

Inspection of Lordswood Girls' School and Sixth Form Centre

Knightslow Road, Harborne, Birmingham, West Midlands B17 8QB

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 March 2022

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Sixth-form provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils are usually happy and form strong friendships. Pupils are conscientious and work hard in lessons. In many subjects, pupils achieve well in their GCSE examinations.

Pupils show a positive attitude to their learning. They are polite and respectful to staff and listen carefully in lessons. At social times and in corridors, pupils behave in a calm and orderly way. Pupils feel safe and say that bullying is rare. If bullying does occur, staff deal with this quickly.

In several subjects, the curriculum is not well planned. Leaders have not thought carefully enough about how pupils build on what they already know. Teachers do not always check pupils' understanding in a timely way and provide enough opportunities to revisit learning. Pupils say they do not get sufficient information about future careers.

There are many different extra-curricular clubs that pupils take part in. Pupils attend a variety of different sports clubs. Many pupils enjoy taking part in music and drama performances and attend a partnership with Birmingham Hippodrome theatre. Several pupils enjoyed performing in the school's recent play of 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'.

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

The new headteacher has an accurate view of the school. She recognises that there are several areas of the school that in recent years have declined. Together with other leaders, she has already taken steps to tackle the areas that need to improve. However, this is still at an early stage, and there is more work to do.

There is variability in how the curriculum is planned and sequenced. In stronger subjects, such as mathematics and history, leaders have thought carefully about the order of topics and how pupils build on what they already know. In history, for example, leaders have considered carefully how pupils build their chronological understanding of past events and develop their knowledge of key historical themes. Leaders in mathematics have also rightly considered the knowledge pupils need for each topic and how this helps to secure their understanding of mathematical ideas. However, this is not consistent across the curriculum. In other subjects, it is not clear how topics have been sequenced to help pupils make connections in what they are learning. Leaders have not consistently identified the smaller blocks of learning needed to help pupils understand more complex ideas. As a result, pupils' depth of knowledge and understanding is not as secure as it could be.

Teachers do not always use assessment effectively. In some subjects, teachers use regular, ongoing, 'low-stakes' quiz questions to check what pupils know and remember. This helps to identify where further teaching may be required. However, in other subjects, there is an over-reliance on using end of topic tests to identify

errors or misconceptions in pupils' learning. In addition, teachers do not consistently plan for opportunities to revisit learning. Consequently, gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding can be allowed to persist.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in the school. Teachers have a good understanding of pupils' needs and make appropriate adaptations to help them access learning. Teaching assistants provide effective support and know pupils well. Staff have received training on recognising different reading ages and the challenges pupils face to better support their teaching.

Leaders have mapped out appropriately the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. This includes topics related to relationships, sex and health education. Pupils have a strong understanding of respect and tolerance. They recognise and celebrate the diversity in the school community. While there is a clear plan for the PSHE curriculum, pupils do not always see the value and relevance of the school's 'drop down' days. In addition, pupils do not receive enough information and guidance about future careers. This is particularly the case in Year 9 when pupils choose their key stage 4 option subjects.

In the sixth form, there is a range of suitable non-qualification and enrichment activities that students can take part in. This includes subject mentoring of pupils in lower year groups. However, not all students take part in these activities and uptake is not tracked carefully by leaders. Students do not always use their additional study periods as effectively as they could do.

Several trustees and governors are relatively new to their posts. They have a reasonable understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Trustees and governors recognise that pupils have achieved well in GCSE examinations and that the school has a positive reputation in the local community. Until recently, trustees and governors had not been given enough information by leaders to provide effective support and challenge. This has meant that they have been unable to scrutinise the quality of the curriculum and other aspects of the school's work effectively. School leaders have already made changes to the way they report to governors and trustees to help strengthen the school's leadership.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular training on how to keep children safe. This includes online modules to help develop staff's awareness of key safeguarding issues. All staff have had recent training on issues such as sexual harassment and abuse. Leaders ensure that all concerns are carefully logged on the school's central system and acted upon. Leaders make sure that pupils receive help and support in a timely way. This includes support for any mental health concerns. Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe through the curriculum in PSHE days and citizenship lessons, including the appropriate use of mobile phones.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In several subjects, the curriculum is not sufficiently well planned and sequenced. This means that some pupils struggle to make connections in their learning and do not have a secure depth of understanding. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is well planned so that pupils are able to build on what they already know and develop a deeper knowledge of their subjects.
- Teachers do not use assessment as well as they could. In some subjects, teachers do not check pupils' learning often enough to identify errors and misconceptions. In addition, teachers do not plan enough opportunities for pupils to revisit learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment more effectively to check their understanding and help pupils recall prior knowledge.
- The school's careers programme does not cater sufficiently well for the needs of all pupils. Leaders do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to engage with future careers. In addition, they do not provide enough guidance to pupils when choosing their key stage 4 option subjects. Leaders should ensure that all pupils receive good-quality advice and guidance, alongside meaningful opportunities to engage with the world of work.
- Not all sixth-form students take part in enrichment opportunities. This means that some students are not well prepared to move on to higher education or into employment. Leaders should ensure that all students take part in non-qualification activities so that they benefit from a broader range of experiences.
- In the past, trustees and governors have not carried out their role as effectively as they could do. They have not provided enough scrutiny around school leaders' actions. Leaders should ensure that they share with governors and trustees the appropriate information so that they can provide effective challenge and support to help the school move forward.

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.

If you are the school and you are 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	136592
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10211907
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	991
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	221
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Julie Lennon
Headteacher	Kerry Cooney
Website	www.lordswoodgirls.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school converted to an academy in February 2012.
- Lordswood Girls' School and Sixth Form Centre is the only school that is part of the Lordswood Academies Trust.
- The school is due to join the King Edward VI Academy Trust in September 2022.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors focused on the following subjects: English, history, languages, art and design and religious education. Inspectors examined leaders' plans, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about the way these subjects are taught. They also looked at other subjects, including mathematics and science, to check how they are planned and taught.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about behaviour, attendance, the school curriculum and improvement planning. The school's website was also checked.
- Inspectors talked to staff and leaders about safeguarding arrangements. They examined how leaders make employment checks on staff and scrutinised further safeguarding records. They also asked how incidents reported by pupils are recorded and analysed.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors held meetings with trustees and governors, the headteacher, senior leaders, lead professionals, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey and pupil survey.

Inspection team

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