

Inspection of Fairfax

Fairfax Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B75 7JT

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 May 2024

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

The principal of this school is Sean Castle. This school is part of Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Simon Jones, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andy Best.

What is it like to attend this school?

Fairfax is an inclusive and thriving school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend well. Their personal development is provided for exceptionally well. The school has high expectations for what pupils can achieve. It has developed an ambitious and holistic curriculum that reflects those expectations. In lessons, pupils respond well to this and focus on their work. Many are keen to engage in discussion and debate.

Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff, are respectful and courteous in lessons and around school. Pupils' behaviour during break and lunch times is brilliant. They conduct themselves very well in busy environments. Pupils understand the high standards and clear routines that are expected of them.

Everyone participates in the rich life of the school. The house system is at the heart of this. Pupils and students in the sixth form speak highly of the house system and all the sporting activities they are involved with. They also greatly enjoy being part of the annual Eisteddfod that celebrates a wide variety of art forms. The school ensures that all pupils are involved and that those in the sixth form take the lead in organising. A wide range of other activities and leadership opportunities are open to all. These include peer mentoring, a range of interest groups and curriculum enriching trips.

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

The school, with the support of the trust, has strengthened the curriculum in recent years. It is coherently ambitious and in all subjects the learning is carefully sequenced. Staff give pupils opportunities to regularly revisit work. Teachers have a strong shared understanding of the crucial knowledge that needs to be acquired in each subject. However, on some occasions, teachers move pupils on to new learning before their knowledge has been checked. This leads to gaps in understanding for some pupils, making it difficult for them to build on their learning over time. The school has systems in place to support staff with this to address these gaps.

The curriculum is having a positive impact for almost all pupils; however, some disadvantaged pupils are not achieving as highly as they could. Leaders at all levels are deeply aware of this. They have ensured that disadvantaged pupils are central to all their work to improve the school. There is clear positive impact of this work which is improving the experience of disadvantaged pupils. For example, the strongly personalised pastoral support and detailed work on attendance helps pupils to engage better with school life over time.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the same curriculum as their peers. The school identifies their needs well. It provides staff with the training and support they require to meet pupils' specific needs. Pupils with SEND who access the additionally resourced provision integrate very well in lessons. Their needs are well met. Pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read are

also well supported. Staff provide them with additional help that enables these pupils to catch up.

The school's approach to pupils' personal development is carefully designed to link through each aspect of a pupil's time at the school. Learning from the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is reinforced regularly in other subjects and during form time. Pupils are given opportunities to discuss serious and sensitive issues in a considered way. This gives them a framework to make appropriate and intelligent choices when confronted by difficult situations. Students in the sixth form take up a range of opportunities to support, extend and enrich their academic studies. All students and pupils are prepared well for their next steps in education, employment or training. This is done through a careers programme that broadens the horizons of all.

Pupils' character is developed exceptionally well. This is encompassed through the 'ARKS' values that are lived throughout school. Pupils in all year groups, including those in the sixth form, are regularly rewarded for displaying positive behaviours, engaging with additional academic activities and helping others in the community. They take great pride in the colours they can gain for their blazer, which reflects the integrated nature of this work by the school.

The school tracks pupils' attendance and behaviour carefully. Leaders have put in place a range of measures to improve these. There is significant impact on the experience for all groups of pupils. These are recognised by staff, parents and pupils in their lived experience of the school.

The school is led exceptionally well. All leaders are unified in their vision for the school. They are successful in realising this vision and are not complacent. This is exemplified through the work for pupils with SEND and supporting pupils with social, emotional, and mental health needs. Leaders are proactively considerate of staff well-being and workload. Staff talk highly of this work. They receive timely and impactful professional development in line with the identified improvements leaders want to make. The trust has a clear understanding of the school. They question, support and champion the improvements in the school. Leaders have been able to share this practice with other schools in the trust and beyond.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is yet to have a consistent impact for disadvantaged pupils. Therefore, some disadvantaged pupils are not achieving as highly as they could.

The school needs to continue to embed and develop the curriculum in all subjects so that all pupils achieve well.

- Pupils' understanding is not always checked well enough before moving on to the next part of the curriculum. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. The school should ensure that teachers check pupils' understanding consistently well. This will enable pupils to build knowledge more effectively over time.

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	136908
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10337822
Type of school	Secondary
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	1,579
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	253
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andy Best
CEO of trust	Simon Jones
Principal	Sean Castle
Website	www.fairfax.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school uses five 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.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, trust leaders, trustees, academy associates (governors), senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, geography, history and modern foreign languages (MFL). 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.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in some other subjects and discussed with leaders the provision for those students in sixth form and disadvantaged pupils.
- 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.
- Inspectors reviewed the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum plan and spoke with leaders. An inspector also reviewed the support provided for pupils in regard to reading.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to behaviour, bullying and attendance.
- 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
Huw Bishop	Ofsted Inspector
Gwen Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Grady	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Epton	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024