

Hunters Hill Technology College

Spirehouse Lane, Blackwell, Bromsgrove B60 1QD

Inspection dates

11–12 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This a school that requires improvement

- Some leaders' aspirations for what pupils can achieve academically at Hunters Hill are too low.
- Pupils, particularly the most able, do not have the opportunity to take qualifications at a high enough level, or in enough subjects. This limits their choices post-school.
- Systems to follow up pupils' absence are not always timely or effective. Good attendance is not promoted strongly enough. Poor attendance limits what some pupils achieve during their time at the school.
- Leaders do not analyse information about behaviour, attendance or safeguarding often enough or well enough to show them what is happening and why.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. At times teaching meets pupils' needs very well but at other times it does not. Teachers do not always have the subject knowledge required to deepen pupils' understanding and develop their skills
- The school does not work enough with other schools to check that its assessments of pupils' learning are accurate.
- Teachers do not have sufficient opportunity to see practice in other schools in order to develop their own work.
- The relatively new governing body is developing its skills and knowledge well, but does not always receive the information it needs from leaders to be able to challenge and support the school robustly.

The school has the following strengths

- There is a pleasant, positive atmosphere in the school. Leaders and staff are warm and encouraging towards pupils. They are very successful in helping pupils to improve their behaviour, attitudes and confidence continuously during their time at the school.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils wear their uniforms with pride. They are polite, cooperative, and often enthusiastic. Some pupils' attendance is high.
- The headteacher has made positive changes to the school since he has been in post. Behaviour has improved and the curriculum is improving. He has developed links with other schools. He is ambitious for the school's future.
- There is some good teaching across the school. Many teaching assistants provide skilled support which really helps pupils to learn. Many pupils make good progress in different subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the monitoring and promotion of attendance, communication about attendance and pupils' actual attendance by:
 - ensuring that a staff member is outside each day as the taxis and minibuses arrive, to ensure pupils' safe entry to school and to take messages from drivers about any non-attendance
 - contacting parents and carers quickly once it is known that a pupil has not arrived at school to let them know and to establish the reasons for absence
 - pursuing non-attendance more persistently and working closely with families and other agencies where necessary to enable pupils to attend well
 - developing a more high-profile and consistent approach to promoting high attendance for all pupils, including those whose attendance is already reasonable
 - ensuring that absence is always coded accurately in the register
 - ensuring that all pupils receive their entitlement to a full-time education
 - analysing attendance patterns and trends so that actions can be carefully focused to ensure the maximum impact.

- Improve teaching and learning and pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that pupils, particularly the most able, have the opportunity to take an appropriate range of qualifications that are suitable for their levels of attainment and give them a good range of choices for the next stage of their life
 - moderating pupils' assessed work with other schools to ensure that assessment is accurate
 - giving all teachers the opportunity to build professional relationships with teachers in other schools to see a variety of practice
 - ensure that where teachers are teaching outside their subject specialism, they receive the necessary level of training and support to be able to teach the subject with the required depth and with logical progression.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that records about child protection, attendance and behaviour are kept in a way that allows senior leaders to know whether necessary actions have been taken and to challenge and support each other and staff accordingly
 - improving the way in which information about child protection, physical intervention, behaviour, teaching and assessment is analysed to show patterns and trends, and used to plan actions
 - ensuring that governors receive well-analysed information that allows them to know how well the school is performing and to provide a suitable level of challenge and support.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Some senior leaders' aspirations for what pupils can achieve by the end of their time at the school are too low. Despite strong evidence from pupils' work and the school's own assessments that pupils could take GCSE examinations, they have not been given the opportunity to do so. The most-able pupils rarely take qualifications at level 2. The range of subjects in which accreditation is available is narrow. This therefore limits the opportunities pupils have once they leave school at 16.
- The school does not contact parents or carers quickly enough in the mornings if a pupil has not arrived at school.
- Some pupils have long-standing patterns of low attendance. The school's work to improve this is not strong enough. While there is contact with families, this is not creative or persistent enough to have a good impact. There is not enough emphasis on rewarding and encouraging good attendance. Some individual staff do this very well, with good impact, but it is not consistent.
- Leaders record information about behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and physical intervention. However, this information is not systematically brought together or analysed in a way that enables leaders to check whether actions have been taken, to challenge or support each other, or to see any patterns or trends.
- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school. He is ambitious for the pupils and recognises their potential to achieve much more than they are currently doing. Since taking up his post, he has challenged aspects of the school's practice and put new initiatives in place.
- The headteacher has sought external challenge and support for the school. He has commissioned a review of the school's work to take place later this term. He has made links with other local mainstream and special schools so that staff can start to form professional links with colleagues.
- The school's evidence, using a range of measures, suggests that behaviour has improved over the last 18 months. Incidents of serious misbehaviour have fallen, as has the use of physical intervention and fixed-term exclusion. A large group of staff have received training in how to use restorative approaches to helping pupils to resolve issues with relationships and with their behaviour. Several staff gave powerful examples of how using this approach with pupils has helped to create an atmosphere of calm, which was evident during the inspection.
- Appropriate steps are being taken to improve the curriculum, including the qualifications that pupils are able to take. The headteacher has sought new courses at the right level for pupils. He is rightly determined that the curriculum will be more aspirational from September onwards.
- The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Leaders have established clear routines for pupils to follow and this helps them to feel secure and safe.
- Since the headteacher joined the school, subject leaders have taken on increasing levels of responsibility. They have worked hard to extend their skills, especially when they are leading subjects for which they are not specialists. They are enthusiastic and are determined to improve the school further.
- The safety and progress of pupils who attend off-site alternative provision are carefully monitored and the school intervenes quickly if any problems occur. Occasionally placements that are classified as full time do not provide enough hours to constitute full-time education. The school has a small number of pupils currently on a part-time timetable.
- Pupils have a wide range of exciting enrichment opportunities which are both enjoyable and help to prepare them for life after school. There is a strong emphasis on ambitious physical endeavour, including, for some, participating in the Three Peaks Challenge, taking boxing lessons and cycling from coast to coast. Musical opportunities include popular drumming lessons and drum band performances. A range of fund-raising events for local and international causes develop pupils' understanding of different groups and different needs, both in British society and worldwide.
- Pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding have been used well to boost pupils' progress.
- Pupils who stay in the residential part of the school for some of the week, and those who take part in the extended day, benefit greatly from this experience and enjoy their activities.
- **The governance of the school**
 - As the governing body has become more experienced, it has become more challenging. Governors have recently questioned some leaders' assumptions about what pupils can or cannot achieve and are supportive of the new curriculum that the headteacher is introducing.

- The chair of the governing body has worked carefully to put together a group of governors whose skills and knowledge complement each other. Newer members have valuable specialisms in safeguarding and finance.
- Governors are aware of the need to challenge aspects of the school’s work further, particularly with regard to outcomes, safeguarding and attendance. However, because some leaders do not routinely analyse the areas for which they are responsible, governors do not always get useful information to help them to ask good questions.
- Governors are carefully managing the school budget to avoid a potential deficit. They consider carefully how to spend the pupil premium funding to best benefit the pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The new leaders of this aspect have attended up-to-date training and have provided appropriate training for staff. Staff at all levels demonstrated a good understanding of child protection during their discussions with inspectors. They know what to do if they are concerned and fully understand the need to be vigilant. Records of staff training are not clear enough for leaders to be able to check whether there is anyone who has missed training and needs to catch up.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teachers teach a range of subjects across the curriculum, including English and mathematics. Most are not specialists in English or mathematics. While teachers often teach these subjects competently, and often with dedication, they do not always have the knowledge they need to deepen pupils’ understanding or move their skills on to the next level.
- There is not always a clear rationale for what pupils are studying in a subject at any one time. At times, topics do not link logically to each other. Sometimes teachers move on to the next topic before pupils have developed any depth or security of understanding in the one they are studying.
- Subject leaders have often developed their own skills over the years and work hard to support their teams. However, neither they nor other teachers have had enough opportunity to develop their practice by spending time with subject-specialist colleagues from other schools. Likewise, too little of the school’s assessment of pupils’ learning is moderated outside the school, despite teachers and subject leaders not always being specialists and the small numbers of pupils in each year group.
- There is an appropriate focus on reading, but the half-hour reading lesson at the start of the day is not consistently well used. In some lessons, staff read with each pupil at a time, checking their understanding. In others, pupils flick through books with little interest or focus. Books are not always suitable for pupils’ reading levels.
- Work in lessons is often suitably challenging. Pupils’ books show that many pupils produce a good volume of work, often of good quality. At its best, teaching stimulates pupils’ thinking and understanding and they rise to the challenges presented to them. During the inspection, for example, a class of Year 8 pupils wrote stunning, creative poems in response to studying a poem about a magic box. At times work is pitched too low for pupils’ abilities.
- Pupils usually write in pencil. This does not allow them to develop their skills of writing legibly using a pen, in preparation for examinations or for training or work after school.
- Many staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They are gently persistent when pupils do not respond. Teachers focus closely on learning in each lesson, not on behaviour, which helps to create a positive atmosphere in classrooms and to ensure that pupils concentrate well.
- Many teaching assistants are skilled at helping pupils to learn. They work closely with teachers, explaining the work to pupils in different ways, adding ideas and encouraging and coaxing. Teaching assistants know the pupils well and pupils respond to them. Occasionally teaching assistants do not involve themselves enough in supporting learning.
- Classroom environments tend to be attractive, with pupils’ work and interesting and useful resources on display.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The school does not pursue low attendance persistently enough or teach pupils enough about the importance of good attendance. Parents and carers are not contacted quickly enough if their child has not arrived in the morning.
- Staff greet pupils inside the school in the morning but are not always outside to meet the taxis and minibuses to check that pupils go straight into school. In contrast, the end of the day is very well organised and well supervised.
- There is a high level of vigilance around the large and open school site. If a pupil leaves a lesson without permission, which is not common, this is reported at once to senior staff, who quickly locate the pupil.
- The 'home' bases for pupils provide a good level of pastoral support and promote pupils' confidence and independence well. There is a high level of care for pupils in the homes. For example, pupils can choose to shower when they arrive at school if they want to. They can eat breakfast, play games and relax after their journey to school. This equips them well for the day ahead.
- The school promotes pupils' mental health well. A clinical psychologist works with pupils to support their physical and mental well-being. This is proving both popular and successful with pupils and their families.
- The new approaches to resolving issues around behaviour, anxiety and relationships are helping pupils to become more resilient and open to discussing their feelings rather than bottling them up.
- Pupils' confidence benefits enormously from the range of enrichment experiences they have at Hunters Hill, many of which take them outside their comfort zone. During the inspection, there was a buzz of excitement about the practice for the Three Peaks Challenge that was taking place. Other pupils talked about their drumming lessons, boxing, singing and athletics.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The atmosphere in the school is calm, positive and pleasant. Clear routines from the start of the day help pupils to know what to expect. They move sensibly and safely between lessons.
- Pupils arrive promptly at lessons and settle quickly to their learning. Younger pupils in particular are often enthusiastic. Pupils concentrate well, often throughout the whole lesson.
- Pupils usually make good and often excellent progress with their behaviour during their time at the school. Depending on their needs, they become calmer and develop more self-control, or more outgoing and confident in social situations.
- Pupils wear their school uniform with pride. There are clear expectations about how pupils should present themselves and the vast majority of pupils meet these expectations willingly.
- Staff encourage pupils to interact with visitors politely and with confidence. During the inspection, pupils were happy to talk to inspectors, often volunteering their thoughts and views of the school, which were all positive.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision make good progress with their behaviour, attitudes and attendance.
- Lunchtimes are well organised, pleasant and sociable. Pupils of all ages eat sensibly together in the dining room. They are respectful to the lunchtime staff. Breaktimes are well supervised and again, pupils are largely well behaved. Many pupils are happy to play football together. However, there is nowhere for quieter pupils to sit and chat. Some pupils become bored and end up play-fighting.
- Attendance is low for too many pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies. It tends to be below average, but some pupils have average or occasionally above-average attainment.

- The school sets pupils appropriate targets for key stage 3. Many pupils make good progress in English and mathematics and meet or exceed these targets. They make progress that is in line with or above national expectations. By the end of key stage 3, some pupils are attaining levels that are above national averages for this age group.
- The progress pupils are expected to make during key stage 4 is not as ambitious. Apart from English and mathematics, no subjects are offered at GCSE level. The most-able pupils in particular do not have the opportunity to demonstrate their achievements at a high enough level through the qualifications they take.
- Around a third of the Year 11 pupils in 2015 gained a level 1 (equivalent to a grade D–G at GCSE) qualification in mathematics or English or both, and around a third did so in information and communication technology. However, the school's own assessment information indicates that some were capable of more.
- The range of subjects in which pupils take examinations is limited and achievement varies from one subject to the next. For example, the school's information indicates that Year 11 pupils achieve well in the cookery course they are taking, but none is on track to pass an examination in this subject.
- For some pupils in each key stage, poor attendance hampers their achievement.
- The school has a good record of ensuring that all pupils have a destination post-16. The school has good working relationships with local colleges. The courses pupils can choose are appropriate for some, but limited for others by the restricted qualifications they gain in school.

School details

Unique reference number	103609
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection Number	10017820

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Number of boarders on roll	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Paul Clarke
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Dawson
Telephone number	0121 4451320
Website	www.huntershill.org.uk
Email address	enquiry@hunthill.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 July 2013

Information about this school

- Hunters Hill caters for secondary-aged pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Almost all the pupils are boys. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Most pupils start at the school in Year 7. A few join later on.
- The headteacher took up his post in September 2014.
- The school is located on two sites, either side of a road. The sites are large and surrounded by woodland.
- Around 60% of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Around a third of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The school has residential provision, with 37 full-time equivalent places. Up to 75 pupils stay each week for one or more nights.
- The school uses a range of alternative provision and college provision: Bournville College, South and City College, Envirohort, Southside Learning, Blue Whale Training, Nova Training, The Prince's Trust and Solihull College. Occasionally pupils also have extended work-experience placements. Most pupils who attend alternative provision do so for part of each week. A few attend full time.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out following a complaint made to Ofsted which raised concerns about aspects of safeguarding and leadership. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised.
- Inspectors evaluated a wide range of evidence about the school's safeguarding processes, including the processes for pupils arriving at school at the start of the day, the checking and appointing of staff, the way in which child protection cases are managed, training for staff about safeguarding, and the way that pupils learn to keep themselves safe. Policies and practice related to behaviour, exclusions, attendance, physical intervention, bullying and children missing from education were scrutinised.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior and middle leaders about different aspects of the school's work.
- Inspectors held discussions about safeguarding with three groups of staff, including leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and domestic staff. Informal discussions took place with pupils throughout the inspection.
- Governing body meeting minutes were scrutinised and a discussion was held with the chair of the governing body and another member of the governing body.
- Inspectors visited lessons, some with senior leaders, where they looked at pupils' work and talked to them about their learning. They looked at the school's assessment information and discussed this with senior leaders.
- An inspector visited one of the off-site providers that the school uses and held a telephone conversation with a leader of another provider.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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