

Longdon Hall School

Longdon Green, Lichfield WS15 4PT

Inspection dates

13-15 March 2018

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| 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 |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Outstanding |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Since the last inspection, the school has flourished and built on its outstanding provision. Senior leaders and managers have ensured that pupils achieve exceptionally well. The teaching of new subjects by highly skilled staff adds richness and enjoyment to pupils' experiences.
- Younger pupils make rapid progress when they join the school. This progress is sustained, and by the time pupils leave school they achieve well, gaining nationally recognised qualifications.
- Pupils enjoy school and they recognise the substantial improvements they have made academically and socially. The trusting and supportive relationships between staff and pupils ensure that pupils thrive.
- Parents and other stakeholders place a high value on the work of the school. They know that it transforms pupils' lives.
- The school continues to meet all the independent school standards.
- Outstanding teaching enables pupils to make outstanding progress. Teaching is inspirational and raises pupils' aspirations of what they can achieve when they leave school.
- The personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils are outstanding. Pupils make enormous strides in improving their behaviour and attendance. They develop a thirst for learning and are eager participants in lessons.
- Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. The well-being and the successful development of pupils' potential are at the heart of the work of the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. They learn to work collaboratively and develop a wider understanding of different cultures.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to undertake work experience away from the school community.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the opportunities for pupils to undertake off-site work experience placements, to better prepare them for the future.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Senior leaders and managers are not complacent. They constantly strive for improvement. This is evident in the many successful developments secured since the last inspection. The improved facilities and well-thought-out curriculum make the learning environment even better for pupils, and contribute to their outstanding outcomes. The work of the leaders and managers, including effective governance, has ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.
- Parents widely praise the school and recognise how effectively staff work with their children. 'Absolutely brilliant' and 'I cannot praise the school enough' are views widely repeated by parents. All parents who responded to the Parent View online questionnaire said that they would recommend the school to other parents.
- Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. Subject leaders have a clear overview of strengths and areas for development in their areas of responsibility. Highly effective subject leadership makes a very important contribution to the drive for success and culture of academic learning. Senior leaders are also very effective in identifying and nurturing staff talent and have developed future leaders for other schools.
- The school's self-evaluation is well supported by evidence from a range of different sources including external reviews. The accurate self-evaluation identifies the many strengths of the school as well as areas for further development. The school improvement plan focuses on the most important areas to develop. This supports the strong capacity to improve, with a well-established culture of sharing best practice.
- The school is well regarded by other stakeholders. Local authorities who place pupils at the school have very positive views about the school's work. Staff who responded to the staff questionnaire are also overwhelmingly positive in their views of the school.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that the curriculum is exceptionally well suited to the needs of pupils. Younger pupils are nurtured in small groups, so that they start to flourish. Older pupils study demanding subjects. All pupils access an enriching range of additional opportunities and experiences. This promotes high levels of enjoyment as well as helping to secure very strong progress. Bespoke qualifications to match different levels of ability are provided, so that all pupils experience success and achievement. There are particular strengths in the on-site vocational activities such as horticulture and vehicle maintenance.
- The provision for pupils, who have autistic spectrum disorders, has developed strongly over the last 18 months and the school is working toward a nationally recognised accredited status.
- Pupils benefit from trips and visits to the local community and visits further afield. On arrival in the morning, pupils have the option of attending the breakfast club, which encourages positive social interactions and also an early morning gym. These activities help to settle and prepare pupils for the rest of the day. The range of activities that pupils participate in has a positive impact on pupils' personal and social development.
- Senior leaders make very effective use of external consultants, who carry out regular reviews of the school to check their own work and add even more challenge. This provides an objective viewpoint so that further improvements are implemented.

- There are effective arrangements to check the work of staff. The quality of teaching is regularly observed and feedback and coaching is given. Staff benefit from ongoing training to develop their knowledge and skills continuously. This contributes well to the outstanding teaching.
- Staff prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain through the strong promotion of fundamental British values. Pupils quickly learn respect, acceptance and tolerance of different cultures and backgrounds.
- The school receives a small amount of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. This money is spent appropriately and has ensured that these pupils secure the same outstanding progress as other pupils in the school.
- Pupils receive effective careers and education guidance from Year 8 onwards and they are encouraged to be ambitious. Pupils find visits from former pupils who have gone on to employment inspirational. The school provides a strong vocational offer, but opportunities for pupils to undertake off-site work experience placements are restricted, limiting their preparation for the future.

Governance

- The governance of the school is outstanding. The governing body, comprising of company representatives, ensures that the school reports against key performance indicators such as attendance; progress; the school budget; quality of teaching; safeguarding and health and safety. Those that provide governance have a good understanding of the school's work and of pupils' progress and achievement and are effective in providing challenge, accountability and support to the school.
- The assistant director provides an important link with the school governors and the proprietor, and visits the school regularly so that he has a close working knowledge of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Senior leaders carry out all relevant safeguarding checks when appointing new staff. Checks on staff's and visitors' suitability to work with children and young people are carried out and recorded thoroughly.
- Staff are vigilant and have a clear understanding of potential indications of abuse. For example, staff report using 'nagging doubt' forms to record early concerns, knowing that these will be acted upon. Their close knowledge of pupils is important in recognising changes in pupils' mood or attitudes, which may be symptomatic of issues that are more serious. They receive thorough initial and ongoing training.
- Pupils feel safe and are protected through comprehensive policies which are put into practice. The supportive school culture ensures that pupils have confidence in staff and they feel able to share their concerns. Staff receive good training so that they know how to keep pupils safe, so that all aspects of their welfare and safety are assured.
- The safeguarding policy takes into account current government requirements and is available on the school website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Inspirational teaching raises pupils' aspirations very effectively and secures outstanding progress. Pupils engage exceptionally well in lessons, because learning is interesting. Pupils respond very well to the high expectations that are set for behaviour and academic progress.
- Learning targets are widely understood by pupils. Targets for numeracy, literacy, behaviour and health and well-being help to accelerate pupils' learning. Staff set pupils clear goals and teachers successfully motivate pupils to achieve them.
- The specialist teaching in subjects such as music, food technology, vehicle maintenance and horticulture provides pupils with excellent opportunities to develop skills in a wide range of vocational activities.
- Staff are knowledgeable and receive effective training so that they understand how conditions such as autism and attachment disorders effect pupils' learning. Planning for activities and lessons is meticulous. This means that pupils' individual needs are exceptionally well met.
- An open culture exists to share best practice amongst staff. 'Bring and brag' sessions have proved beneficial in improving teaching and learning because staff share what works well.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are outstanding. This does much to develop pupils' self-confidence, contributing to the outstanding progress they make academically and socially.
- Pupils' work in books is of a high standard. Pupils are provided with advice on how to improve their work, in line with the school's policies, through the use of clear 'next steps'.
- There is a strong reading culture across the school. Staff match books to pupils' reading levels and provide opportunities for pupils to read widely and often. This has resulted in pupils being confident to read aloud and improve their reading and understanding of what they have read. Pupils take pleasure from reading. Pupils' wider reading helps to improve their writing by extending their vocabulary and knowledge of writing techniques. For example, in an English lesson, pupils knew how to use alliteration and emotive language in order to make their writing more persuasive.
- The numerous opportunities for pupils to work cooperatively contribute to the strong development of their social and communication skills.
- Staff teach knowledge and concepts in ways that pupils can grasp and that spike their curiosity. For example, in a science lesson, pupils were thoroughly absorbed in learning about nanotechnology and the properties and application of graphene.
- Therapy is used well to help those pupils that need extra support to cope with social, emotional and mental health issues and attachment disorders. This has a positive impact on pupils' personal development and helps pupils to access learning and cope with social situations more successfully.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes towards staff, each other and their learning. Pupils' work is neat and tidily presented because they take pride in their work. These attributes are remarkable given the previous negative experiences of education for some pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted outstandingly well through the wide range of activities and experiences offered to pupils. The thought for the week encourages pupils to reflect on positive values. Pupils develop their understanding of different cultures through visitors and visits. A visit from an ex-offender made a powerful impression on pupils on the consequences of breaking the law.
- Pupils develop an excellent understanding of fundamental British values through the curriculum. The school's own values align closely with fundamental British values. These values are visible around the school and staff promote these values on a day-to-day basis through their positive interactions with pupils.
- The school council makes sensible suggestions for improvements which the school act upon. The members are good ambassadors for the school and learn to become responsible members of the school community. Pupils mature and improve their behaviour well and demonstrate politeness to staff and visitors. They develop their understanding of democracy through participating in mock elections, referendums and voting for school council members.
- Pupils are prepared exceptionally well for life in modern Britain. They participate in a wide range of visits locally and further afield to broaden their horizons and experience different cultures. Visitors such as a holocaust survivor reinforce the importance of tolerance, acceptance and respect for all people. Pupils visit the national arboretum to remember fallen soldiers in armed conflicts.
- Pupils learn the importance of being fit and healthy through a wide range of physical activities such as boxing, gym training and team sports. They learn to keep safe online, for example they are aware of the dangers of malware and computer viruses and how to avoid these.
- Pupils make a positive contribution to the school and wider community through fundraising for charitable events.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding in lessons and around the school. The excellent behaviour of pupils in lessons means that learning proceeds without interruption. The school is a calm, orderly and pleasant learning environment.
- Pupils' attendance improves well, particularly given their often previous poor attendance at other schools, and is an indication of how much they enjoy school. The school works hard with the few persistent poor attendees to get them back on track.
- Data shows clear reductions in the frequency of incidents of challenging behaviour. Effective positive behaviour management has contributed to reductions in physical

restraints. All staff are well trained in de-escalation techniques. Pupils feel that behaviour has improved over time.

- Pupils recognise the improvements they have made in their behaviour since attending the school and say that they have learned to manage their emotions more maturely. Pupils reported to the inspector that they feel safe in school and that bullying is not an issue. Records show very few recorded incidents of unkind behaviour and that these incidents are dealt with effectively. Pupils reported that they have trust to confide in staff with any issues that are troubling them.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- The vast majority of pupils make good or outstanding progress from their starting points. When they join the school they receive a baseline assessment within their first six weeks, so that their needs can be fully assessed and met.
- Younger pupils mostly join the school in Year 5 or Year 6. They settle in quickly and start to make rapid progress. For example, in mathematics, primary-aged pupils develop a deeper understanding of concepts such as place value and using decimals through activities which help them to apply their learning in different situations.
- The school has a clear definition of what constitutes good and outstanding progress. Each pupil has a 'flight path' which sets out their expected progress over the course of a year. Staff regularly check pupils' progress to see if they are on course and if adjustments are needed to accelerate progress.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in English, mathematics and science, due to excellent teaching, but progress is equally strong in vocational subjects and other areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils achieve an impressive range of nationally recognised qualifications. The most able pupils achieve a good pass at GCSE in English, and mathematics. Other pupils achieve functional skills and entry-level awards
- Pupils are highly motivated to achieve. Pupils often opt to take further lessons to improve their grades, for example improving mathematics grades from a standard pass to a good pass. A significant proportion of pupils go on to exceed their predicted grades by the end of Year 11.
- Pupils who are in receipt of the pupil premium funding make equivalent progress to other pupils in the school. The school is quick to identify pupils who are struggling, and makes extra support available as soon as it is needed. This additional support is successful in helping pupils to make up lost ground and improves pupils' rate of progress.
- Since the school opened all pupils have gone on to training, employment or further education. The school also checks to see if pupils sustain their placements. Some pupils are currently applying to the Navy and sixth-form provision to study for A-levels.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 137098 |
| DfE registration number | 860/6037 |
| Inspection number | 10006320 |

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

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| Type of school | Independent school |
| School category | Special |
| Age range of pupils | 7-18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 70 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Acorn Care and Education |
| Chair | Graham McEwen |
| Headteacher | Ali McGregor |
| Annual fees (Average for day pupils) | £42,000 |
| Telephone number | 01543 491051 |
| Website | www.longdonhallschool.co.uk |
| Email address | enquiries@longdonhallschool.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 15–16 May 2012 |

Information about this school

- Longdon Hall School is registered for boys and girls aged seven to 18 years. However, at the time of inspection there were no pupils above the age of 16.
- The school admits pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Some pupils also have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder with associated learning difficulties.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan and some have experienced disrupted education, having been excluded from their previous schools.

- The school was registered in July 2011, opened in September 2011 and received its first full inspection on 15 May 2012, when it was judged outstanding, with all the independent school standards met.
- In July 2014, following a material change visit, the school expanded its roll to a maximum of 76 pupils. At the time of this inspection there were 70 pupils on roll.
- The school is owned by Acorn Care and Education, a national provider of schools and foster care. The school aims to provide a 'caring structured learning environment in which all pupils can develop academically, socially, emotionally and morally to their full potential and in which staff feel safe, secure and valued'.
- Pupils come from several different neighbouring local authorities. Some are children looked after.
- The current headteacher took up his post in September 2014. The school also has an executive headteacher, who oversees a number of schools in the Acorn group.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed 16 parts of lessons, all of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or assistant headteacher.
- Pupils' work, staff surveys, annual reports and other records were scrutinised.
- The school's documentation was examined, including planning for the teaching of subjects, records of pupils' progress and the welfare and safeguarding of pupils. The inspector checked the school's compliance with the regulations for independent schools.
- The views of pupils were sought through individual discussions and meeting with the school council.
- There were 10 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. The views of parents and carers were also gained through a school-based survey and discussions with three parents.

Inspection team

Frank Price, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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