

Inspection of Highams Park School

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

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 May 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

The headteacher of this school is Nigel Armsby. This school is a single 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, Nigel Armsby, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tracy Penfold.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a warm and friendly atmosphere at this school. Pupils are well-cared for by dedicated staff who take time to get to know their pupils well. Leaders are ambitious for pupils' learning and pupils have many opportunities to learn from visiting speakers and to hear about a wide range of careers. Pupils in Years 10 and 12 benefit from an extensive work experience programme. The sixth form is a key strength of the school. Students achieve very well in their sixth form studies and benefit from an extensive range of wider opportunities preparing them well for adulthood and further study.

The recent actions of leaders have led to a noticeable improvement in behaviour. In lessons, behaviour rarely disrupts learning. Pupils know the rules and, overall, they follow them. This is helping teachers to deliver the curriculum more effectively.

Pupils are taught how to be good citizens and how to take care of their physical and mental health. They contribute to charities and learn about the work of organisations supporting those in need. Older pupils are trained to support younger ones with their reading. Many pupils successfully complete their Duke of Edinburgh Award and Sports Leadership Award.

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

The new leadership team have been highly effective in achieving positive changes in behaviour across the school. Leaders have identified the right actions and have worked at pace. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is typically calm and focused. Pupils are very clear about the rules. Where pupils do not meet leaders' high expectations for behaviour, prompt and robust action is taken. This has also had a positive impact on staff who welcome and support the new behaviour system. Staff are proud to work here and are very positive about the new leadership. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and respectful.

While behaviour rarely disrupts learning, a few pupils are not making as much progress as they should. These pupils do not have the same positive attitudes towards their learning as their peers. This is not consistently identified and addressed by staff. In the sixth form students approach their work with diligence and commitment.

There is a well-sequenced and ambitious curriculum in place across a broad range of subjects. The curriculum is equally ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This allows pupils a choice of academic, technical and vocational courses, including in the sixth form. Students in the sixth form achieve very well. They have highly positive attitudes towards their education. This is because teachers set high expectations for students' learning and consistently check they are learning the key knowledge needed. Teachers are precise in ensuring that students apply subject-specific vocabulary appropriately. Where gaps are identified, these are addressed. Lower down the school, there is not as much

consistency across subjects in terms of assessment. In some subjects, the quality of work in pupils' books is variable. This includes for some pupils with SEND.

In many subjects, pupils build their subject knowledge with increasing complexity over time. For example, in geography, pupils are encouraged to use subject-specific vocabulary when comparing country demographics. This helps pupils to develop the skills and confidence to 'speak like a geographer'. In citizenship, pupils first learn how young people are protected by the law in relation to child labour. This provides the foundation for learning about the British criminal justice system and the age of criminal responsibility. This prepares pupils to tackle more complex issues such as youth violence later in their studies.

Reading is a priority across the school. There is a new programme in place to support pupils to read with greater fluency and accuracy. Progress is carefully checked to ensure that pupils have the support they need. This programme is in the early stages of implementation but the impact so far has been very positive.

The school has a broad and relevant programme of learning and opportunities to support pupils' personal development. An ambitious curriculum helps pupils to develop the knowledge and skills needed to make safe and responsible choices. This is particularly strong in the sixth form where students have many opportunities to contribute actively to their school and to wider society. This includes taking part in the annual charity walk.

The actions of leaders, with the support of the governing body have led to an improvement in attendance. There is a robust system in place to address poor attendance and leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to providing the support needed to pupils and families to ensure that attendance continues to improve over time.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes in key stages 3 and 4, teachers do not routinely check that pupils have understood the learning before moving on. This means that errors and misconceptions are missed and that some pupils are not able to make connections in their learning over time. The school should ensure that teachers check pupils' understanding and address any aspects that pupils are finding difficult.
- The quality of work in pupils' books is variable. This is because sometimes expectations for the subject are not clearly set out and insisted upon. This slows progress and means some pupils do not develop the disciplinary rigour they

should. Leaders should ensure that expectations are clearly communicated to pupils and followed up with consistency.

- Leaders have rightly focused their attention on improving behaviour. This has had a positive impact. However, a small proportion of pupils are disinterested in learning and have poor attitudes to their education. This is not consistently picked up and addressed by staff. Leaders should ensure that staff identify pupils who are not participating in the lesson and provide the support needed to ensure that these pupils engage in the curriculum and gain the confidence to seek help when they need it.

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	137558
Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10323376
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1537
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	345
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tracy Penfold
Headteacher	Nigel Armsby
Website	www.highamparkschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 March 2023 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a standalone academy.
- The headteacher took up their role in January 2023.
- The school makes use of six registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors met with leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND; personal, social, and health education; careers; behaviour and attendance; early reading; pupils’ wider development, and the sixth form.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: modern foreign languages, mathematics, English, drama, geography and religious studies.
- 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 considered pupils’ learning in other subjects, including science, citizenship, computing, business studies and health and social care.
- 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 spoke to a range of staff about safeguarding, behaviour and their workload.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from the school and the sixth form. Pupils’ behaviour in lessons and at playtimes was observed.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s online surveys for parents, staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Polly Haste, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Yvonne Chisholm	Ofsted Inspector
Gareth Cross	Ofsted Inspector
Hayley Follett	Ofsted Inspector
Costa Dyer	Ofsted Inspector
Cristalina Fernandes-Bates	Ofsted Inspector

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