

Summerhill School

Lodge Lane, Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 9XE

Inspection dates

22–23 November 2016

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

- Leaders have, in the past, not held teachers to account with sufficient rigour for the quality of their work. As a result, there has been a decline in pupils' progress.
- Outcomes for pupils have declined since the previous inspection. Rates of progress are variable, particularly for most-able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The information that leaders collect, about how well pupils do, currently does not allow accurate examination predictions to be made.
- Middle leaders have previously not monitored the quality of teaching sufficiently well. This has resulted in discrepancies between subjects. New opportunities for teachers to benefit from the best practice at the school, and from training and development, have not yet improved teaching sufficiently.
- Systems in place to routinely monitor the information collected about pupils' behaviour are inconsistent. As a result, leaders are not able to fully evaluate the effectiveness of strategies to improve behaviour.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly appointed executive headteacher has acted quickly and decisively to identify and address aspects of the school that require improvement. Other leaders, staff, parents and pupils share the executive headteacher's vision to improve the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils make rates of progress comparable to those of other pupils nationally. The additional funding the school receives has been used to good effect.
- Pupils behave well. There is a culture of strong, positive relationships between pupils and adults, and among pupils, which supports learning well. Pupils rightly feel safe in school. Attendance is good and exclusion rates low.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good because of their participation in a wide range of appropriate, high-quality experiences. The school successfully promotes values such as tolerance, mutual respect and fairness.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing the role and capacity of middle leaders to check the consistent application and impact of whole-school initiatives
 - ensuring that teachers' development is appropriate and targeted to improve teaching and outcomes
 - making sure that the best teaching practice is shared widely and systematically across the school
 - improving the reliability and validity of information leaders collect about pupils' progress
 - introducing systems to regularly monitor, review and evaluate information about pupils' behaviour and conduct
 - holding staff to account through clear systems that manage their performance.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - using questioning more effectively to enable pupils to develop their reasoning and extend their thinking
 - providing learning activities that challenge pupils of all abilities so they can achieve their best in lessons
 - making sure teachers check pupils' understanding effectively in lessons to help their learning
 - developing the quality of feedback to support pupils to improve their work.
- Further reduce all gaps in the performance of different groups of pupils by increasing their rates of progress to at least the expected level.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Teachers' performance has not been well managed in the past and there are not clear links between performance objectives, quality of teaching, pupils' outcomes and professional teaching standards. Leaders have started to address these issues.
- Heads of department do not routinely monitor the quality of teaching in their subject areas. Consequently, differences in the way the school's expectations are applied have not been tackled. This has contributed towards variation in the quality of teaching and outcomes. Middle leaders now are developing a better understanding of, and experience in, carrying out their responsibilities. They benefit from, and are appreciative of, coaching and development provided by senior leaders.
- Relevant and useful professional development and training opportunities are planned for all staff. These take into account teachers' career stage and level of expertise. In the past, a lack of comprehensive information about the quality of teaching has meant that development opportunities have not been sharply focused to meet teachers' needs. Also, existing expertise has not been used to the full to develop colleagues. Recent high-quality training has had variable effect on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes, and its impact has been informally monitored. Leaders' clear priorities for training are now linked to accurate identification of aspects of teaching that require improvement.
- Leaders regularly collect information to track pupils' progress. Teachers use this information to predict how well pupils will do in their GCSE examinations. In 2016, these predictions were imprecise. This was because the information available was not always reliable. Leaders ensure that middle leaders have access to information from examination boards and use external support to validate their assessments. Leaders recognise that changes to the structure of GCSE assessment will affect the accuracy of predictions until sufficient national information is available about pupils' attainment.
- The additional funding the school receives, to support pupils who start Year 7 with low literacy and numeracy skills, is not used consistently well. Some interventions have more impact than others. Leaders recognise that consistently improving progress for these pupils to catch up with their peers is a key priority for the school.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a wide range of subjects that meets the interests and ambitions of pupils. The range of subjects is constantly reviewed to ensure its appropriateness and value. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in many additional activities to broaden their experience. These opportunities include sports, and performing and creative arts.
- The local authority provided support and advice to the governors during the successful recruitment of the new executive headteacher. Involvement in this process provided evidence to the local authority that it should increase the level of resources allocated to the school. This planned support is welcomed by leaders and governors.

- Leaders track and monitor the allocation of additional funds they receive to support disadvantaged pupils. Actions and strategies are starting to have a marked positive impact on raising progress. For example, disadvantaged pupils' progress in English and mathematics currently compares favourably with that of other pupils nationally.
- The recently appointed executive headteacher has successfully created and shared his vision for the school with staff, parents and pupils. He has catalysed leaders at all levels to develop their skills and take the lead on their areas of responsibility. Staff are galvanised, energised and challenged to positively address those aspects of the school that require improvement.
- The executive headteacher has rapidly formed an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. His realistic assessment of standards is based on a wide range of information. Other leaders have rightly adjusted their perceptions of the school's effectiveness to align with this evaluation. Clear plans are being created to address areas that require improvement.

Governance of the school

- Governors wholeheartedly share the executive headteacher's vision to provide high-quality teaching, learning and pastoral care, and improve outcomes for all pupils.
- Governors have not been able to effectively challenge the decline in the quality of provision at the school because they have not had the appropriate information to do so. For example, systems to hold teachers to account for the quality and impact of their work are not fully effective and progress information about current pupils contains inaccuracies.
- Governors are able to interpret and evaluate the clear information they now receive from the executive headteacher and other senior leaders. As a result, they have a realistic view of the school, and are aware of what needs to be done to improve it.
- A recent review of governance at the school has resulted in a restructuring of the work of committees and additional training for governors. The governing body is now in a more secure position to support and challenge leaders, and to monitor the impact of its work to improve the school's overall effectiveness.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A clear culture of safeguarding exists within the school. Leaders ensure that all staff have received relevant and up-to-date training. Staff are knowledgeable about the risks that young people face. They know how to ensure that pupils are kept safe by using school policies and systems. As a result, staff can identify pupils who may be at risk and act swiftly where necessary.
- Pupils successfully learn how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum from staff and external speakers who visit the school. Pupils state that they feel safe when in school, and parents agree with this view.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable, and is sometimes weak. Senior leaders know that there is work to do to reduce the inconsistencies that exist.
- Teachers often do not adapt learning strategies carefully enough to suit the needs of pupils. Pupils, such as those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, sometimes find their work too hard to do, which limits their achievements. Other pupils, particularly the most able, are provided with insufficient challenge, which slows their rates of progress.
- Teachers sometimes do not use questioning effectively enough to ensure that pupils make good progress. Questions can be superficial and addressed with short answers. As a result, opportunities are lost to explore and develop ideas. Many pupils are not in the habit of asking challenging questions of themselves and each other. Where learning is most effective, teachers use questioning to develop pupils' understanding and draw information from them. Teachers are able to clarify misconceptions and provide activities that confirm pupils' understanding.
- Teachers' feedback, too often, does not precisely identify how pupils' work can be improved. As a result, in some subjects pupils do not always know how to do better. In other instances, pupils are not given sufficient time to reflect and act on the feedback that they receive. However, some teachers demonstrate very effective practice. For example, in art and drama, pupils work on specific skills in order to improve the quality of their work. Parents comment on the variable impact that feedback has on progress.
- Not all teachers use ongoing assessment consistently to inform the next steps in lessons. Subsequently, learning tasks or the pace at which they are completed does not match what pupils need. When teachers, or pupils themselves, make judgements in lessons about how well pupils are doing, activities are closely targeted to pupils. For example, in a science lesson, an inspector observed pupils choosing which exam question to answer based on analysis of their previous work which highlighted strengths and weaknesses.
- Homework is set in accordance with the school's policy and helps to reinforce and consolidate learning. A high proportion of parents stated that their children receive appropriate homework tasks.
- Teachers have high expectations for pupils' use of relevant key terms which support the development of subject-specific vocabulary. Teachers use, and expect pupils to use, these terms in their explanations. Teachers provide activities that develop reading and writing in their lessons. For example, in English, pupils often complete longer written answers which are assessed using GCSE examination criteria.
- There are extremely strong relationships between adults and pupils and this creates a calm and purposeful learning environment in the classroom.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Opportunities to contribute to personal, social and health education and promote British values are carefully mapped and effectively delivered through enrichment days. Pupils are clear about how to keep themselves safe from risks in a range of different situations, including from extremist views. Pupils say that there are adults they can talk to if they are concerned about their welfare.
- Appropriate, individualised support is provided for pupils when required. Close links exist with agencies outside the school to ensure that the most suitable support is provided successfully at the right time.
- Pupils demonstrate high levels of respect and tolerance for each other. They are very clear about the unacceptability of abusive or discriminatory behaviour and, as a result, such incidents are very rare. Bullying is uncommon, and pupils state that, should it occur, they have confidence in adults at the school to address it successfully.
- A small number of pupils are educated away from the school site for part of the week. They benefit from following qualifications that meet their particular interests. As a result, they attend regularly and behave well.
- Pupils have good opportunities to participate in the life of the school. For example, some represent their peers on the student council, and older pupils have roles to contribute to keeping younger pupils safe. Although the views of pupils are sought in relation to specific aspects of the school, there is currently no regular process for them to contribute their individual views.
- Careers information, advice and guidance provide appropriate information to pupils from Year 7 onwards. Consequently, pupils can make informed decisions about their futures and so raise their aspirations. This provision is successful because a higher than national proportion of pupils moves successfully into further education, employment or training after leaving the school. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are successful in their destinations is lower than for other pupils. Older pupils told inspectors that they would have welcomed some of the advice they receive earlier on in their school careers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Strong relationships exist between pupils and staff. Pupils listen carefully in lessons, and respond quickly to instructions and requests. Staff are very positive about the relationships that exist in the school.
- Pupils move around the building in a calm and orderly manner between lessons and are well supervised by staff. They are pleasant, polite and helpful to adults and each other. At lunchtime, inspectors observed more high-spirited, but not unpleasant, behaviour. Younger pupils state that they feel safe in all areas of the school.

- There is a culture of pride in the school. Pupils wear their uniforms smartly and correctly, and keep their school clean and tidy.
- Pupils enjoy school, and attendance is close to the national average. Disadvantaged pupils' absence remains slightly higher than the national average, although this is falling because of the positive impact of support. There are high rates of persistent absence among a small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, who have particular healthcare needs. The inclusive nature of the school is demonstrated by work to limit the impact of these interruptions to pupils' education as much as possible.
- The attendance of pupils who are educated at other locations for part of the week is closely monitored, and they attend well. Clear procedures exist to report any absences.
- Pupils are punctual when moving between classes, but a number of pupils arrive late to school at the start of the day. Although leaders ensure that appropriate sanctions are used, punctuality is not improving.
- Rates of exclusion of pupils at the school have been historically low and permanent exclusions from the school are very rare, and used as a last resort. However, exclusions increased last year, despite targeted interventions and support for certain pupils. Currently, leaders do not have coherent systems to monitor the range of information they collect on pupils' behaviour. As a result, they cannot evaluate the impact of strategies to improve behaviour, or ensure that school policies regarding behaviour are being applied consistently around the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Recently, pupils' outcomes have been similar to those of other pupils nationally. However, in 2016, pupils' rates of progress across a range of subjects were lower. Furthermore, progress has been too variable for different groups of pupils and in different subjects. Too many pupils have not been able to build sufficiently on their above-average standards when they started at this school.
- Pupils with different starting points make different rates of progress. For example, in 2016, most-able Year 11 pupils' progress was one third of a grade below that of all pupils nationally. Pupils with low prior attainment made, on average, three quarters of a grade less progress. Leaders' analysis suggests that lower rates of progress for the most-able persist for current pupils. However, low prior attaining pupils' progress is now closer to expectations, particularly as many more of these pupils are now taking appropriate qualifications in key stage 4.
- Year 11 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made, on average, almost a grade less progress than other pupils in 2016. Leaders' analysis shows this trend continues for current cohorts.
- Pupils' progress in humanities, mathematics and modern foreign languages has consistently been stronger than in English and science. The differences between mathematics and English look set to diminish for those pupils currently in Year 11, but less so for most-able pupils.

- The small number of pupils who complete part of their education at different locations are generally achieving well. They make progress towards qualifications that, mostly, prepare them well for the next stage of their education. However, one qualification that is available currently limits pupils' achievement to a lower GCSE grade. Leaders have plans to change this.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making similar, and in some cases better, progress than other pupils in most year groups and nationally. The differences that previously existed have disappeared. For example, in 2016, Year 11 disadvantaged pupils made almost a grade less progress, compared with other pupils nationally.
- Leaders are able to demonstrate that boys and girls make similar progress. Differences that have existed have been addressed in most subjects. Boys have previously made less progress than girls. For example, in 2016, Year 11 boys made on average half a grade less progress than girls.
- Pupils' attainment overall is consistently high. For example, it has been much higher than nationally in English and mathematics, and across a range of subjects. The proportion of pupils who achieve the English Baccalaureate has been higher than the national figure. However, this has not been the case for disadvantaged pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	103854
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10025356

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	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,016
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Knowles
Executive headteacher	James Bowkett
Telephone number	01384 816165
Website	www.summerhill.dudley.sch.uk
Email address	info@summerhill.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 November 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is of average size for a secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than average.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British and other pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A below-average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities supported by the school is below average.

- A small number of key stage 4 pupils access part of their education at either Stourbridge College or Halesowen College.
- The school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum targets for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11, in 2015. This information is not yet available for the 2016 cohort because progress information for Year 11 has not yet been validated.
- The previous headteacher retired in summer 2016 and an executive headteacher was appointed to lead the school in October 2016. During the period of transition, an interim headteacher has been in place.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 33 lessons, two of which observations were carried out with a member of the school’s senior leadership team. Lessons covered a wide range of subjects and year groups. An inspector visited a tutorial session. Pupils’ behaviour in lessons and at social times was also evaluated by inspectors.
- Pupils’ work was reviewed by inspectors in lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, including those with responsibility for safeguarding, with teachers, and four members of the governing body. An inspector also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed the 143 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also took account of the views of 63 members of staff through online inspection questionnaire responses.
- Pupils met formally with inspectors on two separate occasions. Inspectors also conducted many informal discussions with pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of school documentation, including information about self-evaluation and action plans, outcomes, teaching and behaviour, and minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Rob Hackfath, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Bernice Astling	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Tyrer	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Ellis-Martin	Ofsted Inspector
David Hughes	Ofsted Inspector
Herminder Channa	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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