

Inspection of Droitwich Spa High School and Sixth Form Centre

Briar Mill, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire WR9 0AA

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 February 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The headteacher of this school is Jonathan Brook. This school is part of Droitwich Spa High School and Sixth Form Centre, a single-academy trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The headteacher is the accounting officer. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Karen Moore.

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils enjoy attending this school and value the warm relationships they have with staff. The school's ethos: 'be ready, be kind, be respectful' plays a significant role in everyday life. Pupils appreciate the support they are given to help them be successful. As one Year 11 pupil commented, 'Teachers care and want us to do well.'

Pupils are generally polite and well behaved. The school's new behaviour policy is well understood, helping staff manage behaviour more consistently and creating a calm and orderly environment throughout.

The school's house system plays an integral role in school life and gives pupils a sense of identity. There are several different competitions that take place during the year, culminating in the school's 'House Fest' in the summer term. The school is rightly proud of the charity work that pupils take part in, and the large sums of money raised because of this.

There are a vast and wide-ranging number of extra-curricular activities to extend pupils' experiences beyond the classroom. There are many different clubs available in sport, music, dance and drama, as well as international visits to places such as Delhi and New York. Many pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award with several expeditions planned each year.

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

New leaders have an accurate view of the school. They have acted quickly to address areas for improvement that were identified at the previous inspection. In many of these areas, leaders have made good progress in bringing about change. Staff are positive about these changes and the support they get with their workload.

The school ensures that pupils are taught a broad range of subjects. Leaders are aware that the number of pupils taking the suite of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate is low. However, the school has effective long-term plans to adapt the modern foreign languages curriculum and increase the uptake of this subject at key stage 4.

In many subjects, the curriculum is sequenced and structured effectively. The school has given careful thought as to how topics are organised so that pupils can build on what they know with increasing confidence over time. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this effectively in the classroom. New ideas are presented carefully and pupils are given opportunities to practise and apply their learning in a range of contexts. Most teachers check effectively what pupils have learned. They use techniques such as questioning so as to identify what pupils know and understand. However, the checks that some teachers make on learning do not consistently pick up where pupils are stuck or where gaps in their knowledge may exist. When this occurs, it slows pupils' progress.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. The school accurately identifies pupils' needs, including those who arrive at the school in Year 8 with new or previously undiagnosed needs. The school ensures that pupils' individual education plans are kept up to date and targets are well matched to pupils' stage of development. Pupils with SEND are supported effectively in lessons. Teachers make suitable adaptations to learning to help these pupils to be successful.

The school assesses pupils' reading ability annually. This information is shared with staff so that they are aware of pupils' reading ages. However, support for weaker readers is still at an early stage of development. The school has not put in place an effective programme to help those pupils who struggle with fluency and comprehension to catch up.

The school has made attendance a high priority. New staff have been appointed to help support the school's work in this area. Leaders monitor closely and track pupils' attendance and have put in place a range of appropriate interventions. This includes using the school's on-site 'The Link' for those who have previously struggled to attend. As a result, pupils' attendance is improving, but leaders know there is more work still to do.

The school's personal, social, health and economic curriculum is well planned. Tutor time is used successfully to help supplement what is taught through this curriculum. Pupils are taught about topics including healthy relationships, online safety, as well as knife and gang crime. The school's careers programme is organised effectively. Pupils in all year groups experience a broad range of opportunities to learn about the world of work. This includes undertaking work experience placements. Pupils are also given the opportunity to find out about apprenticeships and the different pathways that are available to them at the end of Years 11 and 13.

Students in the sixth form make strong progress. There are a broad range of courses available and a plethora of different enrichment activities. Students' attitudes to their studies and behaviour in the sixth form are exemplary.

Those who are responsible for governance are committed to the school. They recognise the important role the school plays in the town. Members of the trust, including the new chair of the board, are providing greater scrutiny of the school's work. However, trustees have not held leaders closely enough to account for their spending on disadvantaged pupils who are entitled to the government's pupil premium funding. This means that this group of pupils do not achieve as well as their peers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not consistently check pupils' learning in the classroom. This means that gaps in knowledge are not picked up quickly or pupils who are stuck do not receive the help that they need. The school should ensure that teachers check pupils' understanding so that they are secure in what they know and understand before learning moves on.
- The school has not put together a coherent reading strategy in order to help support the weakest readers. This means that pupils with weak reading skills are not being supported to help improve their fluency and comprehension. The school should put in place an effective programme of reading support to help those who struggle with reading to catch up.
- Those responsible for governance have not ensured that school leaders have been sufficiently held to account for their use of pupil premium funding. This means that those pupils who are eligible for the funding have not been supported as well as they could be to improve their attendance, behaviour and progress. Those responsible for governance should ensure that an effective pupil premium strategy is put in place and that money is used effectively, to help these pupils succeed in all areas of school life.

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 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	136927
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10268115
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	12 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,284
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	180
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Karen Moore
Headteacher	Jonathan Brook
Website	www.droitwichspahigh.worcs.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 June 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school's new headteacher was appointed in April 2023. Since this time, there have been other appointments to the school leadership team, including two new deputy headteachers.
- The school uses two registered and two 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

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 second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. 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 chair of the trust and two other trustees. Meetings were also held with the headteacher, other 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 these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, design and technology and music. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also looked at other subjects to check how they are planned and taught.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 a range of school documents. These included information about behaviour, attendance, the school curriculum and improvement planning. The school website was also checked.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text comments. They also considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Mark Howes, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Huw Bishop	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Stevens	His Majesty's Inspector
Gwen Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Fenton	Ofsted Inspector

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