

Light Hall School

Hathaway Road, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands B90 2PZ

Inspection dates

29–30 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress. This is because teaching is not consistently good enough.
- Leaders do not evaluate the impact that their work has on improving pupils' progress in enough detail.
- Some subject leaders do not yet have the skills to check and improve teaching and learning.
- Some targets which are set to help teachers improve their work are not effective.
- The most able pupils, including disadvantaged pupils who are the most able, are not achieving their potential.
- Although improving, pupils do not make good progress in science.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils because work is sometimes too easy. Pupils are not routinely required to think hard.
- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop the skills to write at length, when appropriate.
- Governors do not hold leaders to account well enough for the impact of their work to improve pupils' progress.
- Despite leaders' best efforts to recruit high-quality permanent teachers, there are too many temporary teachers in the school. This is an important reason why pupils do not make consistently strong progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is a harmonious multicultural community. The headteacher has successfully created a school culture which is underpinned by British values. Pupils from different cultural backgrounds and faiths work well together.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are respectful, polite and well mannered. Relationships between pupils and staff are highly positive.
- The broad and balanced curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and welfare.
- Safeguarding procedures are robust. As a result, pupils feel safe at school.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics and English because teaching is good. Teaching is also good in food technology, drama and music.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress. These pupils benefit from high-quality, bespoke support when required.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to further raise pupils' achievement, particularly for the most able pupils and those who are the most able disadvantaged pupils, by making sure that all teachers:
 - set work which is appropriately challenging for all pupils
 - ask questions which require pupils to think deeply
 - provide pupils with opportunities across the curriculum to develop the skills to produce extended pieces of writing, when appropriate.
- Accelerate the improvements to teaching and learning in science, by ensuring that:
 - teachers are fully aware of any gaps in skills and knowledge that pupils have and using this information to plan activities which help pupils to catch up quickly
 - pupils have regular opportunities to deepen their scientific understanding
 - teachers use assessment information, including the outcomes from tests, to plan activities which help pupils to correct errors and misconceptions.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - robustly evaluating the impact that all strategies to improve teaching and learning have on accelerating pupils' progress, particularly the most able pupils and those most able pupils who are disadvantaged
 - making sure that the school improvement plan and subject plans contain clear targets for improving pupils' progress at key points throughout the year so that leaders can objectively evaluate the school's effectiveness
 - ensuring that all subject leaders have the skills to check and further improve teaching and learning
 - making sure that governors develop their skills and knowledge so that they robustly hold leaders to account for the impact of their plans and actions
 - ensuring that the targets which are set to help teachers improve their work are the most important priorities that will have the greatest impact on pupils' progress
 - reducing the need for temporary teachers by recruiting and retaining specialist subject teachers.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership requires improvement because leaders have not yet made sure that teaching is good. Consequently, pupils do not make consistently good progress.
- Leaders do not consistently evaluate the impact that their actions have on improving pupils' progress in sufficient detail, particularly for the most able pupils. As a result, actions, which follow the checks that are made on the quality of teaching, sometimes do not precisely identify how teaching may need to be adapted or improved to meet the learning needs of different groups of pupils.
- Although the school improvement plan and subject plans address the most important areas for improvement, there are few clear targets and milestones throughout the year which relate to pupils' progress in all year groups. This means that leaders at all levels, including governors, cannot objectively evaluate the school's effectiveness and precisely identify medium-term priorities.
- Staff value the opportunities for training which the school provides. Leaders have a diverse programme of staff development activities, some of which are personalised to individual teachers. The impact of this training is not as effective as it could be because leaders' evaluation of the impact is not as detailed as it could be, particularly in relation to how it improves pupils' progress.
- An important reason why pupils do not make consistently good progress is because some subject leaders are inexperienced or have not been fully trained to check and improve teaching and learning. Senior leaders are supporting these members of staff and there are signs that teaching is improving, though there is still some way to go.
- A further reason why teaching and pupils' progress are not consistently good is because some targets, which are set to support teachers to improve their work, are not as effective as they could be.
- Although the number of temporary teachers in the school has reduced this year, there remain too many unfilled staff vacancies, despite leaders' best efforts. Pupils told inspectors that this has a detrimental impact on their learning. Some parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire also expressed the same view. Inspectors agree.
- Leaders are fully aware that too many Year 11 pupils have significantly underachieved in recent years in science, history, geography and modern foreign languages. The headteacher has taken decisive action and she has made sure that some new teachers and leaders have been recruited. As a result, teaching and achievement are beginning to improve in these subjects. However, leaders fully acknowledge that standards are not yet good enough in these areas.
- Although there is much still to do, standards of achievement in science are improving. This is because the relatively new subject leader, very well supported by a senior leader, is successfully addressing the most important areas which require significant improvement. However, due to weak teaching in the past, pupils have many gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Leaders have not robustly established what these

gaps are for all classes in every year group so that teaching can be adapted to close the gaps.

- The impact of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is not as effective as it should be. Although leaders are succeeding in helping many disadvantaged pupils to catch up, they are not yet having the same success with respect to improving the attainment of the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- The impact of the additional Year 7 catch-up funding (this is additional funding to support Year 7 pupils who have not attained the expected standard in English and mathematics) is not as effective in mathematics as it is in English. While the large majority of eligible pupils made very strong progress in English last year, over half did not catch up in mathematics.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is good. The leader has a detailed understanding of the learning, personal or emotional needs of pupils. The inclusion team provides highly personalised support to each pupil, when necessary. Pupils told inspectors how much they appreciate and value the support which they receive. As a result, additional funding for SEN is being spent effectively.
- The broad and balanced curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and welfare. There is an appropriate balance of subjects to interest and motivate pupils as well as a well-attended programme of extra-curricular activities. The termly personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education days help pupils to understand a wide range of safety matters as well as develop a good understanding of British values. Regular assembly themes and tutorial activities raise pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, as does the life and morality course which all pupils study until the end of Year 11.
- Since joining the school, the headteacher has spearheaded the drive to create a school culture underpinned by the principles of British values. Well supported by staff, she has succeeded in creating a climate of mutual respect.

Governance of the school

- Governors are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and they know what leaders are doing to improve the school's effectiveness. However, importantly, the governing body does not robustly hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions as well as it should.
- The governing body does not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of the school's weaknesses. For example, governors are aware that the most able pupils are not consistently achieving their potential, but they are unaware that some of the most able disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well enough.
- Governors do not monitor additional funding with sufficient rigour. For example, there is not a sufficiently detailed and systematic approach to checking the impact of the additional pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding. As a result, they do not know for certain if the school is achieving good value for money.
- Governors visit the school at appropriate points throughout the year to see for themselves how effective provision is. Some governors visit the school to monitor the

effectiveness of policies. Other governors are linked to subjects which they monitor the effectiveness of particular departments.

- Governors are involved in reviewing the school improvement plan. The strategy of linking a governor to key sections of the plan is good, though more attention should be given to the impact of the plan.
- The governing body has appropriate procedures in place for setting performance targets for the headteacher. It also has robust procedures for making decisions about whether teachers should receive pay rises in relation to them achieving their targets.
- Governors have made sure that safeguarding procedures are robust.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school meets all statutory requirements. All staff are checked and vetted as required. Relevant staff, including governors, have been trained in safer recruitment procedures.
- Leaders in this area are well trained. They are quick to respond when safeguarding matters are brought to their attention. Records are appropriately detailed and securely stored. Robust risk assessments ensure that pupils are safe when taking part in educational trips and visits.
- Staff training is thorough and covers a comprehensive range of safeguarding issues. Training is updated at regular points throughout the year. As a result, staff know what to look out for if a child may be at risk and they know what to do when they have a welfare concern. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities with respect to safeguarding and there is a culture of vigilance in the school.
- Pupils feel safe in the school. They are taught about safety matters in the PSHE education curriculum as well as in assemblies. Visiting speakers from organisations such as the police help to reinforce important messages for pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable between subjects and within them. As a result, pupils do not yet enjoy consistently good teaching.
- Teachers' planning is not consistently well matched to the learning needs of pupils, particularly the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. This is because assessment information is not routinely used to pitch work at the right level for pupils. This results in work which lacks challenge and is sometimes too easy for these pupils as well as others.
- Teachers do not consistently ask pupils questions which require them to think deeply. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to provide longer answers which require them to explain ideas and concepts in detail, for example. Over time, this results in pupils making less progress than they could, particularly the most able pupils.
- Teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to develop their extended writing skills in all subjects when appropriate, particularly science. As a result, pupils do

not regularly have opportunities to communicate their knowledge and understanding in greater depth. This is also a missed opportunity to develop wider literacy skills.

- Assessment information, including outcomes from tests, is not used well by science teachers. Teachers do not robustly use test information to help pupils address errors and misconceptions. As a result, pupils are too often moved on to new work when they have not mastered the previous work.
- Teaching in science is improving. Teachers are increasingly providing pupils with motivating activities which challenge their thinking well. However, as a result of leaders not robustly establishing what the gaps in knowledge and understanding are, which many pupils have in all year groups, teaching is not as effective as it should be.
- Teaching in mathematics is good. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and high expectations of their pupils. Work is appropriately challenging and teachers require pupils to apply mathematical reasoning skills very effectively. As a result, pupils work hard, demonstrate a high level of perseverance and resilience and make strong progress.
- Teaching in English has improved over the past year and is now good. Teachers in English typically require pupils to work hard and lessons proceed at a good pace. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they often use to challenge pupils very effectively through questioning.
- Pupils benefit from good teaching in several subjects, including food technology, drama and music. Teachers in these subjects skilfully guide pupils to make links and connections between their theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The prevailing culture of mutual respect is preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils work and socialise well together, valuing and respecting each other's different backgrounds and beliefs, including religion and race.
- Pupils dress smartly and behave respectfully towards staff. Pupils value learning, have good attitudes and try their best in lessons. Even when teaching is not as good as it should be, pupils show an appropriate level of maturity and get on with their work.
- Pupils told inspectors that the pastoral staff provide good support when pupils have personal or emotional issues. Pupils are confident that staff will help them.
- Bullying is rare at the school. As a result, pupils feel safe and happy. Pupils are confident that when bullying incidents do occur, staff will deal with matters swiftly and effectively.
- The welfare of pupils is taken very seriously by the school. As a result, pupils understand a wide range of safety matters and they have appropriate skills to assess risks, including when working online.

- The school site is almost entirely free from litter and this is indicative of pupils' wider sense of social responsibility.
- The PSHE education curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. This includes a comprehensive and very well-planned programme of careers education for all pupils. The impact of this is that almost every Year 11 pupil who left the school in 2017 moved on to further education or employment with training.
- The school actively promotes the personal and emotional development of pupils. The headteacher rewards pupils for acts of kindness, good work, good behaviour and work in the local community. Pupils' names are recorded in the 'golden book' for such achievements.
- The small number of pupils who study at other institutions make strong progress in terms of their personal development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. Pupils have a good sense of self-awareness, which means that many are able to manage their behaviour very well. Pupils who spoke to inspectors overwhelmingly agreed that behaviour is good. The large majority of staff and parents who responded to the questionnaires also agree.
- Exclusions have reduced dramatically. In the past they have been far too high. However, indicative of the good behaviour in the school, exclusions so far this year are much lower than at the same time last year. Exclusions have reduced each year since 2015.
- Pupils who have behavioural difficulties are very well supported. 'Refocus', 'Refocus 2' and provision in the Sir Edmund Hillary Suite meet the individual support needs of these pupils. Heads of year and pastoral leaders know the pupils, who are supported well, and this ensures that pupils benefit from personalised support to improve their behaviour.
- Overall attendance is broadly average and has remained stable for the past few years. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been too low in the past. The number of disadvantaged pupils who regularly miss school has been too high historically. However, as a result of effective strategies to improve attendance for this group of pupils, it is improving this year and is increasingly approaching the national average for all pupils.
- Most of the pupils who attend alternative provision have improved their behaviour. This is because they are motivated and interested in the courses which they are following.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2017 made broadly average progress in English and mathematics. However, the school's own unvalidated data indicates that pupils made slow progress in science, history, geography and modern foreign languages.

Pupils have underachieved in these subjects for the past two years. In science, pupils have significantly underachieved for several years.

- The most able pupils in 2017, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, made average progress in English and mathematics. However, as in 2016, these pupils made slow progress in science, history, geography and modern foreign languages.
- Too few of the most able pupils have attained the highest grades in recent years.
- Although improving, the progress that pupils who are currently in the school are making is not consistently good. There is too much variability because pupils are not consistently taught well enough.
- Pupils' progress is stronger in key stage 4 than it is in key stage 3. An important reason for this is because younger pupils have a higher proportion of temporary teachers.
- In most year groups the most able pupils are not reaching their full academic potential. This is because the overall progress for many of these pupils is no better than average. In every year group the most able disadvantaged pupils are making the weakest progress, though there are signs of improvement this year.
- Pupils are beginning to catch up in science, particularly in key stage 4, because leaders are making sure that teaching is improving. The school's own internal assessment information indicates that Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2017 made better progress than the group who left in 2016. Similarly, pupils who are currently in Year 11 are continuing the pattern of better progress.
- Pupils are making better progress in history and geography than they have historically, though it is not yet good. Similarly, pupils are also making improved progress in modern foreign languages, but this is inconsistent because it is dependent on the skills of particular teachers.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive good support from class teachers and from the inclusion team. As a result, pupils make consistently good progress across the curriculum.
- Middle- and low-attaining disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to others with similar starting points. However, this is variable and not consistently good.
- Attainment by the end of Year 11 has been broadly average in recent years. As a result, pupils are adequately prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	137231
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10037882

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

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	1180
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Chris Thomas
Headteacher	Annette Kimblin
Telephone number	0121 744 3835
Website	www.lighthall.co.uk
Email address	office@lighthall.solihull.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2014.
- A small number of key stage 4 pupils study full-time at other institutions. These are Solihull College, South and City College, The Reach School and Triple Crown (this is local authority provision for pupils who are unwell).

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, 12 of which were paired with senior leaders. They also made a number of further short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with six groups of pupils, governors and staff, including subject leaders. A meeting took place with the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at policies, the school's own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its development planning, records of lesson monitoring and governing body meetings, information about pupils' progress, safeguarding documents and samples of pupils' work.
- The views of the 28 parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) were considered, as were the 54 responses to the staff survey. Inspectors also took account of the school's own parental survey.

Inspection team

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Nigel Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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