

Inspection of a good school: Highams Park School

34 Handsworth Avenue, Highams Park, London, Essex E4 9PJ

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 March 2023

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe and are kept safe at school. They feel comfortable approaching teachers to discuss their concerns and know that they will be taken seriously. Leaders deal appropriately with any bullying incidents that arise.

Staff and pupils recognise that some of the recent changes that leaders have introduced are beginning to improve behaviour. Pupils speak highly of the positive working relationships that they have with staff. These reflect the school values of 'respect, responsibility, and resilience'. However, behaviour in classrooms and around the school is variable. While some pupils work hard and behave well, others lose focus on their learning. Staff do not consistently use leaders' policies and procedures to manage incidents of off-task behaviour.

Pupils readily take on additional responsibilities. For example, they are proud of the charity drives they support through the house system. Sixth-form students act as mentors, helping younger pupils with their reading for example. The 'Inspire and Aspire' programme encourages pupils to embrace the local community and value their cultural background. It connects pupils with organisations that can work with them to support their aspirations for the future.

Pupils follow a broad and ambitious curriculum. However, the delivery of the curriculum does not consistently support pupils to learn and remember the knowledge that leaders expect.

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

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum. They have thought about how to ensure that the curriculum builds effectively on what pupils have learned in their primary schools. In many subjects, the curriculum has been sequenced so that pupils consolidate their learning over time. Where the curriculum is delivered well, this careful sequencing helps pupils to learn and remember more. For example, in design and technology, pupils practise using different tools and techniques for cutting and joining a range of materials. They use these skills effectively when tackling more complex projects.

Throughout the school, teachers have high levels of subject expertise. They use this expertise to present information and ideas clearly. However, the activities set for pupils do not consistently match the ambition of the planned curriculum. This reduces how effectively the curriculum enables pupils to build up, revisit and remember knowledge.

While teachers typically identify pupils' errors and misconceptions, at times, they do not ensure that these are promptly addressed. This means that for some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), errors and misconceptions persist in their work.

Leaders understand the importance of helping pupils with SEND to learn and remember the intended curriculum. Staff understand and are alert to pupils' different needs, including the needs of those students who attend the sixth form. They typically make appropriate adaptations to tasks. As a result, pupils with SEND study the same curriculum as their peers wherever possible. They also have access to qualifications designed to support their specific needs.

Pupils who find reading difficult do not consistently receive the help that they need to catch up. This is because leaders have not put in place a coherent plan to help these pupils learn to read with greater accuracy, fluency and confidence.

Pupils' behaviour is variable. This is because staff do not consistently implement the agreed policy and systems. As a result, some lessons are disrupted by pupils who are not focusing sufficiently on their learning.

The provision for pupils' broader development is well considered, from Year 7 through to Year 13. Leaders organise a wide range of additional activities that aim to develop and extend pupils' interests and talents in different areas, including music, sports, digital technology and languages. Pupils like that they get to participate in performing arts events and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. In the sixth form, students with SEND can opt to receive bespoke mentoring.

All pupils, including those with SEND, are well supported in exploring their future career options. For example, leaders make sure that they have access to independent advice and guidance.

Staff, including those at the beginning of their career, feel well supported to develop professionally. They acknowledge the work that leaders have done to reduce their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding systems and procedures are robust. Staff are well trained and understand their role in keeping pupils safe. Regular briefings keep teachers up to date with important information about safeguarding. Leaders deal promptly with any concerns that are reported. They know pupils' needs and circumstances well and put support in place the moment that issues emerge. Leaders work closely with the local authority and other agencies to make sure that pupils and their families get the help they need.

The curriculum has been designed to help pupils understand how to stay safe. For example, local partners deliver assemblies to make pupils aware of risks within the area.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Weaker readers do not receive sufficient help to catch up. As a result, some pupils struggle to access different areas of the curriculum. Leaders must ensure that these pupils are accurately and promptly identified. They should ensure that pupils receive the structured and systematic support that they need to become accurate, fluent and confident readers.
- The tasks pupils complete do not consistently match the ambition of the planned curriculum. In addition, some teaching does not ensure that errors and misconceptions are identified and addressed. Leaders should ensure that teachers implement the planned curriculum fully, including checking that pupils have understood and rectified their misconceptions. They should ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, are well supported to learn and remember more.
- The agreed systems for managing pupils' behaviour are not consistently applied by staff. As a result, some lessons are disrupted. Leaders should ensure that staff fully and consistently implement the revised procedures so that expectations of behaviour are consistent across the school.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2013.

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	137558
Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10240098
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	1,545
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	347
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tracy Penfold
Principal	Nigel Armsby
Website	http://www.highamsparkschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2017 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a standalone academy.
- The school makes use of eight registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical educational qualification 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.

- Meetings were held with senior and subject leaders, teachers and trustees. Discussions were also held with staff at two of the alternative provisions.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, languages, design and technology, and history. 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 their work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and carers, and staff through both discussions and their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the record of pre-employment checks.

Inspection team

Luisa Bonelli, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jeff Cole	Ofsted Inspector
David Thomas Hatchett	Ofsted Inspector

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