

Inspection of a good school: Dormers Wells High School

Dormers Wells Lane, Southall, Middlesex UB1 3HZ

Inspection dates: 30 November and 1 December 2021

Outcome

Dormers Wells High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Dormers Wells High School is a nurturing environment. Pupils are happy and feel safe. Leaders have high expectations for the outcomes of all pupils. They have placed the EBacc subjects at the heart of the curriculum. The school rejoices in its diversity. Teachers design lessons which reflect the range of cultures within the school community.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects. What pupils learn often goes beyond the national curriculum. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and opportunities. A focus on literacy across the school supports pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school has specialist provision for pupils with a hearing impairment. In a few subject areas, teaching does not build knowledge cumulatively.

The school sets high standards for pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well in all areas of the school. They are polite and courteous. Lessons have a purposeful atmosphere. Pupils want to learn. They listen to staff and say that their teachers help them to do well.

Pupils say that the school is a respectful place where bullying is not tolerated. Students in the sixth form are role models for younger pupils.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils in the school. The sixth form has grown in recent years and staff are proud of the destinations of their pupils. Leaders have designed the curriculum to be relevant to pupils. For example, there is a focus on diversity in the history curriculum. History teachers want pupils to 'see themselves' in the curriculum. As a result, pupils value their learning.

Subject leaders have considered the order that pupils learn topics. This means that pupils build their knowledge over time. For example, leaders in science have sequenced the learning of scientific practical skills. Pupils develop their understanding of scientific enquiry with increasing complexity. However, in a few subjects, leaders have not considered fully

what pupils have previously learned when planning learning in key stage 3. As a result, some lessons do not sufficiently build on the prior learning of pupils.

Teachers are experts in their subjects. They consider the ways they can extend the learning beyond the curriculum. For example, pupils in computer science learn about the technology used in fighter planes. They debate whether this is a good use of public money. Teachers plan sixth-form lessons which develop students' independent study and research skills.

Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to revisit their learning from previous lessons. They use assessment to identify misconceptions and address these in lessons. Following extended writing tasks, teachers dedicate lesson time to allow pupils to make corrections to their work. Pupils say this helps them to improve their understanding of more complex concepts.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the same curriculum as their classmates. Leaders consider the needs of pupils with SEND when designing the curriculum. Teachers plan lessons to support literacy development. Pupils who speak English as an additional language learn alongside their peers. Teachers in mathematics are keen to support the literacy of pupils. They help pupils to decode worded examination questions at GCSE. Pupils in Year 7 who struggle with literacy learn humanities within a bespoke literacy programme.

Pupils behave well in lessons. They have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils find their lessons interesting and they like it when work is challenging. Staff say that pupils are well mannered and considerate of the views of others. They engage in lively discussions in class. At times, pupils struggle to retrieve information with fluency and accuracy.

Pupils learn about future careers in citizenship and personal, social and health education lessons and their subject lessons. Teachers take every opportunity to highlight the career pathways available to pupils. For example, Spanish teachers link the learning of languages to working as a doctor in South America. Leaders prepare pupils for their next steps in education. Pupils experience a wide range of career-related trips and learn from guest speakers. The enrichment week at the end of the summer term provides a variety of opportunities outside of the taught curriculum. Leaders have worked hard to continue this provision throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leaders support the well-being of staff. Staff are positive about the efforts made by leaders to reduce their workload. They make use of the school's well-being package. Staff in all areas of the school feel valued by leaders as well as by pupils and parents. The school's governors and trustees maintain strong communication with the school. They challenge leaders to review and develop their ways of working.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has clear policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe. Staff receive training on a range of safeguarding topics. The school carries out thorough checks when recruiting new staff. The safeguarding and pastoral teams work together to identify pupils in need of early help. The safeguarding link governor supports the school to review safeguarding practices.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and know how to stay safe online. They receive age-appropriate lessons on issues around healthy relationships and consent. Pupils say they feel confident that adults in the school will help them when they ask.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the content taught at key stage 3 is not sufficiently ambitious. Sequential lessons do not build cumulative knowledge over time. Leaders should ensure that the key stage 3 curriculum is consistently ambitious across all subject areas.
- Teachers do not always ensure that pupils embed key knowledge securely. This means that pupils do not always use subject vocabulary with fluency and accuracy when discussing their learning. Leaders should ensure that pupils can use and recall key subject knowledge with fluency.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school the predecessor school, Dormers Wells High School, to be good in May 2012.

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	145348
Local authority	Ealing
Inspection number	10206484
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1465
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	273
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Callum Anderson
Chair of local governing body	Tan Afzal
Headteacher	Róisín Walsh
Website	dwhs.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Dormers Wells High School converted to an academy school in January 2018. When its predecessor school, Dormers Wells High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with a hearing impairment. There are currently five pupils in this provision.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This is the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, two deputy headteachers and other senior leaders. Inspectors met with two members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors, and the chair of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, history, science, modern foreign languages and computer science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and met with subject teachers.
- Inspectors met with a range of leaders in the school, including those with responsibilities for safeguarding and SEND provision, and the school's careers leader.
- Inspectors considered the effectiveness of safeguarding through discussions with leaders, governors, staff members and pupils. They looked at school records related to safeguarding and recruitment of staff, including pre-employment checks.
- Inspectors considered the behaviour of pupils during lesson visits and when moving around the school. Inspectors met with groups of pupils and spoke to pupils in lessons and during social time to consider their views on the school.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including support staff, about workload and the behaviour of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Parent View, and free-text responses from 30 parents and carers. They also took account of the responses from 72 staff and 266 pupils to the Ofsted survey.

Inspection team

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