

# Inspection of Sandwell Valley School

150 Birmingham Road, West Bromwich, West Midlands B70 6QT

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Inspection dates: 14 to 16 June 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Sixth-form provision

**Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

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

This unique school places pupils at the heart of everything. Pupils from local areas and all over the world enjoy coming to school. They learn alongside one another and develop strong friendships. Pupils say they feel safe in a place they call 'family'.

Often, pupils have experienced significant difficulties in the past. They feel welcomed and cared for by staff who know them well and understand their needs. Relationships between pupils and staff are highly positive and supportive. This means pupils settle quickly and are ready to learn.

The ambitious curriculum is well planned. Pupils engage exceptionally well in broad learning opportunities that meet their individual needs. They leave with a range of meaningful qualifications. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in learning, employment or training.

Diversity is embraced and celebrated. Pupils immerse themselves in opportunities to learn about different cultures. Educational trips and visits bring learning to life. Pupils understand one another and respect individual beliefs and traditions.

Pupils benefit from the calm environment. Leaders and staff have high expectations for behaviour. Pupils know this and they work together to make sure that the school is a happy place. Therefore, behaviour and pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary.

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

Leaders' vision for all pupils is highly ambitious. The belief in and aspirations for pupils are far-reaching, stretching beyond academic achievements. Leaders want pupils to experience the best of education and be well prepared for future life chances. This vision starts with the proprietors and the board of governors and permeates throughout the whole school community. For some pupils, this is a final chance to experience success. Pupils know that staff believe in them. This means a great deal to pupils, many of whom have not experienced this level of support previously.

The pupils' needs are varied and unique. This is because the school supports a highly diverse community. Pupils arrive from all over the world and are taught alongside pupils who have been referred from local schools, some with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum for all pupils is well thought out. Leaders make deliberate choices based on what pupils need to learn. Leaders place great emphasis on making sure pupils achieve meaningful qualifications in English, mathematics and science. Pupils also study modern foreign languages, as well as humanities, art and physical education.

Learning is designed carefully to meet pupils' diverse needs. Teachers carefully consider what pupils need to learn and when they need to learn it. New learning

builds on existing knowledge. This helps pupils learn and remember more. Arrangements for pupils with SEND are well thought out. Adaptations to the curriculum are highly effective for them. The same applies to pupils who speak English as an additional language. Learning is carefully tailored to meet the needs of all pupils. This specialist support means that pupils access a rich, broad curriculum for as long as possible.

Behaviour is exemplary. This is because staff understand pupils and know how to support them. Staff apply the behaviour policy fairly and consistently and pupils understand it. Pupils display positive attitudes towards their learning. They arrive on time, ready to start the school day. Staff teach pupils how to make friends and they help and support one another. Pupils say that bullying is rare and they have confidence that teachers will resolve any problems. Staff also recognise that pupils are all different and so need different strategies to support their behavioural needs.

The school is a diverse community where everyone respects, values and celebrates the things that make them unique. Pupils love to learn about the differences in their cultures. They speak enthusiastically about cultural days and how much they have learned as a result. They appreciate and value the planned trips which enhance their learning experiences. These visits underpin the curriculum aims and help to bring learning to life.

Life skills are an important part of the curriculum. Well-planned sessions help pupils to prepare for their futures. They learn how to budget and plan meals with a focus on healthy eating. Through the relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum pupils learn about healthy relationships. Parents have been consulted on the RSE content and policy.

The school council take its responsibilities seriously. Leaders take note of what pupils say and their suggestions are acted upon. They plan whole school celebration events and contribute to extra-curricular activities. Pupils are widely involved in the ongoing development of the school community.

The proprietor body makes sure that all its statutory responsibilities are met. It is supported by a knowledgeable chair and board of governors who oversee all aspects of the school's work. They make regular checks and ensure that all of the independent school standards are consistently met. All pupils have fair and equal access to learning. As a result, the school complies with the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school places safeguarding at the heart of its practice. The policy is written with due regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The designated safeguarding leads understand their role fully and take their responsibilities seriously.

All staff are appropriately trained and know what to do if they feel a pupil may be at

risk of harm, neglect or abuse.

Systems for reporting and managing concerns are robust. Records are detailed and well maintained.

Pupils learn how to keep safe. They know about online and community risks and how to access support if needed.

## **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 provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 143038   |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>                    | 333/6011   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Sandwell   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10204234   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | Other independent school   |
| <b>School category</b>                            | Independent school   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                        | 11 to 19   |
| <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>        | 117  |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 15   |
| <b>Number of part-time pupils</b>                 | 2  |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                                 | Sandwell Valley School   |
| <b>Chair</b>                                      | Geoff Walker   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                | Mim Hall   |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>                   | £60 to £92 per day   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                           | 0121 679 7522  |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.sandwellvalleyschool.com">www.sandwellvalleyschool.com</a> |
| <b>Email address</b>                              | <a href="mailto:mhall@svs.sandwell.sch.uk">mhall@svs.sandwell.sch.uk</a>       |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                | 10 to 12 October 2017  |

## Information about this school

- Sandwell Valley School is an independent day school. It admits international pupils from a range of countries. The school also offers places to pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and/or SEND.
- The school was inspected in October 2017 when overall effectiveness was judged as good. A subsequent material change inspection took place in January 2019 to allow the school to admit additional pupils.
- Places are commissioned by local authorities, including Sandwell, Birmingham, Walsall and Dudley.
- The school makes use of one alternative provision. This provision is not inspected by Ofsted.

## 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 the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the proprietor and a member of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including reading, mathematics, science and citizenship. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads and reviewed the school's processes for reporting concerns. Inspectors also spoke with pupils about their experiences at school. A number of documents were also reviewed, including the school's single central record of checks made on staff prior to appointment.
- Inspectors scrutinised policies relating to the independent school standards. These included safeguarding, health and safety, first aid, behaviour, admissions, complaints and the curriculum. The lead inspector toured the premises to check for compliance with regulations.

- A number of responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents, staff and pupils were also taken into account.

### **Inspection team**

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector      Ofsted Inspector

Gwen Onyon      Ofsted Inspector

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