

Inspection of a good school: Longdean School

Rumballs Rd, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP3 8JB

Inspection dates:

26–27 November 2019

Outcome

Longdean School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a large, friendly school. Pupils, parents and staff say that they enjoy being part of its community. Behaviour is good in lessons and at breaktimes. Pupils are kind to each other and to visitors to the school. Staff ensure that the school welcomes everybody. They want all pupils to do their best.

Pupils are confident that staff take good care of them. They feel safe. Bullying is rare. Pupils said that staff are quick to deal with bullying, should it occur.

Pupils enjoy their lessons because teachers plan interesting activities for them. Pupils and parents like that pupils can study lots of extra subjects at GCSE, such as fashion, photography and engineering. Leaders ensure that pupils who need extra help are well supported. For example, there is a group in Year 7 to support pupils with extra reading and writing.

Many subjects have trips and extra activities. For example, pupils can go to Europe and Japan. These trips help pupils to do well in their GCSEs. Pupils are proud of their school and say that they would recommend it to younger pupils.

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

Leaders design ambitious pathways for pupils to study. For example, there is extra provision for pupils in Year 7 who are interested in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM). Teachers plan a good sequence of learning for the whole of key stages 3 and 4. Teachers ensure that pupils revisit the knowledge that is most useful. This helps pupils remember what they have learned. For example, in art pupils said that learning about the life of an artist helped them to understand his work. They linked this learning to their current topic of painting in the style of that artist.

Teachers use information from pupil assessment effectively. Teachers adapt the next set of lessons to ensure that pupils can revisit work they find difficult. Pupils are able to tackle

challenging work. Pupils are effectively taught specific skills they need for each subject. For example, English and history teach pupils how to review literature using the same method. Pupils find this useful. They understand how their learning can link between subjects.

Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds do less well than other pupils. Leaders had underestimated some of the social needs of this group of pupils. Leaders have now appointed staff champions to oversee the progress of these pupils, and this is making a difference. For example, pupils who attended reading programmes and support workshops say that they now feel confident in their academic lessons. Leaders have recently introduced a programme of social activities to ensure that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds have a wider experience of world cultures and are more able to debate social and political issues in their lessons. However, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds do not attend school as regularly as other pupils.

Staff are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most pupils are well supported. Staff are trained to plan work for pupils with SEND within their everyday lessons. Most teachers use the information about pupils with SEND to plan activities that help pupils do well.

Students in the sixth form achieve well. They enjoy their studies and are well supported. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Staff provide students with helpful information and guidance about next steps after the sixth form. The relationships between staff and students are very positive. Students contribute to their school by mentoring the younger pupils and spending two hours a fortnight on community service.

Leaders support the personal development of pupils well. Staff make sure that pupils have someone to talk to if they have concerns. Staff provide useful advice and support to pupils on issues that affect pupils' personal lives. There are lots of opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and countries. Pupils benefit from a range of experiences which help them prepare for the world of work. For example, all pupils in Year 10 attend work experience for a week and employers come into school to work with pupils during the year. Many pupils complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Pupils and parents respect school leaders. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils and expect them to do their best. Governors share this expectation and support school leaders effectively. Staff are proud of their school. They say that leaders are caring and supportive and show genuine concern for staff workload and well-being. Staff and parents appreciate the way leaders talk with them about major changes planned for the coming years.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders maintain accurate records for all staff and complete the required employment checks. Staff are well trained to report safeguarding concerns. Staff responsible for safeguarding have relevant training and experience. They respond to all concerns

appropriately. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to provide the support families need.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from harm, including online. Pupils say they feel safe at school and are confident to speak to staff when they are worried.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Disadvantaged pupils achieve less well than other pupils in key stage 4. This means that they have fewer opportunities open to them compared with other pupils when leaving school. Leaders need to identify accurately and address the needs of these pupils.
- Attendance at school for disadvantaged pupils is lower than the average attendance for pupils nationally. This means that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds do not receive enough teaching. Leaders need to ensure that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils improves.

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 school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, 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 convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Longdean School to be good on 2–3 December 2015.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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 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	137110
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10088723
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
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	1,273
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	158
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Karen Falconer
Headteacher	Graham Cunningham
Website	www.longdean.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 December 2015

Information about this school

- Longdean is a larger than average school which converted to academy status in 2011.
- The academy manages a provision for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties on behalf of the local authority.
- The academy makes use of Oaklands College and Dacorum Education Support Centre to provide education for some of its pupils.

Information about this inspection

- We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team during the course of the inspection.

- We did deep dives in the following subjects: mathematics, English, science, history and geography. For these subjects, inspectors visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, talked with subject leaders and met with teaching staff and pupils.
- We checked the school's single central record of recruitment and considered the school's safeguarding policy and practices. A sample of the school's safeguarding files were checked to look at how the school identifies, manages and helps vulnerable pupils. Inspectors spoke with leaders, staff, pupils and the chair of governors about safeguarding. We telephoned the two agencies the school uses to provide alternative education for pupils.
- The responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires were considered. This included the pupil survey (54 responses), the staff survey (78 responses) and the text responses to Parent View (68 responses).

Inspection team

Diana Osagie, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Cathy Tooze	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Pardy	Ofsted Inspector

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