

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Earls High School

Furnace Lane, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3SL

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 March 2025

Outcome

The Earls High School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The executive headteacher of this school is Jamie Fox. This school is part of Stour Vale Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Rachel Salter, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Joanne Williams.

What is it like to attend this school?

'To become children of the light' – this motto underpins everything that happens in this school. Pupils enjoy strong relationships with staff and each other. Pupils are safe and enjoy learning. This contributes to their high attendance. Pupils are a pleasure to speak to. They are welcoming and proud of their school.

The school has high expectations for all. From listening carefully and working hard in lessons, pupils always try their best. Pupils support each other. Pupils have confidence in their teachers to deal with bullying if it does happen.

Pupils and families praise the wide-ranging opportunities on offer to extend learning beyond the classroom. Trips and visits are an important part of this. For example, a group of pupils have recently returned from volunteering in The Gambia. Many pupils proudly wear 'flashes' on their jumpers which celebrate their achievements in the wider curriculum. All pupils receive good information about possible career opportunities and next steps in education.

The school values the importance of developing each pupil as a rounded individual. Pupils benefit from many clubs, activities and trips, as well as a range of opportunities to take leadership roles. Vulnerable pupils are supported to get involved in these aspects of the school.

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

The curriculum clearly sets out what pupils need to learn and when. The school ensures that the curriculum is delivered consistently well. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They skilfully model to pupils what they are teaching. Pupils benefit from clear instruction by staff. Teachers use questioning techniques effectively to check pupils' understanding and identify any misconceptions that they have. The curriculum provides ample opportunity to practise skills and concepts before progressing to further subject content. As a result, pupils remember what they have been taught. This includes in subjects where outcomes have historically been weaker.

The school is effective at identifying pupils who need additional support, including with their reading. Staff ensure pupils receive swift and effective support that helps them read confidently and with expression. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from the clear information that is provided about their needs to teachers. One pupil, typical of other comments, said: 'Teachers work really hard to support me and have helped me be more confident.' However, the school does not help some pupils with SEND to develop their independence as well as it could.

The school manages pupils' attendance very effectively. Leaders diligently check pupils' attendance, identifying patterns and barriers that prevent pupils from attending school regularly. The school has expanded its pastoral team to better support pupils to overcome these barriers. Leaders recognised that attendance was weakest on a Friday. The 'Thursday Nudge' and a range of rewards and competition-based programmes have had a positive impact. Behaviour in and around school is positive. The school is calm. Pupils who struggle to regulate their behaviour are well supported to improve. As a result, suspensions are low, and use of the in-school refocus room is decreasing.

Pupils speak confidently about topics that they have learned in the school's personal development programme. They explore themes such as health and well-being and living in the wider world. The programme responds to live themes to help equip pupils with the skills they need to make sensible choices and lead fulfilling lives. The school's high-quality careers advice and guidance programme supports pupils in making informed choices about their next steps in education or training.

Leaders, including the trust, are ambitious for the school. They understand the priorities of the school and take effective action in the best interests of its pupils. They are committed to enabling pupils to thrive. Most staff are proud to work at the school. They value the school's work to consider workload and well-being. As one member of staff commented: 'This is a very special place to work. There is a real sense of community.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, the school does not help some pupils with SEND to benefit from steps to encourage their independence. Consequently, sometimes pupils do not succeed in tackling learning goals on their own. The school should strengthen its work on this aspect of SEND provision so that all pupils with SEND gain greater independence and succeed well.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in January 2020.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	137812
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10343965
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,298
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joanne Williams
CEO of the trust	Rachel Salter
Headteacher	Jamie Fox (Executive headteacher)
Website	www.earlshighschool.org
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Stour Vale Academy Trust.
- The school uses seven registered and two unregistered providers of alternative provision for a total of 13 pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information and engagement about approved technical education, qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors spoke to the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body, the chair of the trust board, the CEO of the trust and members of the school's senior leadership team. The lead inspector also spoke to one of the providers of alternative provision.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors took account of the free-text comments and the responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys. Inspectors also met with a small group of staff.
- The lead inspector reviewed the school website, other school documents and read a range of publicly available information about the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and interactions during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes and spoke to many pupils during the inspection. The lead inspector visited the school refocus room.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Richard Gill, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Ezran Little	Ofsted Inspector
Cat Woodsmith	Ofsted Inspector

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