

Inspection of an outstanding school: Swanshurst School

Brook Lane, Billesley, Birmingham, West Midlands B13 0TW

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 May 2024

Outcome

Swanshurst School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Swanshurst is an exceptional place for pupils to learn. The school's values are lived throughout all aspects of its work. A culture of respect and inclusivity exists that allows every pupil to thrive. All pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve strong outcomes. Leaders at all levels place a significant emphasis on the development of pupils' personal qualities alongside their academic success. Pupils benefit hugely from the extensive opportunities to learn in and out of the classroom. They value this cultural enrichment.

Pupils and students have strong working relationships with staff. Pupils feel safe in school and are attentive and hardworking in class. They move around the school demonstrating exceptional maturity and self-control. The school has established clear routines that are understood by all. Where pupils fall short of these high expectations, they are supported rapidly and effectively.

Students in the sixth form take a lead in the life of the school. They have a strong and active influence, setting a fine example for the younger pupils. Pupils' contribution through completing the 'Swanshurst Pledge' and taking up wider leadership opportunities is exceptional. Pupils know they have a voice and feel listened to. They talk proudly of the creation of a reflection room that they raised the money to build. This now provides a quiet space at break and lunch for pupils to use.

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

The curriculum is exemplary. Leaders at all levels have thought very carefully about pupils' experiences over time. The small parts of knowledge and how they are assessed have been carefully mapped into the 'curriculum dashboard' for each subject. This allows pupils to develop an understanding of how subjects work. For example, in science and design and technology, there is detailed consideration of how pupils will become better at practical work from Year 7 to Year 13.

The planned curriculum explodes into life in the classroom. Activities are well chosen to help pupils to learn precisely what they need to. Pupils are given time to practise and nurture the deep understanding needed to succeed. They have opportunities to discuss key ideas and debate topics relevant to them. Teachers use all assessment information to develop a comprehensive understanding of how each class is working towards the aspirational curriculum in place. As a result of high-quality training, teachers use a range of strategies to ensure pupils remember what they have been taught.

The support provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is exceptionally strong. Teachers receive high-quality guidance on how to support these pupils and this is consistently followed. Pupils with SEND are helped intelligently and in a timely way by staff. They are involved in all aspects of school life and achieve well alongside their peers.

A deep-rooted culture of reading permeates throughout the school. All pupils benefit from high-quality opportunities to read, both in and out of lessons. The school uses assessment information well to make sure that pupils get the right support. For example, pupils at an early stage of reading are provided with high-quality phonics sessions led by specialist staff. Increasing numbers of pupils are using the two libraries in school. Sixth form students are supported with free access to high quality academic journals, as well as focused reading before and after lessons.

Pupils are encouraged to be kind, and considerate of others. They feel that staff deal with any issues fairly and quickly. Daily reviews from pastoral leaders, informing a pastoral blog to all staff, allows any emerging issues to be quickly addressed. Additional staff have been recruited to provide mental health and well-being support for pupils. This work has had sustained impact on attendance and punctuality which are in a strong position. As a result, pupils feel exceptionally well supported by the school's pastoral team and attend school regularly.

Pupils in all year groups, including those in the sixth form, are provided with many opportunities to prepare for life after school. They appreciate the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education sessions that cover important topics such as healthy relationships and preparing for the world of work. There is also considerable strength in the school's wider provision of careers information and guidance for pupils of all ages. Students in the sixth form keep track of their own success through the wider study programme and are actively aspirational for their future. They benefit from bespoke support to make their best possible next step.

The school is conscious of staff workload and well-being and are committed to achieving excellence in a sustainable way. Staff appreciate the professional development they receive. They say it allows them to apply whole school priorities to their subjects, allowing them to build their curriculum and teaching expertise.

Governors have a clear oversight of all the work done in the school. They support and challenge leaders well. They use their diverse range of professional expertise and experience to enhance their involvement in the school. Governors ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties and is on a continuous path of improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in November 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	103514
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10294488
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1928
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Professor Philip Thickett
Headteacher	Mike Dunn
Website	www.swanshurst.org
Date(s) of previous inspection	1 and 2 November 2017

Information about this school

- The school uses three alternative providers for pupils. All of them are 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 education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school's sixth form is co-educational, but currently has no boys.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, governors, the local authority representative, other senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in design and technology, mathematics, science 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 pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to attendance, behaviour and bullying.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' plans to improve the school and their self-evaluation of the school's work.
- Inspectors took account of responses to the pupil and staff surveys, as well as Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Richard Wakefield, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Hayley Clarke	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Fenton	Ofsted Inspector

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