School report

Handsworth Grammar School

Grove Lane, Handsworth, Birmingham, West Midlands B21 9ET

Inspection dates 10–11 January 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher is relentless in his determination that all pupils should achieve as well as they can while developing into young people ready to take their place in society. Pupils, staff and parents support this vision for excellence.
- Senior leaders provide clear direction and high-quality leadership in their areas of responsibility. The leadership of pastoral systems, teaching and learning, pupil premium and assessment are all outstanding.
- Governors know the school well. They provide very effective support and challenge to school leaders and staff.
- A wide and impressive array of enrichment activities, opportunities and visits complements the taught curriculum. This contributes strongly to pupils' personal development.
- Pupils make excellent academic progress in almost all subjects. Achievement in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages is especially high.
- Disadvantaged pupils make even better progress than their peers across all subjects. They make better progress from their starting points than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- Teachers have expert subject knowledge and high expectations of all pupils. They use skilled questioning to deepen pupils' understanding of their work.
- Relationships are excellent. Pupils respect their teachers and value their support. They are equally respectful of each other. Pupils are studious and classrooms are places of high-quality learning.
- Teaching and outcomes are less strong in English than other subjects. However, leaders' actions are bringing about improvement.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons, at social times and as they move around the school. They are confident, articulate and unfailingly polite and courteous.
- Pupils enjoy school and they appreciate the wide range of opportunities that the school provides for them. Attendance is consistently higher than the national average for secondary schools.
- Pupils feel safe, and are safe, in school. The curriculum ensures that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe.
- The sixth form provides outstanding teaching and a wealth of broader opportunities. Consequently, students achieve highly and are very well prepared for adult life.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English to match those in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages, by sharing the effective practice that exists within the English department and the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding

- The school's improvement since its previous inspection is a result of the headteacher's uncompromising determination to provide the best possible education for each pupil. A strong senior leadership team and effective governors have ably supported him, as have the school's staff. All members of staff who responded to the online inspection questionnaire said they understand the school's aims and they believe the school is well led and managed.
- Senior leaders and governors know the school well. Over recent years they have identified weaknesses and tackled them quickly. Consequently, all aspects of the school have improved and are now outstanding. Remaining areas in need of improvement, for example outcomes in English, are being addressed and improvement is evident.
- Senior and middle leaders regularly and rigorously check the quality of teaching in the school. They then direct training at aspects, subjects or individuals where they have identified a need. Leaders also check that training has had the desired impact. Leaders use performance management well to set teachers targets that focus on high-quality teaching and outstanding progress for pupils. Consequently, almost all teaching is of a consistently high standard.
- The school has a much higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils than is typically seen in selective schools and these pupils are achieving very high standards. This is because leaders thoughtfully target the pupil premium at ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make the best possible progress. Leaders meticulously track disadvantaged pupils' progress and teachers intervene as soon as any begin to fall behind with their work. They also use additional funding to provide sporting, artistic and cultural opportunities for disadvantaged pupils, broadening their horizons and raising their aspirations.
- Leaders' use of assessment information is very thorough. Sophisticated systems, well understood by staff, enable leaders and teachers to spot any pupil who is falling behind the standard expected of them. Teachers then provide extra support that helps such pupils to catch up.
- Middle leaders form an enthusiastic, supportive and effective team. Well supported by senior leaders, they lead the development of teaching within their departments. They understand that they are accountable for the outcomes achieved by pupils in their subjects. For example, effective leadership in English is seeing standards rise. Additionally, all subject leaders support improvement in English by ensuring that teachers develop pupils' literacy in their subjects.
- Leaders provide pupils with an appropriate, traditional academic curriculum in key stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form. They regularly review its effectiveness and make changes when necessary. For example, leaders have recently provided more curriculum time for English in response to pupils' literacy needs and for mathematics in the light of changes to the examination syllabus.
- A very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, clubs and visits supplements the formal, taught curriculum. These include an arts festival, many sporting clubs, opportunities to work in the community, musical ensembles, visiting speakers and residential visits in this country and overseas. Regular 'enrichment days' enable pupils to spend extended periods of time learning about topics including alcohol misuse, healthy

relationships, sexism and stereotyping, and the criminal justice system. Together with regular assemblies and daily form periods, the curriculum as a whole contributes strongly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. High academic standards, effective careers guidance and a rich array of extra-curricular opportunities mean that the school prepares pupils exceptionally well for life in modern Britain.

- Systems for pastoral support are strong in the school. Members of staff know pupils very well and are ready to provide extra help when it is needed. Pupils told inspectors that they trust the school's adults and know where to go if they have any problems.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school very well and are fully committed to seeing it provide the best possible education for its pupils. They support and challenge well, using the high-quality information that leaders provide, checking it with externally published information and asking searching questions.
- Governors carry out their statutory duties with diligence. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met. They carefully evaluate the impact of additional funding, including pupil premium and funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to make sure the school is getting value for money. They ensure that performance management is well focused on raising standards or maintaining already high standards of achievement.
- Governors are increasingly involved in school life. Each governor is linked to a department which they regularly visit.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership of this area is strong and meticulous. All policies and procedures are in place, fit for purpose and well understood by staff. Members of staff are knowledgeable and alert to potential dangers because they receive regular training and updates. Several leaders have been trained to a high level in safeguarding practice.
- Staff are confident to pass on any concerns they might have, knowing that they will be taken seriously and that appropriate action will be taken. Leaders keep well-organised and secure records. They seek external advice when they need it and work well with the many local authorities from which the school's pupils are drawn. Procedures to recruit staff safely are in place and used well.
- All members of staff who responded to the online inspection questionnaire said that pupils are safe in school, as did all pupils who spoke to inspectors during the inspection. Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire 'Parent View' also confirmed that pupils feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment — Outstanding

- Teachers typically use their expert subject knowledge and skilled questioning to make pupils think hard about their work. They set pupils demanding tasks and provide sufficient time to consolidate and embed their learning. Consequently, pupils develop a deep understanding of the material they are studying and make strong progress.
- Expectations are high and pupils rise to the challenge. When faced with difficult work, pupils do not give up and they are not overly reliant on their teacher. Instead they

have, at their fingertips, a range of strategies to employ. For example, in one mathematics lesson where pupils were tackling difficult problems about graph transformations, they discussed difficulties with each other, they referred to textbooks and they thought long and hard before resorting to asking their teacher for help.

- Teachers regularly and carefully check pupils' understanding in lessons. They are quick to spot and tackle errors and misconceptions, reshaping lessons in response to how well pupils are doing. Inspectors observed several examples of teachers using pupils' misconceptions as learning points for the whole class. Pupils do not fear making mistakes; instead they learn from their errors.
- Relationships are strong in lessons. Teachers are in charge but rarely have to admonish pupils because of pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and the mutual respect that has been established. Pupils are equally respectful of each other. They listen attentively when their peers answer questions or offer explanations. Consequently, pupils of all ages are keen and confident to contribute to discussions, safe in the knowledge of their classmates' support.
- Teachers set homework regularly, in line with the school's policy. Homework tasks are substantial and demanding and help pupils to consolidate and extend their learning.
- Leaders' focus on developing pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum is now evident across most subjects and is having a positive impact, especially for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Teachers and pupils all understand that this is a school priority. Inspectors observed pupils answering questions with precision and detail and completing extended writing tasks in several subjects. Pupils read in tutor times, in designated reading lessons and across the curriculum.
- Teaching in the sixth form shares the characteristics of teaching in the main school and is of the same outstanding standard.
- A little variability remains in the quality of teaching, for example in English. Although the teaching of English, and consequently pupils' progress, has improved of late, not all teachers' planning and expectations are of the same consistently high standard. Some excellent practice exists in the department, but is not evident across all English teaching.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare — Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are confident and articulate. They express themselves in a sensible and mature fashion when speaking in class, but equally when talking to adults in less formal settings. Pupils of all ages demonstrate mature and well-rounded views of a wide variety of issues. For example, pupils talked to inspectors about current world issues such as the conflict in Syria and post-Brexit Britain. They were fully aware of how these issues might have an impact on them as young people attending a multicultural school in multicultural Birmingham. Consequently, the school is a caring and cohesive community of respectful and tolerant young people.
- Pupils are smart and fiercely proud of their school. They value and appreciate their teachers, the school's facilities and the wide range of opportunities available to them because they attend Handsworth Grammar School. The impressive array of enrichment

and extra-curricular visits and opportunities serves to broaden pupils' horizons, raise their aspirations and build their self-confidence.

- Pupils are safe and well cared for in school. All pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in school. They told inspectors that bullying is very rare, a fact confirmed by the school's records, and that they have confidence in the school's adults to deal swiftly with any issues that might arise.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves healthy and safe from potential dangers, including those that might arise when using the internet. The curriculum is carefully planned to ensure that pupils are regularly reminded of potential dangers and how to deal with them. For example, pupils told inspectors some of the key rules to stay safe online. Similarly, other pupils explained the potential dangers that might arise from people who hold extreme or radical views.
- Careers education is effective and appropriate for its pupils. A carefully planned programme from Year 7 to Year 13 includes visiting speakers, visits to colleges and universities, careers interviews, work experience and independent careers advice. Consequently, almost all pupils move on to appropriate destinations at the ages of 16 and 18.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in almost all lessons and they are keen to learn and to do their very best. They listen attentively to their teacher and each other, and they tackle their work with resilience, enthusiasm and determination.
- The school is calm throughout the day. Pupils behave maturely at break and lunchtime and as they move around the school. The site is litter free, even at the end of lunchtime. Pupils are courteous and polite to adults and to each other.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions has declined considerably over the past three years and they are now rare. Leaders use exclusion appropriately as a sanction of last resort and when it is applied pupils learn their lesson and do not repeat the poor behaviour. Consequently, leaders have not excluded any pupil more than once in this academic year.
- Pupils enjoy school and very much value the education that the school provides. Attendance is consistently above the national average for secondary schools and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is very low and well below the national figure. Pupils' punctuality is excellent, despite many travelling a considerable distance on public transport to get to school.
- In the sixth form, attendance and punctuality are excellent, as are behaviour and students' attitudes to learning.
- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View said that the school ensures that pupils are well behaved. A small number of parents, through the free text facility in Parent View, expressed concerns about pupils' behaviour. Inspectors found no evidence to support these concerns.

Outcomes for pupils — Outstanding

- Pupils join the school with prior attainment that is typically above that seen nationally. They make very strong progress in almost all subjects and finish key stage 4 having achieved standards well above national averages. For example, in 2016 almost all pupils achieved GCSEs in both English and mathematics at grades A* to C.
- Pupils make particularly rapid progress in many subjects including mathematics, science, languages, computing, geography and religious studies. In these subjects, and in some others, the proportion of A* or A grades achieved by pupils is high when compared to pupils of similar ability nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils make better progress, from their starting points, than other pupils nationally and in the school. Meticulous checks on these pupils' progress, combined with high-quality support from teachers and leaders, ensures that none are allowed to fall behind. The progress of the most able disadvantaged pupils is at least as strong as that of their peers, and better in several subjects including English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. Disadvantaged students in the sixth form continue to make even better progress than their peers.
- Middle-ability pupils make very rapid progress across all subjects. They achieve standards far in excess of those achieved by pupils with similar starting points nationally.
- The school has a very small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, typically single figures in each year group. These pupils make similar strong progress to their peers because leaders provide appropriate additional support as and when it is needed.
- Outcomes in the sixth form are consistently high. Students join the sixth form with high starting points and make significantly better progress than similar students nationally. Consequently, attainment at the end of Year 13 is very high indeed. The school's own assessment information indicates that sixth form achievement will improve further. Attainment is consistently well above national figures in most subjects and especially strong in mathematics, physics and psychology.
- Standards in English still lag a little behind higher-achieving subjects including mathematics, science and modern foreign languages, but are improving. Leaders' whole-school focus on developing pupils' literacy and specifically oracy, reading and extended writing is now bearing fruit, particularly for the school's high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. GCSE English outcomes improved in 2015 and again in 2016. Inspection evidence confirmed a continuing trajectory of improvement for current pupils. They now read widely and make regular use of the school's high-quality library.

16 to 19 study programmes — Outstanding

- Sixth form leaders play a prominent day-to-day role in students' education. They regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form as well as overseeing students' independent study habits. Teaching is outstanding, students' attitudes to learning are excellent and achievement is consistently high and continuing to improve.

- All required elements of the 16–19 study programmes are delivered in the sixth form. Extra-curricular activities and enrichment form an important and valued part of students' study programmes. For example, recent enrichment days have allowed students to learn about managing stress, characteristics of great leaders and career opportunities in law and the civil service. Students regularly take part in community projects. For example, one group of students recently worked to improve the environment in a local care home for the elderly.
- Almost all students go to university when they leave the sixth form. Careers guidance in the sixth form provides excellent support for students to realise their aspirations. Visiting speakers, well-focused work experience, visits to universities and help with university applications mean that students are very well prepared for their next steps. The small number of students who do not intend to go to university are equally well supported as they pursue employment or other options.
- Sixth-form students' conduct is exemplary and they provide excellent role models for younger pupils. Attendance is high, punctuality is excellent and students' work ethic is first class.
- Retention has improved considerably over recent years. Leaders' concerted focus on improving students' learning habits, especially for those students who join the sixth form from other schools, has proved effective. Almost all students who start the sixth form now successfully complete their courses.

School details

Unique reference number	103549
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10025364

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	985
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe Biddlestone
Headteacher	Simon Bird
Telephone number	0121 554 2794
Website	http://www.handsworth.bham.sch.uk/
Email address	enquiry@handsworth.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 February 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is a selective boys' grammar school that admits girls in the sixth form. It is an average-sized secondary school.
- Approximately 80% of pupils are Asian or British Asian and there are small numbers of pupils from a range of other ethnic backgrounds including White British.
- Nearly half of the pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school has very few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is close to the national average for secondary schools, but very high when compared to selective schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for its pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, and some of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. They met with four focus groups of pupils. Inspectors observed pupils at morning break and lunchtime and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and talked to them about the books they enjoy.
- Inspectors considered 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 20 responses to an online staff questionnaire.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, other leaders and the chair and vice-chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised several documents, including the school's self-evaluation, its development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, and the school's records about pupils' behaviour, attendance and attainment and those relating to keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

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Lois Kelly	Ofsted Inspector
Adele Mills	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Rob Steed	Ofsted Inspector

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