

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Higham Lane School

Shanklin Drive, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV10 0BJ

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 May 2025

Outcome

Higham Lane School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Michael Gannon. This school is part of Central England 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), Andrew Dickinson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Carole Davies.

What is it like to attend this school?

A warm welcome awaits pupils at Higham Lane School. They meet the school's high expectations with exemplary manners. Politeness is second nature. Pupils hold doors open, greeting staff and visitors with a smile. Their respectful conduct sets a happy tone.

Pupils' attendance is excellent. They arrive on time, ready to learn. They thrive in key stages 3 and 4. In the sixth form, students shine. Pupils take feedback seriously and strive to improve. Most pupils secure exceptional achievements. They are well prepared to access education, employment, or training pathways after leaving school.

Disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), thrive, especially when staff make suitable adjustments for them. Pupils are keen readers. The school's well-stocked library, with books matching pupils' interests and needs, is a popular spot. Pupils enjoy reading in this welcoming space.

Pupils' personal development matters here, with an array of extra-curricular activities to choose from. This includes drumming, drama, code-breaking and charity fundraising. Sixth-form students foster valuable working relationships through mentoring younger pupils and helping others. Some complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. One recent Gold Award recipient was honoured at Buckingham Palace. This culture of giving back shapes pupils' character, extending well beyond school.

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

The school has constructed an incredibly strong and ambitious curriculum. It covers the key knowledge pupils need now and in the future. A broad key stage 3 curriculum builds a solid foundation for pupils' GCSE studies. This curriculum's well-sequenced content helps them remember more. Most exceed expectations. Pupils then go on to well-chosen post-16 pathways. The school has taken decisive steps to raise English Baccalaureate (EBacc) entry rates. Almost all pupils now study the full EBacc suite of subjects.

The school has placed academic excellence at the heart of its sixth-form curriculum. Teachers design engaging tasks for students, which harvest strong study habits. Students gain essential skills in research, note-taking and independent working. Small-group teaching gives students focused, one-to-one feedback, encouraging resilience. Students' outcomes are exceptional.

Elsewhere, teachers use their expert subject knowledge to help pupils learn more. Lessons begin with rapid recall questions that check pupils' understanding. Teachers' careful questioning corrects pupils' errors straight away, consolidating their knowledge well. With pupils' memories fresh, teachers know pupils are ready to absorb new learning. Pupils can then apply this to more complex problems. This cements what they have learned.

The school accurately identifies the needs of pupils with SEND. Overall, staff use this information well to match tasks to pupils' requirements. Pupils can then access the curriculum very well. However, occasionally, tasks are not adjusted as effectively. When this happens, it limits what pupils with SEND learn.

High-quality reading is a top priority. Pupils who struggle to read get very effective targeted support. They make sense of new words and extracts in class more readily. This builds their reading confidence and fluency. Many then choose to read widely and often.

The school's high expectations reap great benefits for pupils. Pupils' behaviour, attendance and manners are excellent. Sometimes, a few pupils need help to meet these standards. The school offers them effective, bespoke support straight away. Pupils' healthy attitudes drive their exceptional engagement in lessons, which helps them to secure strong outcomes.

Pupils relish the school's well-structured and remarkable personal development offer. Recent workshops have covered important everyday life challenges. These have included consent, sexism and violence. Pupils learn about these topics in safe, small-group sessions. Here, they can ask questions and share views. Pupils value these opportunities. This helps their maturity and respect for others deepen.

The school's careers programme provides rich and diverse opportunities. Pupils attend university taster sessions and careers fairs and visit employers. Some sample trades like bricklaying. Sixth-form students learn about workplace relationships through voluntary work. They deepen their self-awareness and understanding of people's differing needs.

This broad offer prepares pupils well for their next steps.

Staff feel valued. Leaders consider their well-being and workload. Governors hold the school to account well. Their precise questioning of the school's priorities ensures that the school is on track to achieve its targets. And so, this school continues to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, staff do not make the necessary adaptations to support pupils with SEND. As a result, a small number of pupils with SEND do not access the curriculum as well as they could. The school and trust should ensure they support staff to adapt their teaching for pupils with SEND consistently well so all pupils can access the full curriculum.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in May 2019.

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	137767
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10343964
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	1,425
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	230
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Carole Davies
CEO of the trust	Andrew Dickinson
Headteacher	Michael Gannon
Website	www.highamlaneschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a member of the Central England Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school uses one registered and five unregistered alternative provisions.
- 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

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education.
- 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.

- 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 held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, other staff and pupils.
- Inspectors also met with the CEO of the trust, the chair of trustees, a member of the trust, the chair of governors and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys, as well as speaking to staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

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