

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Miss Emma Hillman
Headteacher
Heathcote School and Science College
Normanton Park
Chingford
London
E4 6ES

Dear Miss Hillman

Short inspection of Heathcote School and Science College

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2018 with Lisa Gorman and Diana Osagie, Ofsted Inspectors, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since Heathcote School and Science College was judged to be good in January 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these findings, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since your appointment in September 2017, you have accurately evaluated the school. You have been instrumental in identifying the areas for further development. You recognised that, while the outcomes in GCSE English and mathematics examinations have shown an improvement, the most able pupils did not make as much overall progress when compared to national figures. You have identified inconsistencies within both senior and middle leadership in holding others to account. You have prioritised the need to improve pupils' attendance and have begun to make progress in this area.

You are currently working on a sharper use of evidence-based analysis to drive improvement. This includes a focus on teachers' feedback to pupils, who then implement the advice. This has had a limited effect so far on pupils' literacy. You have begun to move these areas forward through your continuous focus on a 'high challenge, low threat culture'. However, you told me that improving the school is made more challenging because of the current lack of capacity of some of your leaders and because of historical issues with the curriculum.

Staff are very supportive of your new vision for the school, which is enabling them to focus their work. Governors have used their expertise to finalise the school's

budget. However, they have not displayed a similar level of rigour and challenge concerning pupils' progress.

On the day of the inspection, pupils were polite and willing to talk with inspectors. Pupils reported that they know how to keep themselves safe and that they 'feel safe and cared for'. Pupils stated that the 'Road Safety Week', requested by them, had resulted in them feeling safer on their way to and from school. They spoke positively about being part of the school community and about the support they receive from their teachers. Pupils cited the 'excellent relationships' and 'teachers pushing you to do better' as examples of their positive experiences. Sixth-form students spoke positively about their achievements, the effective careers advice they receive and the volunteering opportunities enabling them to help others. The majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said they would recommend the school to other parents.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff receive annual safeguarding training and, as a result, they are able to spot the dangers and signs of child sexual exploitation and drug misuse. Your staff effectively track and monitor the work of outside agencies who work alongside you, such as '722 drug advice' and drugs counsellors. The introduction of bi-weekly referral meetings for vulnerable pupils ensures that these pupils receive the support they need and that the impact of the support is evaluated and next steps agreed. These practices have improved attendance and reduced exclusions. However, not all of the school's tracking systems are currently linked, which reduces the impact of the team around the pupil.

Governors have a sound knowledge and understanding of their role in ensuring that pupils are kept safe. The link safeguarding governor visits the school regularly to ensure that recruitment records are up to date and to confirm that the school's policies and procedures are being followed. You ensure that the chair of governors is always fully briefed on any safeguarding issues at your weekly meetings.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on four areas. The first of these was to see how effective school leaders are in improving pupils' achievement across the curriculum. This was because, in 2017, pupils did not make the same progress as all pupils did nationally across a range of subjects.
- You quickly implemented new line-management arrangements to help middle leaders focus on monitoring and improving the work of their departments. You introduced 'raising-standards meetings' with curriculum leaders to ensure that current predictions of pupils' progress are accurate. Your middle leaders have updated their departmental feedback policies and issued 'know your class sheets' to support increased pupil achievement.
- The impact of these strategies has yet to be fully realised. Our visits to classrooms showed that further work is needed to secure consistently high

quality of teaching and learning across all subjects.

- The second area of focus for the inspection was the progress of high-prior-attaining pupils. This was because the 2017 examination results and progress scores were markedly lower than national figures for these pupils.
- You and your leaders have provided teachers with 'know your class' sheets. These are intended to support teachers' planning so that they can meet the needs of different groups of pupils. However, from our joint observations, we agreed that some classroom activities did not challenge the most able pupils to achieve their potential. While discussing the predictions for current pupils, we also agreed that expectations are sometimes not sufficiently high enough.
- You are conducting a curriculum review to ensure that pupils can study a range of subjects that support their future aspirations and increase their progress. We agreed that, although your team show a determination to improve pupils' progress, this is yet to happen.
- The third area of focus was the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This was because, in 2017, their progress results were noticeably lower than national figures.
- Inspectors noted that the progress of pupils who receive SEN support in Years 7 to 10 shows an improvement. The special educational needs coordinator is working with three departments on specific strategies to support increased rates of progress. The learning support assistants have developed their subject-specific knowledge to further improve the support they provide in their linked subject areas. We agreed that a greater focus should be placed on helping pupils who receive SEN support to make rapid progress in their academic studies.
- The fourth area of focus was pupils' attendance. For the last three years, attendance rates have been below national averages and the proportion of persistently absent pupils has been high. You have a clear understanding of the strategies required to continue to improve attendance.
- From September, you have improved the systems for monitoring, tracking and following up absence. This has improved attendance figures since the start of this academic year, although they still remain below the national averages. The proportions of persistent absentees have reduced slightly, although the figures are still high for some vulnerable groups. We agreed that, although it may take longer for this work to show its full impact, the work carried out so far is making a positive difference.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make good or better progress across a range of subjects
- high-quality teaching is secured across all subject areas
- pupils' attendance continues to improve so that it meets national expectations
- governors apply a greater degree of challenge to school leaders regarding pupils'

progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Waltham Forest. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Hayley Follett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspectors carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- meetings with you, governors, senior and middle leaders
- a telephone conversation with the director of learning from the local authority
- joint visits to classrooms with you and other senior leaders
- a scrutiny of pupils' work with you and other senior leaders
- discussions with pupils
- observations of pupils' behaviour around the school and during breaktimes and lunchtime
- analysis of 66 parental responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View
- a scrutiny of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, monitoring, evaluation and reflecting plans, safeguarding records and policies, pupil performance and attendance data, and destination data
- a review of the school's website.