

# Hazel Oak School

Hazel Oak Road, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands B90 2AZ

## Inspection dates

5–6 June 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Outstanding</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- Leaders and governors provide inspirational leadership. They have created a culture that enables pupils and staff to excel.
- Senior leaders and governors are uncompromising in their ambition for the school and pupils' outcomes. They have a deep and accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. Their self-evaluation is thorough and accurate.
- The curriculum is innovative and highly personalised. Leaders are constantly reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it meets pupils' changing needs. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Teachers have a deep knowledge of the subjects they teach. They develop pupils' reading, writing and communication well, but planning for pupils to use their literacy skills in all subjects is not yet maximised. The development of pupils' skills in mathematics is particularly strong.
- Teachers and support staff are highly skilled. They know their pupils exceptionally well and have high expectations of them. As a result, pupils make substantial and sustained progress both in their learning and in their personal development.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are happy and enjoy school. Relationships in the school are warm and based on mutual respect. There is a strong family atmosphere.
- A strong culture of care and support exists across the school. Pupils' welfare is given a high priority by all staff. Work with external agencies is exceptional.
- Safeguarding is a strength of the school. All pupils feel safe in school, and staff and parents and carers agree.
- The rich range of additional opportunities promotes strong spiritual, moral, social, cultural and emotional development. All pupils benefit from this and enjoy the many varied activities on offer, for instance, riding a bike is possible.
- Post-16 provision focuses sharply on making sure that students maximise their potential. The post-16 leader is highly committed to finding ways to help students increase their independence and improve their life chances.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Continue to develop the use of cross-curricular literacy skills within the curriculum so that pupils make even more progress in their writing.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- Leaders and governors share a powerful commitment to an ambitious vision for all aspects of the school's work. They set a strong strategic direction for the school that is centred on improving pupils' life chances.
- Leaders and governors maintain a relentless focus on continuous improvement. Their rapid and decisive actions since the recent inspection have already secured improvement in aspects of the school's work. For example, effective senior leaders' mentoring and coaching of middle leaders have further developed their strategic leadership skills. As a result, middle leaders have an accurate view of their area's strengths and areas for improvement and are taking effective action to secure further improvements.
- Senior leaders are highly skilled at identifying staff's abilities and talents and they give them the opportunities to develop these further. Staff value these opportunities. Consequently, many staff have been successful in gaining promotion both in the school and beyond.
- Senior leaders and governors value the contribution the staff make to the school. They provide effective support for staff's well-being through the work of the life coach. Staff value this support and their morale is high.
- Senior leaders and middle leaders thoroughly analyse assessment information to effectively identify where intervention is needed. As a result, all pupils are making substantial and sustained progress.
- Additional funding, including the pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up funding and the primary physical education (PE) and sport funding, is used carefully and effectively. The spending takes full account of the needs of individual pupils and is well targeted. There are no discernible differences in outcomes for different groups. The primary PE and sport premium is used well and encourages younger pupils to participate in physical activities. For example, activities offered at lunchtime include the riding of bikes and 'balanceability'. Pupils speak enthusiastically about these activities and take-up is high.
- The school's curriculum is a special strength. Leaders continually review the curriculum to ensure that it continues to meet pupils' changing needs. They ensure that relevance is inherent in its planning. For example, as part of a topic on Medieval Britain, pupils wrote a magna carta for Hazel Oak based on the school's core values. However, there is room for more coherent planning to give pupils the chance to use their literacy skills in other subjects more frequently.
- Topic-based work delivered through the 'challenge curriculum' is effectively contributing to the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and, within this, the promotion of British values. For example, a topic studied in the 'challenge curriculum' on the Calais refugee crisis resulted in pupils organising a fund-raising event to support the refugees.
- The school has strong links with the local authority. It was previously a teaching school, and the local authority recognises the school for its good practice and uses the

school's expertise to support the work of other schools. For example, during the inspection, the school provided a course for local schools on positive handling.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governance is strong. Governors have considerable experience and a range of appropriate expertise. This is used effectively to work with senior leaders at a strategic level. For example, governors contributed effectively to the development of the school's development plan. Governors visit the school regularly. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Governors are effective in their role as a critical friend to the school. While they offer a great deal of support to leaders, they are not afraid to ask challenging questions. For example, they probed senior leaders extensively when the idea of moving the post-16 provision to a local college was first proposed.
- Governors pay close attention to their statutory duties, including safeguarding. They take their safeguarding duties seriously. They have a named governor for safeguarding and ensure that the vetting procedure for new staff is robust.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leadership of safeguarding is strong. The holistic approach taken by the school in this aspect of its work is highly effective. For example, having the family support worker as one of the designated safeguarding leads means that individual pupils' needs, and those of their family, are understood well. Together with the strong links with external agencies, this ensures that effective bespoke support can be put in place.
- Training for staff is up to date and appropriate. Leaders recognise that their pupils have particular vulnerabilities and they support these by taking a contextual view to safeguarding. Recent training has included the risks associated with child sexual exploitation and peer-on-peer abuse.
- The school's procedures are rigorous. The single central record is compliant. There is appropriate filtering of the internet. The procedures for the recruitment and vetting of staff are understood and used well.
- Records relating to child protection are detailed, well organised and stored securely.
- Leaders work well with external providers to support pupils who are at risk or who are subject to a multi-agency plan.
- Leaders are tenacious in following up concerns with the local authority. For example, they relentlessly check that drivers provided by the local authority have had the appropriate safeguarding checks.
- Through the curriculum, workshops and assemblies, pupils are taught about e-safety, relationships and self-care. Leaders respond to local issues appropriately, including holding assemblies on railway trespassing to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe during the Easter holidays.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Outstanding**

- Teachers and teaching and learning assistants share leaders' ambitions for the pupils. They have high expectations of what pupils should achieve both in lessons and over time. For instance, teachers expect pupils to know the word of the day, know its meaning, spell it correctly and also use it appropriately in their work.
- Teachers plan lessons well as they have a secure knowledge of pupils' needs. Appropriate resources are used well, including a range of communication aids, closely matched to the pupils' needs. Teachers and teaching and learning assistants use questioning highly effectively to probe pupils' responses and deepen their understanding. As a result, pupils are articulate, confident learners.
- Teachers know their pupils very well. They use individual preferences and motivations effectively to enhance learning, for example, helping pupils to overcome their refusal to use certain pieces of equipment by attaching them to favourite objects.
- The school is a literacy-rich environment. The impact of leaders' decisive and rapid actions since the last inspection to improve the teaching of writing can clearly be seen in pupils' books. There is a consistency of approach. A sharper focus on developing pupils' punctuation and grammar skills has resulted in pupils being more secure in their use.
- Pupils' skills in mathematics are developed well. They are able to use mathematical language confidently. For example, in a key stage 4 mathematics lesson, pupils worked independently to teach each other effective strategies to solve problems in preparation for their GCSE examination.
- Teaching and learning assistants are deployed exceptionally well. They are highly effective in the support they provide to pupils. They promote a 'can-do' attitude that effectively develops pupils' self-confidence and resilience. As a result, pupils are able to take responsibility for their own learning.
- The tracking and analysis of pupils' progress by senior and middle leaders are thorough. Both internal and external moderation give validity and reliability to leaders' judgements. Leaders' analysis effectively identifies pupils who are falling behind and appropriate interventions are put in place. As a result, pupils are making sustained and substantial progress across all key stages.
- Parents are provided with clear and timely information on how well their child is progressing. Reports are highly personalised and give full information regarding their child's progress and achievements. Recognition is given of 'inspired moments' for example, and pupils can achieve the 'philosopher award'. Parents value this information and are highly supportive of the school. A typical comment on Parent View, Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, was: 'It is a very special school for very special children.'

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Outstanding**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.

The pastoral support provided through the school's well-being team is a special strength.

- The holistic view taken by the school to support pupils' personal development and welfare is demonstrated by the effective working relationships between the school, parents and external agencies. The educational psychologist and community nurse hold clinics in school. Workshops are run for parents on topics such as puberty, toileting and personal relationships. Parents value this support.
- The pastoral team's highly effective support for pupils' social, emotional and mental health is making a significant impact on pupils' ability to manage their own emotions. For example, the introduction of the 'zones of regulation' is helping pupils to recognise their emotions and then effectively use strategies themselves to help reduce their anxieties. As a result, pupils are confident and happy. A typical comment from a pupil was: 'Since being at Hazel Oak my confidence has shot up. All staff listen to me. I feel it's really important to talk about your problems and this certainly helped me to feel better about myself and overcome my fears.'
- Pupils' physical well-being is supported effectively by the use of 'fitness flash' sessions during the day when pupils are encouraged to take part in physical exercise. At breaktime and lunchtime, pupils are very active. They enjoy playing short tennis and football and make good use of the climbing frames and play equipment. The healthy eating options provided at lunchtime are popular with the pupils. Posters displayed around the school effectively support the promotion and benefits of health eating.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare. They say that if pupils do say unkind things about them, they tell an adult and it is sorted out quickly.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The school is a calm, orderly environment. Pupils' exemplary behaviour both in class and at unstructured times reflects the school's effective strategies to promote high standards of behaviour.
- Established routines, which begin at the start of the day with pupils lining up on the playground, set the tone. This positive approach continues throughout the day.
- Staff and pupils have purposeful, warm relationships. As a result, pupils want to do well and they take pride in their work. Low-level disruption is extremely rare.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions and repeat fixed-term exclusions is extremely low and reducing over time. There have been no permanent exclusions this year.
- The school's multi-disciplinary approach to improving attendance, including the well-being team, is making a significant difference. Parents are fully involved in the process and value the school's work. One parent commented: 'My son has flourished since he joined a few years ago and absolutely loves to attend each and every day.'
- Attendance is high and improving over time. Persistent absence is low and reducing over time.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Outstanding

- Pupils make strong progress from their starting points in all key stages. Progress towards academic targets is tracked in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' personal development is tracked through the 'skills for life' curriculum. The school's assessment information shows that the majority of pupils make excellent progress over the year. Work seen in pupils' books supports this.
- There are no discernible differences in the progress of different groups of pupils. This is because of the highly personalised approach to teaching and learning and the curriculum that is continually reviewed and adjusted to take account of pupils' needs and interests.
- Pupils study for a wide range of accredited courses. Last year, all pupils achieved a qualification in mathematics and science, and virtually all did in English. Some pupils achieved these qualifications at GCSE.
- Careers education and guidance are threaded through the life skills curriculum from Year 1 with age-appropriate activities. For example, pupils in key stage 3 have a 'world at work day', Year 10 pupils have a 'world at work week', and Year 11 pupils have a week of work experience. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils have a range of opportunities to develop appropriate life skills. For instance, pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 have taken part in a driving school experience at school. Some pupils have since gone on to pass their driving test.
- Last year, all pupils went on to education, employment or training post-16.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Outstanding

- Leadership of the post-16 provision is strong. The head of post-16 works tirelessly to maximise students' life chances. Aply supported by senior leaders and governors, he has successfully negotiated with a local college for the school's post-16 provision to move to the college site. This move, from September 2019, will enable the school to further expand its post-16 curriculum. Better facilities, such as the working farm, will enable more vocational subjects to be offered.
- Teaching is well planned to meet the needs of individuals. Students undertake highly individualised and challenging learning activities to prepare them well for their future. They continue to study English and mathematics, and most improve their qualifications as a result. Assessment information shows that the majority of students are making sustained and substantial progress across both academic and vocational subjects.
- Teachers and teaching and learning assistants know their students well. Relationships are strong and underpin the involvement of all students in lessons. Students feel secure and respect the views of others.
- The curriculum is dynamic and rooted in real life. For example, right-wing extremism is currently a concern in the local area. Teachers have responded to this by including it as a topic in the curriculum. Students were seen in a lesson debating this thoughtfully and maturely. A typical question posed by a student was: 'Should the EDL exist?'

- Students' behaviour is exemplary. They value their education and rarely miss a day of school. They feel safe and well supported. Year 12 students talk positively about the move to the college site and are looking forward to the new opportunities and experiences this will offer.
- Retention levels are high. Last year, all students stayed at the school through Years 12 and 13.
- Students are well prepared for the next stage in their education. All students last year went on to education, employment or training.
- Students take on roles and responsibilities and support the life of the school and the local community. For example, they help with the lower school's sports day and effectively support Year 11 pupils with their transition into the sixth form. They hold regular fund-raising activities to support local charities.

## School details

Unique reference number	104130
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10102379

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	151
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alex Henderson
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Simms
Telephone number	0121 744 4162
Website	<a href="https://hazel-oak.co.uk">https://hazel-oak.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@hazel-oak.solihull.sch.uk">office@hazel-oak.solihull.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	26 March 2019

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than a typical secondary school.
- All the pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils' needs include moderate learning difficulties, speech and language difficulties, and autism spectrum disorder.
- The school has twice as many boys as girls.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- Pupils from four neighbouring local authorities attend the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with: the headteacher; other senior and middle leaders; the vice-chair of the governing body; a representative from the local authority; and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors talked to many pupils about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. Inspectors observed pupils at breaktimes, lunchtimes and as they moved about the school.
- Inspectors observed learning in lessons; all of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Various documents were evaluated, including the school’s development plan and self-evaluation, minutes of meetings of the governing body, and safeguarding information and policies. Information about attendance, behaviour and safety was also analysed. Inspectors checked the school website and the single central record, which contains information on safeguarding checks on staff and staff recruitment.
- Inspectors took account of parents’ views by considering the 59 responses to Parent View, including 47 free-text responses.
- Inspectors considered the 26 responses from staff. There were no responses from pupils to Ofsted’s survey.

## Inspection team

Lesley Yates, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Jo Owen	Ofsted Inspector
Derek Barnes	Ofsted Inspector

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