interests at the heart of all they do.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. They are polite, courteous, and well mannered. Pupils speak to visitors confidently and are keen to tell inspectors about the great experiences they have. Leaders have high expectations of pupils, and pupils live up to these. Pupils follow staff's instructions immediately and have the desire to be the best they can be.

Pupils are enthusiastic learners and want to fulfil their potential. This is because they trust the staff and get the support they need to do well. Pupils say when bullying happens, they will inform a member of staff because they know staff will deal with it and stop it happening again.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Many pupils attend these, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school's radio station, Polesworth Pulse, is a particular highlight. Pupils are presenters on this successful show and share current affairs, birthday 'shoutouts', and important information.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum, which enables pupils to flourish. Teachers are experts in the subjects they teach and deliver lessons with enthusiasm. Pupils are engaged and are keen to contribute to class discussions. Teachers carefully select teaching materials, ensuring the learning needs of all pupils, including those with SEND, are incorporated. As a result, most pupils know more and remember more. Generally, teachers carefully assess what pupils know and have understood and re-teach when pupils become stuck. However, at times, teachers do not always check that learning is clearly understood before moving on.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, and they are committed to their education. There is a respectful and caring culture across the school. Leaders have a strong focus on attendance and punctuality. Despite this, getting some pupils to attend school is a challenge. As a result, leaders have put thorough and rigorous systems in place to make sure that they are doing all they can to improve support and challenge pupils to attend well.

Leaders have worked remarkably hard to prepare pupils for their adult lives. This includes teaching pupils about different cultures beyond the school community. For example, when issues such as racism and equalities arose in school, leaders prioritised educating all pupils on these matters. As a result, the school has an

equality, diversity and inclusivity forum, which is popular among all pupils. In English, pupils study a range of poetry from many cultures. In addition, the history department has achieved a nationally recognised award in Holocaust Education. All of this means that pupils are well-rounded citizens and prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils receive an excellent careers programme that starts in Year 7. This means that pupils receive unbiased guidance from the earliest stage. Year 12 students and pupils in Year 10 value the opportunity to attend work experience placements. In addition, pupils across the school meet a range of employers from different fields, including digital media, forensics, and nursing. This helps pupils get a taste of their aspirations and prepares them well for their next steps in education, employment, or training.

Leaders have designed a highly effective personal development curriculum, which builds on pupils' knowledge and revisits topics as time goes on. As a result, pupils have a strong understanding of topics, such as well-being, healthy relationships, and drugs. Pupils have the confidence to ask questions and seek advice relating to these matters.

Leaders recognise that literacy and reading are fundamental to pupils being successful. Teachers and sixth-form ambassadors support younger pupils with reading for pleasure. Leaders have identified and are supporting pupils who are at the early stages of reading. However, leaders recognise more work needs to be done to identify what pupils' individual reading needs are and to ensure that the resulting interventions precisely meet these needs.

Those responsible for governance work closely with school leaders to ensure that the pupils get the best possible deal. For example, leaders have prioritised working on the curriculum to ensure that pupils receive a good quality of education. Professional development is effective and there is a good balance between pedagogy and training. Staff are proud to work at the school and staff retention is high. Staff who also train at the school are keen to work here. As several members of staff told inspectors 'Once you come to The Polesworth School you do not want to leave.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a culture of vigilance across the school. Staff know their pupils well and report any concerns they may have. Pupils will also speak to a trusted adult if they have worries of their own or if they are worried about their peers. The safeguarding team deal with these quickly and effectively.

Leaders have carried out appropriate checks on their staff to ensure they are suitable to work in a school. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates.

Pupils also receive regular reminders of how to protect themselves online and offline.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, teachers do not check for pupils' understanding before moving on. This means that some pupils are not fully secure in their learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment consistently well to check understanding.
- Leaders do not have a precise enough understanding of the gaps in the weakest readers' knowledge. This means that these pupils do not get the most appropriate teaching, so that they can improve their reading. Leaders should ensure that they identify and address the gaps in pupils' reading, so they can gain the phonics knowledge they need to become fluent readers.

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

Unique reference number	136459
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10266150
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	1478
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	302
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Simon Atkins
Headteacher	Maura Favell
Website	http://www.thepolesworthschool.com
Date of previous inspection	11 March 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Polesworth School converted to an academy in February 2011.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 7 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 further education, training, and employment.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider for a small number of pupils in Year 11.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, attendance lead, designated safeguarding lead, careers lead, sixth-form lead, early career teachers, chair of governors and the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors held discussions with those responsible for governance.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, geography, mathematics, languages, and history. For each of these subjects, inspectors met with subject leaders, carried out visits to lessons, spoke to pupils and looked at some of their work, and spoke to subject teachers.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's tutor programme. Inspectors also visited tutor time.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. Inspectors took account of responses to the pupils and staff survey, as well as Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to behaviour, bullying, attendance, and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with the designated safeguarding leader.

Inspection team

Sultanat Yunus, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Huw Bishop	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Beech	His Majesty's Inspector
Stuart Clarkson	His Majesty's Inspector
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