

Inspection of Sandwell Valley School

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

Inspection dates: 17 to 19 June 2025

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Sandwell Valley School gives pupils another chance to engage in education after having negative experiences in the past. Many pupils have missed a significant amount of time from school. Staff make it a priority to get to know the pupils and form positive relationships with them. Pupils know that staff will always listen to what they have to say. This helps them to settle and feel safe in school. Staff find out what interests and motivates pupils. They use this information to re-engage pupils in learning.

Staff have a good understanding of all pupils' personal needs. For many pupils, the personal support staff provide enables them to make noticeable improvements in their learning and behaviour. However, some staff do not have an accurate understanding of the gaps some pupils have in their learning. This means that, at times, these pupils do not follow a suitable curriculum or build their knowledge as well as they could.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of everything the school does. Staff promote values such as respect and tolerance. Pupils display these values in their interactions with staff and each other. Where pupils struggle with this, staff offer effective support so behaviour improves over time.

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

Leaders, including the proprietor, are passionate about making a difference to the life chances of every pupil who attends the school. There is a team of highly skilled staff to support pupils' personal development and emotional well-being. They play a significant role in helping pupils to re-engage with their learning and manage their emotions. For many pupils, this support has transformed their experience of education and prepared them successfully for their next stage. For instance, several pupils attend for short periods of time to work on their engagement and behaviour. The work the school does helps them to return successfully to their main school. However, since the last inspection, there has been an increase in the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This includes a large increase in the number of pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Some of these pupils do not have their needs met as well as they could.

Once pupils have started, the school conducts a range of checks on pupils' learning. This is to decide which curriculum pathway they should follow. However, this information is not routinely used as well as it could be to plan an appropriate curriculum. Some staff do not have an accurate understanding of what pupils can do or where there are gaps in their knowledge. This means that in some lessons, the pupils find the work too easy or too hard.

The school understands the importance of reading, and many pupils read a range of texts to develop their vocabulary. For pupils in key stage 4, there is a well-sequenced curriculum to develop their understanding of texts. There is also an

appropriate balance between reading and writing. However, for the small number of pupils at the early stages of learning to read, there is not a suitable phonics programme in place. Staff do not have the necessary expertise to teach these pupils how to read. As a result, these pupils are not making the progress they are capable of. For pupils in key stage 3, the curriculum places emphasis on different aspects of grammar and punctuation. For some pupils, this hinders their progress as they have not secured the basics of writing.

There is a well-sequenced curriculum in other subjects, such as mathematics and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. These are designed to build on pupils' prior knowledge lesson by lesson. However, there are inconsistencies in how well these areas of the curriculum are delivered. Some staff do not adapt the curriculum or their teaching well enough to meet the needs of pupils.

The school's work to develop pupils' character is central to the wider curriculum. Individual mentors work with pupils to develop their resilience and build their self-esteem. They help pupils to reflect on their behaviour and the school's values. This supports pupils to have respect for people with different views and characteristics to themselves. Projects such as the 'befriending project' have helped to develop pupils' communication and empathy skills. Attending the local care home for older people has also provided insight into the care profession and provided employment opportunities.

The school places a high priority on raising pupils' aspirations and preparing them for life beyond school. It provides pupils with opportunities to widen their understanding of a range of possible careers. For example, pupils interested in animal care can spend time at a local farm. Others interested in mechanics have experience working at a garage. Pupils in Year 11 benefit from independent careers advice. They attend a range of events to inform them of their possible next steps. This helped all pupils last year to secure a place in further education, training or employment.

Although attendance is low overall, many pupils who attend have previously had significant time away from school. Staff work closely with pupils and their parents and carers to support increased attendance. For many pupils, this results in significant improvements.

The proprietor understands its responsibilities. It uses external consultants to support the checks it makes on the quality of the school's work. This helped identify some of the weaknesses in the school's work before this inspection. Leaders have started to implement strategies to address some of the weaknesses, but these are at an early stage. While the school meets the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010, the proprietor has not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the support of leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum for some pupils, including those at an early stage of learning to read and write, is not matched well enough to their needs. As a result, these pupils do not build the knowledge they need. The school should ensure the curriculum is appropriately matched to all pupils' needs, enabling them to make the progress they are capable of.
- Assessment is not used as well as it could be to inform teaching. As a result, the work some pupils complete in lessons does not build on their prior learning effectively. This holds pupils back. The school should ensure that staff use the information from assessments to plan appropriate activities that build on all pupils' prior learning.
- Staff do not all have a sufficient understanding of the range of SEND needs in the school. As a result, the strategies used to support some pupils are not as effective as they could be. The school should ensure that staff have the expertise to meet the needs of all pupils effectively.

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

Unique reference number	143038
DfE registration number	333/6011
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10374910
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Sandwell Valley School
Chair	Geoffrey Walker
Principal	Maminda Hall
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15, 600 to £48,750
Telephone number	01216797522
Website	www.sandwellvalleyschool.com
Email address	mhall@svs.sandwell.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 to 16 June 2022

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, there has been a significant change in the range of needs the school caters for. The school no longer admits international pupils. It offers places to pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. It also offers places to pupils who have SEND and pupils with an EHC plan.
- The school was inspected in June 2022 when the overall effectiveness was judged as outstanding.
- The school makes use of two unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school is located at 150 Birmingham Road, West Bromwich, B70 6QT.
- The school is registered to admit 175 pupils.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body and a governor.
- Inspectors also met with the principal and several other leaders and staff members.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, mathematics and PSHE education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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.
- The lead inspector toured the premises to check for compliance with the independent school standards. A number of key documents were also reviewed, including policies relating to admissions, behaviour, curriculum, complaints, health and safety and safeguarding.

- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.

Inspection team

Helen Forrest, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Wayne Simner

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

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