

Highfield School

Gawthorpe Lane, Ossett, West Yorkshire WF5 9BS

Inspection dates

12–13 January 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

Require improvement

16 to 19 study programmes

Require improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors do not have a clear view of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, development and progress. This is because they do not analyse and use the information they have in enough depth.
- Teachers do not use information they have about what pupils know, understand and can do to plan their next steps in learning. As a result, pupils do not make fast enough progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Teaching assistants do not always have a clear role in lessons or understand exactly the right support each pupil needs to make the best progress.
- A few pupils who experience difficulties in managing their behaviour are not helped to learn how to stay calm and cooperative. This is because leaders do not ensure teachers understand why pupils behave the way they do.
- Leaders in the sixth form do not evaluate what is going well and what needs improving in enough detail. This means weaker aspects of teachers' practice are not identified and tackled quickly. As a result, learners in the sixth form do not make good progress.
- Leaders have not developed ways to ensure all pupils are respectful and tolerant of other people.

The school has the following strengths

- Many pupils make strong progress in developing independence and social skills because of the wide range of different activities in lessons, at lunchtimes and out of school.
- Parents and staff are committed to the leaders' vision for developing the school and share their aspirations for pupils to gain paid employment as adults.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of all leaders and managers by ensuring that:
 - leaders systematically analyse all information collected about pupils' progress and attainment; the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment; and all aspects of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare
 - leaders then plan to improve each area by keeping tightly focused on improving the outcomes for all pupils.
- Improve the progress pupils make in English and mathematics by improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, ensuring that:
 - teachers' planning, and learning activities, are based on accurate assessments of what pupils know, understand and can do
 - pupils and teaching assistants understand what pupils will be able to do at the end of each lesson and/or planned unit of work
 - activities in lessons are quickly adapted if they are too hard or too easy for individual pupils
 - in mathematics and other subjects, pupils have the opportunity to develop problem-solving and mathematical reasoning skills
 - in English and other subjects, pupils have a varied range of opportunities to develop their writing skills
 - teaching assistants understand their role in supporting pupils to improve their attitudes to learning and how to record assessments of pupils' responses to the activities.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by staff:
 - analysing the information about incidents when pupils lose control or act inappropriately so they understand the reasons why pupils behave in the way they do
 - using their analysis to plan programmes that will bring about positive change in individual pupils' behaviour
 - ensuring pupils' views about their behaviour, and plans to change their behaviour, are listened to, recorded and inform next steps, as appropriate
 - ensuring a wider range of activities are used to promote all pupils' tolerance, respect and understanding of people who are different to themselves.
- Improve the leadership of the 16–19 study programme by:
 - ensuring leaders systematically collect and analyse information about all aspects of the study programme and, as a result, take action to improve teaching, learning and assessment so learners make faster progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher has led many positive developments since the last inspection, most notably opening the sixth form. During this period there has been a change in pupils' main special educational need with a larger proportion experiencing severe, as opposed to moderate, learning difficulties. At the same time, senior leaders have left the school and governors have experienced difficulties in replacing key post-holders. This has led to some aspects of the school's work falling below previous standards.
- Leaders have an over-optimistic view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This means the feedback and support they give to teachers does not drive improvement in the effectiveness of teaching. Over time, this has resulted in slower than expected progress being made by some pupils.
- Leaders do not analyse and use information about pupils' behaviour and the progress they are making well enough to allow them to plan the right actions to secure improvements across the school. The new assistant headteacher is quickly picking up what needs to be done and taking appropriate action.
- Leaders' support for teachers is being developed through a refreshed approach to performance management. Currently, too much of this work is about completing tasks rather than focusing on the difference teachers are making to outcomes for pupils. Professional development and training are helping teachers improve the range of subjects on offer and how they are taught. Many developments are new and it is too early to evaluate the impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- Pupils are appropriately prepared for adult life and most are developing an understanding of British values. Not all pupils are developing a secure understanding of the rule of law and 'right from wrong', due to weaknesses in supporting improvements in their behaviour. Leaders recognise there is more to be done to ensure pupils understand about different faiths and cultures. All other aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are secure in the school.
- Leaders are developing the range of subjects and how they are taught to make sure what is on offer meets pupils' individual needs and prepares them well for adult life, including the world of work. Many of these new developments are at an early stage and teachers are keen to try new ways of working to find the best approach.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and are confident their children are safe and making progress, particularly in their independence and social skills. Parents are delighted with developments in the sixth form.
- Support provided by the local authority has not been effective in ensuring the school has sustained its position as a good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - has not been sufficiently diligent in ensuring all required information is published on the school's website. For the most part, this was addressed during the inspection, as were some other elements of statutory requirements which were not fully met.
 - has not checked if leaders are analysing information about teaching, progress and behaviour accurately enough to ensure they agree the right priorities to bring about further improvement.
 - has improved significantly since the last inspection in other areas of their work, undertaking a review of their arrangements and responding to the recommendations.
 - ensures that resources are well spent, including the pupil premium grant (additional money for disadvantaged pupils) and catch-up grant (additional money to help pupils in Year 7 make swifter progress in reading and mathematics).
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Recent developments in the roles of parent support advisers give pupils and their families additional support, and parents appreciate this. Staff are using the 'signs of safety' approach recently adopted by the local authority and lead on plans to help vulnerable families. This demonstrates leaders' commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of the pupils and working with other agencies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- Assessment of pupils' work is accurate but this key information is not used well enough to plan lessons that make sure pupils take the next step in their learning. Teachers do not check and challenge pupils' understanding enough during lessons or when marking their books. This means chances to correct misunderstandings or move more quickly on to the next step are missed. This contributes to a pace of learning that is slower than it could be.
- There is too much variation in teachers' expectations of how pupils should behave in lessons. The lack of consistency and appropriate plans to support some pupils with complex social and emotional needs means the learning of some pupils is interrupted at times. This contributes to the less than expected progress some pupils make.
- Teaching assistants' impact on pupil progress is as varied as the quality of teaching and is limited by the strength of the teachers' planning. Teaching assistants make the most effective contribution to pupils' learning when they understand what pupils are expected to learn and have a clearly defined role.
- Pupils, including the more able, have very few chances to develop problem-solving skills involving mathematics. Some pupils get all their number work right first time, which shows a lack of challenge. More effective teaching, especially for pupils with more complex learning difficulties, is characterised by learning activities which are carefully planned so they build on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. This leads to faster progress. The recent introduction of practical resources is helping pupils to understand different mathematical concepts.
- Some teachers plan for pupils to write at a challenging level in a range of subjects. However, in some subjects, pupils who can write paragraphs often record their work in one-word answers or simple sentences on worksheets. This does not give them enough opportunities to develop and extend their writing skills.
- The teaching of reading, including improvements in teaching phonics, is more positive. The use of a range of highly structured commercial schemes is helping improve progress in reading. Pupils' involvement in the new library is promoting a love of reading.
- Pupils show more enthusiasm for practical subjects and activities linked to their interests. Pupils' keenness to learn was seen in the wide range of lunchtime activities. Pupils have equally positive views about the vocational options of construction and motor vehicle maintenance at alternative providers and the hospitality and catering option provided at school.

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's records show that some pupils lack respect and tolerance for other people. Leaders deal with individual incidents but do not analyse records over time, so do not plan to address the underlying causes. Views expressed by a few pupils confirm that tolerance of those who are different in some way is not universal.
- Pupils are safe, they say they feel safe and parents agree. However, the new assistant headteacher responsible for safeguarding and related aspects of the school's work, has quickly identified the need to improve the way concerns about pupils' welfare are managed and is efficiently bringing about the necessary changes.
- Pupils learn about different aspects of keeping themselves safe and professional visitors support teaching in this area. Pupils talk enthusiastically about e-safety lessons delivered by the local police officer.
- A very small number of pupils, at risk of exclusion, attend alternative provision. Effective oversight of this provision by senior leaders supports pupils' personal development and welfare.
- Parents and the majority of staff are positive about the personal development and welfare of pupils. Parents and staff gave very clear examples of how residential visits, enjoyed by pupils, make a big difference to their independence and their ability to cope with change.
- Pupils talk confidently about how the school council makes a difference in the school. Council members are particularly proud of their involvement in the development of the recently opened library and their involvement in planning for pupils to work in the library in the near future. This demonstrates how pupils are learning about democracy, which prepares them for life as adults.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Leaders do not use the information they have about

incidents of poor behaviour, including bullying, to fully understand why some pupils respond poorly in different situations. This, in turn, means that leaders and teachers are not effectively planning how to help pupils change their behaviour.

- Pupils do not always show a keen interest in lessons. Some pupils quickly 'switch off', especially when the teacher has planned and provided activities which are either too hard or too easy. As a result, some pupils become distracted, which slows their own progress, while others disrupt the learning of others by talking or moving around the classroom.
- A small number of pupils with more complex social, emotional and mental health needs, in addition to their learning difficulties, do not always get the support they need to develop in this area. Teachers are not always clear why pupils react in the way they do, so plans to support the pupils do not fully address the cause of the problem. Individual behaviour plans are superficial and do not include the pupils' views. Importantly, pupils' views are not included in the records of incidents involving restraint, so chances to increase teachers' understanding of why pupils lose control are lost.
- Most pupils move around school calmly and show respect to each other. In the playground, most pupils play well together but some, with gaps in their social skills, do not get the skilled support they need to make and keep friends.
- Pupils' attendance at school is below the average for all secondary schools. However, leaders have increased support to pupils and their families who find good attendance difficult. This is beginning to improve their attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Leaders expect pupils to make progress from their different starting points, in English and mathematics, broadly, and appropriately, in line with the amount of progress pupils are expected to make in all schools. The school's information about pupils' progress in these key subjects, over the time they attend the school, confirms that too few pupils make better than expected progress.
- Pupils attained a range of entry level and level 1 qualifications and other appropriate accreditations at the end of Year 11 in 2015. For a few pupils, the level of qualifications represented a significant achievement but this was not the case for many. A few pupils gained a level of qualification that was lower than their teachers' assessments. This means they started their post-16 education on courses at a lower level than necessary, stalling their opportunities to achieve at a higher level. Over half the pupils made significant progress in information and communication technology (ICT) over Key Stage 4 to gain a level 1 BTEC certificate.
- During the last school year, pupils in Years 7 to 10 made expected progress, and some pupils made stronger progress. However, there were weaknesses in some aspects of English and mathematics in different year groups. For example, in Year 9 in 2015, too few pupils made good progress in all aspects of English.
- Pupils' progress last term, as demonstrated in their books and work and in teachers' records, is varied over a range of subjects. For example, some pupils in Year 7 made progress in the use of basic punctuation in their writing but are producing less writing, which is less well presented now than at the start of the year. Pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics is equally varied.
- Pupils with different special educational needs and those who are disadvantaged achieve in line with all other pupils. By the end of Year 11, girls make slightly more progress than boys in English and vice-versa in mathematics.
- Leaders and teachers are currently developing individual learning plans that link progress in different subjects to the aspirations in pupils' education, health and care plans or statements of special educational need. It is too early to see how well pupils are making progress towards the individual targets in these plans. The plans seen did not show how pupils are being supported to improve aspects of their personal and social development.
- Many parents feel that progress in the personal, emotional and social skills of their children is very strong and they are positive about the impact this has, not just on their children but on their family lives. Pupils' views about the progress they make are varied. Some say that work is too easy, which slows their progress, and inspectors saw evidence of this in some lessons.
- The recently opened sixth form has made a big difference to possible destinations for pupils at the end of Year 11. This has resulted in all last year's pupils remaining in education, either at the school sixth form,

the local further education college or the 'Bridge' programme, which involves the pupils enrolling at the local college but receiving some of their education in the familiar environment of school.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Leaders have a clear vision to develop a sixth form which is 'holistic and personalised' in response to learners' individual interests, needs and aspirations for the future. In this first year, progress towards achieving their aim has been slowed by a lack of depth in leaders' understanding of the effectiveness of all aspects of the study programmes.
- Leaders cannot provide strong evidence that sufficient learners are making good enough progress in all aspects of their study programmes. They do not make good use of the information they have about learners' progress to drive improvements in the quality of teaching or the range of subjects and activities on offer to learners.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is too variable. Teachers and teaching assistants do not consistently use assessment information to develop activities which build on what learners already know, understand and can do. As a result, some learners do not make fast enough progress.
- Learners make progress in English and mathematics and are on track to achieve higher-level qualifications in a range of vocational subjects, as well as these key subjects. However, weaknesses in assessment and planning for some learners' next steps is holding back their progress.
- Learners get sound careers advice and guidance. Leaders have invested considerable resources, in partnership with the local authority, in working with Project Search, a provider working to secure employment for young adults with learning difficulties. The outcome of this work will be evident in the destinations of 2016 leavers.
- All requirements of the 16–19 study programme are met, including opportunities for personal development through a range of non-qualification-based learning. Work experience opportunities are valued by learners because they help them to develop the employability skills they need to progress on to paid employment in the future. Learners are clear that work experience helps to improve their confidence and independence. One learner said 'I felt trusted'. Parents share an equally positive view.
- Learners' personal development, behaviour and welfare is strong in the sixth form. They behave well and respectfully towards each other and staff. They say they feel safe and continue to learn to keep themselves safe.

School details

Unique reference number	108311
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10010778

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	23
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Brady
Headteacher	Pat Marshall
Telephone number	01924 302980
Website	www.highfield-school.co.uk
Email address	headteacher@highfield.wakefield.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 December 2012

Information about this school

- Highfield School is a secondary school for pupils with severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum condition. A few pupils with moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and mental health needs also attend the school alongside a small number of pupils with additional needs of physical disabilities and/or hearing and visual impairments. All of the pupils have statements of special educational need or education, health and care plans.
- The school receives the pupil premium grant (additional government funding to support pupils who are disadvantaged) for just over half the pupils. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a very small number from different ethnic groups.
- Since the previous inspection there have been several changes in the senior leadership team. At the time of the inspection, the assistant headteacher responsible for safeguarding and personal development, behaviour and welfare had been in post for eight days. The role of deputy headteacher and another assistant headteacher role are currently covered by temporary post-holders.
- The school uses the following provisions to extend the range of subjects available to the pupils: Pennine Camphill Trust, Elite Training Solutions, Phillips Hair Salon and Riding for the Disabled at Middleton Equestrian Centre. Pupils from Years 8, 10 and 11 attend the provisions for half a day a week, supported by school staff. The school works in partnership with Wakefield College to provide the Bridge programme for a small number of post-16 learners.
- A very small number of pupils, at risk of exclusion, attend UCAN, an alternative provision.
- School leaders provide support to Pathways School in Wakefield.
- The school has a number of nationally recognised quality standard awards including Investors in Pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited parts of many lessons, covering all year groups, the sixth form and a range of subjects. Joint observations were undertaken with the headteacher and acting assistant headteacher. During visits to lessons, pupils' work and books were reviewed. Pupils talked about their work and inspectors heard pupils reading during their lessons.
- The alternative provision, UCAN, was visited and discussions held with the pupils and staff.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other members of the governing body and the school improvement partner, to discuss all aspects of the school's work.
- Thirty-one responses to Ofsted's staff survey were considered. No responses to the pupils' survey were received. There were insufficient responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online survey) for inspectors to view but three free text responses were considered. Inspectors considered a letter from a pupil's grandparents and held a meeting with one parent. Fifty-nine responses to the school's survey of parents' views, conducted in November 2015, were considered.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of Year 8, 10 and 11 pupils and a group of sixth form learners. Three members of the school council took the lead inspector on a tour of the school and inspectors talked with pupils during breaktime.
- A wide range of school records, documents and information were reviewed and discussed.

Inspection team

Susan Hayter, lead inspector

Nick Whittaker

Her Majesty's Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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