

Inspection of a good school: The Hart School

Penkridge Bank Road, Rugeley, Staffordshire WS15 2UE

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 June 2023

Outcome

The Hart School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Hart School is an inclusive, welcoming and friendly school. Pupils feel safe. Leaders are ambitious for pupils. The school's motto is 'we can, we will, we do' and leaders provide many opportunities, both in and out of the classroom, for this vision to be realised. Pupils are encouraged to think about the 'Hart' values in everything they do, which remind them to be 'happy, ambitious, resilient and tolerant' learners.

Pupils display respect for people's differences. Everyone feels that they can be an individual here. The relatively new behaviour policy is having a positive impact. Pupils behave very well in lessons and move calmly around the school site. They enjoy being part of this harmonious school. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils, are friendly and purposeful. Bullying is not accepted.

Sixth-form students act as good role models for younger pupils. Leaders have ensured that, since the pandemic, that there is a wide variety of after-school clubs and sports. They are working with pupils to make sure this offer continually improves. An annual school musical production offers excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their individual skills and talents.

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

School and trust leaders have high expectations for pupils. They have an ambitious vision for the quality of education that pupils should receive. They have carefully crafted a curriculum that ensures pupils learn well in lessons. In addition, they provide many opportunities outside the classroom to build pupils' resilience, knowledge and skills.

Leaders, with support from the trust, have made improvements to the curriculum and assessment. For example, changes to the key stage 3 curriculum mean that pupils study subjects for longer and develop greater depth in their knowledge and understanding. Senior and trust leaders have worked collaboratively with subject leaders in the school to redevelop the curriculum. Subject leaders have identified what they want pupils to know,

do and understand, with a focus on ensuring that pupils learn 'powerful knowledge'. There is a clear sequence of learning. This helps pupils to build on what they have previously learned, and provides guidance about assessment. However, some teachers do not always adapt their teaching to meet the needs of all pupils. This means that the learning of some pupils is not secure before they are moved on to the next task, and some gaps in learning persist.

The proportion of pupils at key stage 4 who choose subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is lower than the government's ambition. A significant factor is the low take-up of pupils choosing to study a modern foreign language in key stage 4. This has, historically, been due to difficulties leaders have faced in recruiting modern foreign languages teachers. Leaders have plans to increase the numbers of pupils studying languages at GCSE.

Leaders recognise the importance of reading and support those pupils who need help to catch up. Reading is prioritised and subject leaders think carefully about how they can promote reading within different subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Leaders provide teachers with accurate information about these pupils' needs. Pupils with SEND follow the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

The school's new policy for managing behaviour has had a positive impact. The majority of classrooms are calm and orderly. Most pupils, including those in the sixth form, display positive attitudes to learning. Instances of low-level disruption have decreased. Suspensions, which leaders use appropriately, are decreasing. Leaders are taking all reasonable steps to ensure improved attendance from those pupils who are regularly absent. Pupils know that staff care for them and want them to achieve their full potential.

Leaders place great importance on pupils' wider development. They have constructed a curriculum that teaches pupils about a range of important issues, such as healthy relationships, consent and how to stay safe in the community and online. Pupils speak confidently about the school's inclusive nature and how they are taught to respect different cultures, beliefs and characteristics. Pupils receive high-quality, impartial careers advice about their next steps in education, employment or training.

Members of the academy council and trust leaders support the school well. They celebrate the school's many strengths, but also challenge leaders to continually improve. They have a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to improve further and hold leaders robustly to account. Some staff, in response to Ofsted's survey, did not always agree that workload was well managed by leaders. Leaders recognise this and know that, when implementing new policies, they consider the impact on staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of vigilance at this school. Staff receive regular and high-quality training and take their responsibilities seriously. Leaders and staff have an informed awareness of local safeguarding priorities.

Leaders work with a range of outside agencies, including local community groups and the police, to support vulnerable pupils and their families. All pupils know who to go to if they have any worries or concerns.

The required checks on adults in school are carried out and recorded.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers do not check that all pupils have the secure knowledge they need to be able to complete key tasks. When this is the case, pupils sometimes move on to new learning without having a secure understanding of key pieces of knowledge. This hinders their understanding and progress. Leaders should ensure that teachers make appropriate adaptations to their teaching to support all pupils to understand important knowledge before moving on.
- The numbers of pupils studying a modern foreign language at key stage 4 is low. This means that too few pupils study the full range of academic subjects that make up the EBacc. Leaders should prioritise their plans to increase uptake of modern foreign languages.

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 March 2018.

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	137100
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10282698
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	1253
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	120
Appropriate authority	The Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Abbie Rumbold
Headteacher	Rachael Sandham
Website	www.hartschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 and 21 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- 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 education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Leaders use two alternative providers.

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 carried out deep dives in English, science, geography, and art and design. In these subjects, they visited lessons, looked at work in books and met with curriculum leaders. They also spoke with pupils about their work.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and a range of senior leaders. They also met with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding, attendance and behaviour, and personal development. They also met with the school's special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with the chair of the academy council and a director of Creative Education Trust.
- Inspectors checked a range of school documentation and policies, including pupils' safeguarding records.

Inspection team

Neil Warner, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Clare Considine	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Todd	Ofsted Inspector

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