

Inspection of Ellowes Hall Sports College

Stickley Lane, Lower Gornal, Dudley, West Midlands DY3 2JH

Inspection dates: 12–13 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

The quality of education is not good enough. There is too much variation in the effectiveness of the curriculum in different subjects. This has led to some groups of pupils' progress being weak in key subjects. Leaders are taking too long to put things right. Leaders' expectations are not consistently high in all areas of the school's work.

Relationships between pupils and teachers are purposeful and relaxed. Inspectors saw mainly good behaviour in lessons and at social times. Pupils are less positive and say poor behaviour too often disrupts lessons. This is also a concern for some teachers.

Most pupils say they like the school. They say bullying is very rare and always resolved. Pupils feel safe and are safe. Some pupils' attendance is not as good as it should be. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are excluded more frequently than other pupils.

There is a wide range of school clubs and activities, especially in sports and the arts. Pupils appreciate these, and most take up the opportunities on offer. This improves their self-confidence, development of skills and enjoyment of the school. Inspectors saw rehearsals for the forthcoming school production of 'Miss Saigon'.

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

School leaders are not ambitious enough for what pupils can achieve. They are too slow to acknowledge and tackle weaknesses. Leaders do not target their work precisely enough to make the necessary improvements. Governors and the chief executive officer of the Invictus Education Trust have a more realistic view. They are concerned that standards have declined over time. Governors have not challenged leaders sufficiently. Leaders of the trust acknowledge that their support has lacked impact and there is much to do.

There is a lack of joined-up thinking about the curriculum. This leads to variability in planning and teaching across departments. Pupils' knowledge and skills do not build well enough year on year. They do not achieve as well as possible. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEND.

Some pupils do not have their full entitlement to a broad and ambitious education. This is because, in Year 9, pupils study either geography or history. A minority do not study modern foreign languages.

In some subjects, there is no clarity about what pupils should learn step by step. In French, pupils copy out far too much work without understanding it. Pupils in key stage 3 cannot recall basic vocabulary and phrases. Year 11 pupils told inspectors they did not have 'the building blocks' to succeed in languages.

In mathematics, the work in pupils' books is not always well presented. Pupils with SEND cannot use what they have learned in mathematics to support their work in science.

In physical education (PE), teachers plan a series of tasks rather than planning learning so that pupils build their skills over time.

Teachers' planning in English is stronger. They reinforce the essential skills pupils need. Pupils enjoy the books and poems they read and the opportunities they have to develop speaking and listening skills. Teachers say they receive good training and share resources to reduce their workload. Pupils achieve well in English because they remember key knowledge and produce good work.

Too many pupils are often absent, especially disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. These pupils have been excluded more than their peers in the past. This has had a negative impact on their achievement.

Leaders place pupils' personal development at the centre of learning. There is a variety of extra-curricular opportunities which stretch pupils' talents and interests. Additionally, there is a range of positions of responsibility available to pupils. They can, for example, become prefects, house captains and anti-bullying ambassadors. Pupils are proud to wear a different uniform that recognises their position in the school. The provision for careers guidance at key stages 3 and 4 is strong. Pupils speak highly of the wider opportunities the school provides.

There are 26 students in the sixth form. There is a broad range of courses on offer, as the school shares provision with six other schools. Students' learning is supported effectively, and they achieve well. For example, in accounts and forensic science, students' past, current and future learning is mapped out. There are enrichment and careers activities, for example work-experience opportunities, university visits and additional courses such as a public-speaking qualification. These help students prepare for the next stage of their education, employment or training. Students would welcome increased careers advice and guidance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is given the highest priority. Leaders are knowledgeable about pupils, the local area and agencies from whom they can draw support. There are robust employment checks on adults working at the school. Staff, including those in the school canteen, can explain the safeguarding training they receive and how to pass on concerns.

Pupils learn how to keep safe, including online and outside the school. There is a structured citizenship programme. This tackles issues including the dangers of gangs

and extremism. Inspectors saw the school's anti-bullying ambassadors deliver an effective assembly. This was very well received by other pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- School leaders do not have a realistic and critical view of the performance of the school. Consequently, they cannot act swiftly to address issues when required. Improvement planning to address areas of weakness needs to be more sharply focused on the key issues. Governors and the trust need to give stronger challenge and support to ensure that the school improves.
- The curriculum plans in some subjects are not logically sequenced nor delivered well. As a result, pupils are not able to develop the breadth and depth of knowledge they need, particularly in mathematics, modern foreign languages and PE. Leaders need greater clarity about how the school's overall curriculum will support the aspirations they have for young people now and in the future. At key stage 3, leaders should ensure that all pupils benefit from a curriculum as ambitious as that outlined in the national curriculum.
- Teachers vary in their skills at adapting the curriculum to meet all pupils' needs. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND struggle to keep up. They do not achieve as highly as others. Teachers need to meet pupils' needs, and help them remember previous learning and apply this to their current work.
- Many pupils and some teachers feel that too many lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour. Leaders need to ensure that low-level disruption is addressed. Both internal and external exclusions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND must reduce.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND do not attend school regularly enough. They are missing out on their education and are underachieving. Leaders need to review and change their strategies to increase these pupils' attendance.

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're 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	141570
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10088616
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	1114
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	26
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of the board of trustees	Geoffrey Marsh
Headteacher	Alan Jasper
Website	http://www.elloweshall.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Invictus Education Trust in 2015. The predecessor school was inspected in November 2012 and was judged to be outstanding.
- The school shares its sixth form with six other schools in the Invictus Sixth Form.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision currently.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher; several other members of the school's senior leadership team; the special educational needs coordinator; curriculum leaders; and teachers and support staff.

- The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing board and had a telephone conversation with the vice chair of this board. The lead inspector also met the chief executive officer of the Invictus Education Trust.
- Inspectors spoke with many pupils and sixth-form students formally and informally throughout the course of the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of 75 responses to Ofsted’s online survey Parent View.
- Inspectors focused on English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and PE. Inspectors considered the school’s curriculum, including subject plans, visited lessons and scrutinised pupils’ work. Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their learning and with teachers in these subjects. Inspectors also visited lessons in other subjects, for example science, history, art and geography, including in the sixth form.
- When inspecting safeguarding, inspectors looked at the school’s procedures for recruiting staff. Inspectors also met with staff to consider the impact of training, and the procedures that are in place to keep pupils safe.
- The inspection team reviewed a range of documentation, including curriculum plans, the school improvement plan and records on attendance and behaviour. During the inspection, leaders corrected information on the website, following a discussion with the lead inspector.

Inspection team

Nigel Griffiths, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Phil Lloyd	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Reeves	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Hoddinott	Ofsted Inspector

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