

# Inspection of Longdon Hall School

Longdon Hall School, Longdon Green, Nr Lichfield, Staffordshire WS15 4PT

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Inspection dates: 8 to 10 November 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

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**Good**

The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Sixth-form provision

**Insufficient evidence**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Most pupils' educational journey prior to joining Longdon Hall School has been a bumpy and turbulent one. Each pupil joins with unique social and emotional needs, and many have not attended school regularly. Staff know this. They treat each pupil with care and respect, greeting them with a smile each morning. Most pupils attend happily and told inspectors that they feel safe in school. While bullying does sometimes happen, pupils are confident that staff will address issues.

Many pupils have struggled as school life has changed since the pandemic began. Changes in leadership and staffing have exaggerated this. New leaders have recognised this. They have introduced a new behaviour policy in response that sets out their expectations for pupils and staff. Staff apply this consistently. The policy reflects leaders' high expectations. It helps pupils to improve their behaviour but there is still work to do, especially with some older pupils.

Pupils enjoy a range of enrichment opportunities, from football coaching to Thai boxing to fishing. There are also well-equipped spaces in school, from music rooms to food technology rooms. Many pupils take advantage of these opportunities. However, the range and scope of this offer does not currently interest and inspire all pupils.

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

Leaders understand what is working well and what needs to improve. Much has changed in a short time to address areas of weakness, with new leaders joining the school. Leaders know the importance of further recruiting the right staff to the school so that changes are sustainable. In the short term, this has presented leaders with a challenge. Addressing immediate concerns means that some school leaders have been unable to focus on the bigger picture. However, senior leaders have taken steps to increase capacity and these steps are working.

All pupils at the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan to address their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The special educational needs coordinator ensures that staff know and understand pupils' specific needs. Staff contribute towards pupils' individual learning plans. These plans help staff to use the correct strategies to support pupils and identify any additional, emerging needs. Staff told inspectors that this is a useful and practical improvement. Professionals' therapeutic work with pupils complements this.

Pupils study a broad academic curriculum. This is commensurate with the breadth of the national curriculum. At key stage 4, pupils can choose from a range of academic and vocational qualifications. This includes attending courses in construction and animal care at local colleges. Leaders have supplemented the curriculum with a range of enrichment activities. Leaders know that the diversity of this enrichment offer could be greater. It does not currently appeal to all pupils, including the girls that attend the school.

Pupils' behaviour has affected teachers' ability to deliver the curriculum. However, as new policies and practices have become embedded, this effect has significantly reduced. One member of staff summed this up, commenting that 'we are at the end of a period of disruption. Stability is allowing us to improve behaviour and teaching and learning'.

Leaders recognise that many pupils join the school with significant gaps in their learning. They assess pupils carefully to identify gaps so that teachers can adapt the curriculum appropriately. Leaders have constructed carefully ordered subject curriculums. Subject specialists mostly deliver these in the secondary phase. Leaders have recognised weakness in the curriculum and have made significant changes. For instance, exposing pupils to whole texts in English, rather than relying overly on extracts. Leaders have defined the curriculum content in detail. However, staff have not had the time to refine this in all subjects, so that it is being delivered consistently well in every classroom.

There is a school-wide approach to reading. Appropriately trained staff support pupils in key stage 2 who need help with their phonics. Pupils learn a structured phonics programme. They practise with books that are matched to the sounds they know. Leaders have also introduced a new phonics programme for older pupils who have gaps in their phonics knowledge. Staff expect pupils to read every day and staff also read to younger pupils. Leaders have dedicated time in the school day so that this can take place. This helps build pupils' confidence in their reading.

Pupils enjoy their personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. These include careers education and impartial careers advice. Furthermore, they cover the statutory requirement for relationships and sex education. Inspectors saw pupils learning about acid attacks and body shaming. However, some pupils find it difficult to regulate their language. There are instances where pupils use inappropriate sexualised or discriminatory language. However, staff report this promptly and they follow this up with pupils. Leaders comply with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and there is an appropriate accessibility plan in place.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They want the best for all pupils. Most staff are positive about leaders' work to support their well-being. They are willing to step in to help each other, even when they are busy. However, for some, this has meant that they are not able to fully focus on their specific areas of responsibility. The proprietor body recognises this. It has utilised additional leadership and teaching expertise to support improvement.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding policy adheres to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State. It is available on the school's website.

Staff are alert to the safeguarding risks that pupils face. They know the importance of reporting any concern no matter how small. Staff know how to use the systems to raise a concern.

Safeguarding is well led. Leaders act promptly if staff raise a concern. They are tenacious in following these up. Leaders act swiftly and work closely with other agencies to secure the right help for pupils and families. They are not afraid to challenge if they feel that pupils are not getting the support they need.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Leaders have carried out a significant amount of work in a short space of time to improve the curriculum in all subjects. In some subjects, the implementation of the improved curriculum is at an early stage. This has meant that there is variability in how well staff deliver the curriculum as they get to grips with exactly what pupils should be learning and when they should be learning it. Leaders should ensure that all teachers know precisely what each pupil should be learning and how this draws on what they already know. They should ensure that subject leaders have the time to lead this improvement.
- Leaders are in the process of implementing a new behaviour policy aimed at improving the culture and ethos of the school in the wake of the pandemic and some significant staffing changes. Some pupils in the secondary phase of the school are finding it difficult to adapt to what is expected of them. Leaders should continue to work alongside staff and pupils to embed a culture in the school based on high expectations, high-quality pupil support, shared values and mutual respect.
- Leaders have not ensured that the range of activities available taps into a broad enough spectrum of interests to develop all pupils. As a result, activities do not always make a sufficiently strong contribution in fostering pupils' interests, broadening their horizons, firing their imaginations and preparing them for life beyond school. Leaders should ensure that all pupils develop their creative, aesthetic, social and technological talents and interests within school and as local, national and global citizens.

## **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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137098
<b>DfE registration number</b>	860/6037
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10220408
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	71
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	2
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	1
<b>Proprietor</b>	Acorn Care and Education
<b>Headteacher</b>	James Wookey
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£53,302 to £82,961
<b>Telephone number</b>	01543 491051
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.longdonhallschool.co.uk">www.longdonhallschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@longdonhallschool.co.uk">office@longdonhallschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 to 15 March 2018

## Information about this school

- Longdon Hall School provides education for up to 76 boys and girls aged seven to 18 years, all of whom have an EHC plan. Some pupils also have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder with associated learning difficulties. The school offers provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Many pupils have missed a substantial amount of schooling.
- The school was registered in July 2011 and opened in September 2011, and its last full standard inspection was in March 2018.
- At the time of the inspection there were only two pupils attending the sixth-form provision.
- Places are commissioned by eleven local authorities.
- The school makes use of local colleges to teach two different vocational qualifications.
- The school does not make use of alternative providers.
- The school does not have a religious ethos.

## Information about this inspection

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

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- 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 met with the headteacher, as well as other leaders in the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, PSHE, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at the geography and science curriculum and reviewed pupils' work in these subjects.
- Inspectors considered safeguarding by meeting the designated safeguarding leader. They scrutinised policies and records relating to child protection and examined the safeguarding checks made on staff before they join the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised policies and documents relating to the independent school standards. The lead inspector had a tour of the premises.

- Inspectors considered the responses from staff to their online inspection questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime. They observed the school at these times.
- Inspectors considered the responses, including written responses, to Ofsted Parent View.

### **Inspection team**

Ian Tustian, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Susan Morris-King

His Majesty's Inspector

Susan Hickerton

Ofsted Inspector

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