

Inspection of a good school: Leasowes High School

Kent Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B62 8PJ

Inspection dates:

24–25 September 2019

Outcome

Leasowes High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Leasowes, staff really care about pupils and how they do. They act in pupils' very best interests and go the extra mile to support them. Most pupils study academic subjects throughout their time at the school. Others have a unique curriculum to suit their particular needs which usually includes a mixture of academic and vocational subjects. Staff are very enthusiastic about how the school can make a difference to pupils' lives and have high expectations for all.

Pupils told inspectors that they like coming to school. They feel that it is a safe place to be and that bullying is not tolerated. Younger pupils say that they already feel safe and confident in school, and that older pupils go out of their way to be kind to them. They say that pupils in the school generally behave well.

School prefects play a very active role in the school and seek out opportunities to support other pupils, listen to their problems and point them in the direction of the right support. When pupils face challenges, they feel that staff support them. Inspectors listened to some pupils who had previously had difficulties describe their 'transformation'. They were clearly excited at achieving really well following a challenging time in their lives.

There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to become involved in lots of exciting activities, and many pupils take these up.

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

Leaders have thought carefully about the curriculum. Almost all pupils study academic subjects for GCSEs. Some pupils do a mix of academic and vocational courses and other activities where this is right for them. Leaders make the right choices about pupils' subjects even if this makes their overall published data look worse. Pupils generally do well at GCSE.

Leaders have decided that spending only two years on key stage 3 is not preparing their pupils well enough for GCSEs. Some GCSE courses stretch out over too long a time. Leaders intend to teach a three-year key stage 3 from September 2020 to improve this situation.

Last year, leaders decided to change the way they decide what pupils learn and the order they learn it in. They asked the teachers who are responsible for subjects to plan what they wanted pupils to know over the five years they are at Leasowes. This was to make sure that pupils learned the important knowledge in subjects in a logical order. Leaders also asked teachers to check regularly to see whether pupils know the things they need to.

As a result of these changes, pupils' knowledge is growing over time. All pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEND) are making better progress than they have in the past. For example, in food technology pupils know about the different protein sources so that they can create healthy recipes. In English, teachers are clear about what pupils need to remember each time they study some Shakespeare. Pupils explore a wider range of poems in key stage 3 so that they are ready for their GCSE. In science, pupils begin to write down their observations about experiments from the moment they join the school. This work to plan the curriculum carefully in all subjects is not yet complete, but it is well under way.

There are lots of opportunities for pupils to learn outside of traditional subjects. Some activities are for everyone, so everyone gets to benefit. These are things like visits to the beach, castles, picnics and museums. There are other optional activities such as an inter-faith forum, formal dances with free-flowing tea and biscuits, sporting activities like golf and sailing, science clubs and outdoor awards. Leaders track how many pupils do each activity, so they know that the activities are popular. However, at the moment, leaders cannot be sure that all groups of pupils, for example disadvantaged pupils, attend the optional activities regularly, because they do not keep this information.

Many pupils and staff say that behaviour improved last year because of a new behaviour policy. They say that lessons are not disrupted often. Fixed-term exclusions and internal exclusions have decreased to low levels because leaders are finding out what is causing the poor behaviour and dealing with it. Staff have had training to manage pupils' behaviour, but some staff still feel that improvements could be made.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are well trained and very knowledgeable about safeguarding. Staff receive regular training about important issues. The training is detailed and focused on the issues facing pupils in the local area, for example county lines and child sexual exploitation. Notes about safeguarding incidents are kept securely and are detailed. These notes show that staff look out for anything that is concerning, that they report these concerns to leaders and that leaders follow things up swiftly. The multi-academy trust employs an independent body to help them make sure that all of the relevant processes are followed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils currently experience a shortened key stage 3 of two years. As a result, GCSE courses can lack focus and the content is stretched over too long a time. Additionally, there is not enough time to prepare pupils with the background knowledge they need to do well in some subjects at key stage 4. Leaders should ensure that key stage 3 prepares pupils appropriately for key stage 4.
- The new curriculum planning needs further work to become fully embedded across the school. This means that, in some subjects, curriculum plans are 'a work in progress'. Leaders should make sure that the curriculum planning is embedded across the school.
- Leaders do not currently collect information about the pupils who take part in the wider curriculum. As a result, they cannot be sure that all pupils have equal access to the very rich set of experiences that the school offers. Leaders should develop a way of ensuring that they know who takes part in which activities.
- A small group of staff feel that communication about behaviour is not yet as clear as it need to be. This means that they are not fully committed to new the behaviour system. Leaders should make sure that all staff are fully informed of how leaders are dealing with behaviour.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Leasowes High School, to be good in December 2015.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can complain to Ofsted.

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	143582
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10111708
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	900
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mr G Marsh
Headteacher	Mr M Mynott
Website	www.leasowes.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Leasowes High school converted to become an academy school on 1 December 2016. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall. It is a part of the Invictus Education Trust.
- Some pupils are educated at a separate campus, The Greenhill Alternative Learning Campus. Its address is: Long Lane, Halesowen B62 9JT. No other external AP is used.
- The school also has a small sixth form. However, all of the pupils in this sixth form are registered at another school in the multi-academy trust, Ellowes Hall. As a result, inspectors did not consider the sixth form as a part of this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, the inspection team met with senior leaders including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers. Discussions were held with governors and the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors took into consideration responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire and an anonymous staff survey. There were too few responses to a pupil survey to take these into consideration.

- The lead inspector visited the school's in-house alternative provision unit.
- Inspectors looked in detail at science, English and food technology. They sought leaders' thoughts on these subjects, scrutinised curriculum plans with teachers who were in charge of the subjects, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and spoke to pupils. They also looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors inspected safeguarding through discussions with pupils and staff, scrutiny of the school's single central record and sampling of case files. They also explored the way in which staff had been trained to help keep pupils safe.

Inspection team

Dan Owen, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sara Arkle

Ofsted Inspector

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