

Holmfirth High School

Heys Road, Thongsbridge, Holmfirth, West Yorkshire HD9 7SE

Inspection dates

13–14 December 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have established a positive ethos that addresses the academic needs of pupils and promotes their wider personal and social development.
- Effective teaching and positive relationships enable pupils to achieve high levels of attainment and improving rates of progress.
- The promotion of pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Staff provide high-quality and cohesive support for the well-being of their pupils.
- Senior and middle leaders have established a dynamic learning culture where high-quality training contributes to continuous improvement.
- Governors use their considerable expertise to hold leaders increasingly to account for the school's performance. They know the school's strengths and areas for development, although they have accepted some over-generous views of performance from leaders.
- Pupils are polite and courteous and demonstrate a clear pride in their school community.
- The school works effectively with other schools to lead the sharing of good practice.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. The school carries out thorough checks to ensure that all adults in the school are fit to work with children but the recording of these checks is not as thorough.
- Despite recent improvements, disadvantaged pupils remain more likely to be absent than their peers and make slower progress.
- A small amount of variability remains in the quality of teaching and expectations in some subjects and year groups. This leads to an element of unevenness in rates of progress, especially for boys and lower ability pupils.
- At key stage 3, teachers do not consistently set work that builds rigorously enough on the high standards pupils achieve in primary school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management in accelerating pupils' progress, by:
 - ensuring that teachers set higher expectations on the quality of pupils' work in books, particularly for boys
 - providing appropriate curriculum time for core subjects
 - setting work that builds robustly upon pupils' prior attainment, particularly at key stage 3
 - addressing any remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching
 - improving the rigour of self-evaluation so that leaders and governors have an accurate picture of progress.
- Ensure that safeguarding records are accurately maintained at all times, by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders and governors routinely monitor the central record which contains information from background checks of adults who work or volunteer in the school so that the required information is accurately recorded.
- Improve the achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils, by:
 - providing more focused teaching and support for disadvantaged pupils in lessons
 - building on the recent work to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have continued to promote high expectations founded upon good academic achievement. This is enhanced by high levels of pupil participation in a diverse range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Leaders' commitment to the wider academic, social and personal development of pupils is rooted in the school's every day practice.
- The executive and associate headteacher have built a culture of on-going improvement. Teachers are encouraged both to participate in and lead professional development activities at school and with partner organisations. Teachers value their on-going professional development which is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Senior leaders and governors recognise that on-going improvement is dependent upon constant self-review. They are reviewing curriculum time as they realise that in some year groups core subjects are not given enough teaching time to enable pupils to make rapid progress.
- Leaders at all levels provide cohesive support that ensures pupils' well-being lies at the heart of the school's work. Pastoral leaders work alongside counselling services and specialist nursing support to offer exemplary provision that enables pupils to access extensive support for their physical, social and emotional well-being.
- Middle leaders are closely involved in checking standards and work with senior leaders to check the quality of teaching. They are actively involved in sharing good practice and leading a culture of on-going improvement. They are accountable to leaders and governors. Their work contributes to a relentless focus on the quality of teaching that is contributing to improving rates of current progress. However, middle leaders have not been successful enough in setting high enough expectations of the quality of work in pupils' books.
- Leaders have enhanced performance management processes so that teachers are accountable for pupils' progress and their contribution to key school improvement goals.
- Senior leaders are committed to long term improvement. They work closely with local primary schools to build curriculum continuity between primary and secondary schools. However, the work set at key stage 3 does not consistently build on the high standards pupils arrive with from primary school.
- Pupils access good-quality independent careers information and guidance and this prepares them well for their future destinations. The proportion progressing to education, training or employment is well above that seen nationally.
- Pupils benefit from a rich and varied curriculum. Pupils have access to an academic core curriculum that is complemented by an inventive enrichment programme at key stage 3. In key stage 4, core subjects are supported by a range of varied options that capture pupils' interest. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong through the school's well-structured assembly and enrichment programme and

wider curriculum experiences.

- Leaders actively promote a culture of mutual understanding and their advocacy of restorative practice encourages pupils to take responsibility for their actions. Values of respect permeate all aspects of the school's work and this prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Governors have high levels of expertise that they use to hold leaders to account. They set challenging targets and are aware of the rapid rates of progress that need to be sustained for the school's performance to remain strong. However, governors have not fully challenged leaders' over-generous views on outcomes.
- Governors make regular visits to the school and have responsibilities for following up the progress of particular departments. Governors have particular areas of focus that they report upon on a regular basis.
- Governors check the use of additional funding, such as the pupil premium, and this has contributed to diminishing differences, although differences of progress and attendance remain.
- Governors are proud of the ethos of the school and the active promotion of a diverse range of enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities and the central place the school holds in the community. They oversee sound financial management, while accepting that the curriculum requires review in order to meet the changing needs of pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders take their responsibilities for pupils' welfare extremely seriously. The cohesive systems in place to support pupils' welfare are very strong. Staff training is up-to-date and teachers pursue any concerns about pupil welfare tenaciously. Robust programmes are in place to inform pupils how to stay safe from the risks others may pose and how to stay safe online. The school carries out thorough checks to ensure that all adults in the school are fit to work with children but the recording of these checks is not as thorough.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders oversee an ambitious programme of professional development that focuses relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching and learning. This supports a culture of creativity and professional enquiry, contributing to on-going improvement within the school and its partner schools.
- The school's promotion of an ethos of mutual respect enables a positive learning climate that supports effective learning. Pupils are willing to contribute to discussion and respond to questions as they feel confident that their views will be valued.
- In most subjects, teachers take account of pupils' needs and use assessment information to inform their planning, and this enables the majority of pupils to make good progress. However, work is not routinely adapted to meet the needs of pupils

with differing abilities across subjects, particularly the most able pupils.

- The quality of teaching is strong in many subjects. In science, teachers maintain a strong focus on key concepts and provide increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge at key stage 4. In religious education (RE), pupils receive challenging opportunities to explore issues of faith and morality and this is reflected in the level of debate in lessons and the quality of work in their books over time.
- Inspectors saw examples of motivational teaching in physical education (PE) that contributes to strong rates of progress. Through effective modelling and exposition, pupils were able to develop their skills and understanding while careful planning enabled pupils of differing abilities to make good progress.
- Senior and middle leaders have robust systems in place to check the quality of teaching and its impact upon progress. This leads to effective teaching in the majority of subjects, although variability remains at key stage 3 where pupils are less routinely challenged.
- Pupils are given opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in science and design and technology lessons, while evidence of extended writing was apparent in RE and history. However, high standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are not consistently implemented across subjects.
- Time in lessons is used effectively. Pupils are punctual to lessons and settle to their learning. The pace of learning provides sufficient time for pupils to consolidate their learning while also gaining access to new skills and concepts. On some occasions, the most able pupils are not moved on to suitably demanding work swiftly enough.
- Teachers set homework in line with the school's homework policy. Pupils respond positively to homework tasks which they believe support and extend their learning.
- The majority of teachers provide feedback in line with the school's marking and assessment policy and there was clear evidence in subjects such as English and RE that this was improving pupils' progress. Elsewhere, the picture was less consistent as pupils did not routinely act upon feedback to improve their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils' welfare is at the heart of the school and strong pastoral systems ensure that each individual is well-known and supported.
- Pupils benefit from cohesive support systems to enhance their personal development, including circle time and specialist in-house support services. They also have a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills and talents through events and activities during and after the school day.
- Teachers actively support pupils' physical, emotional and mental health and pupils talk confidently about how these needs are supported. Pupils feel they can express concerns as adults will listen carefully to the issues they raise.
- Pupils feel safe and are taught how to keep safe. Through assemblies, enrichment

activities and the wider curriculum, pupils are taught how to stay safe, for example from those who could exploit them in relationships and through modern technology.

- Incidents of bullying are extremely rare. Pupils are comfortable in reporting the few occasions when bullying does occur as they have confidence that teachers will address this effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils show pride in their appearance and in their school and this is reflected in the orderly and tidy environment around the school site. Rates of exclusion are well below those seen nationally as the school promotes an inclusive and supportive culture.
- The vast majority of pupils are courteous and polite and behaviour in corridors and in playgrounds is typically good, although a small minority of pupils can be less considerate. Pupils value the school's approach to restorative practice although some feel behaviour policies could be more consistently applied.
- The vast majority of pupils show positive attitudes to learning in lessons and are willing to contribute to discussion, provide feedback to their peers and work constructively in group activities. A small minority of pupils take less responsibility for their learning and this occasionally impacts upon the learning of others.
- Pupils value school and their learning and this contributes to levels of attendance that are above those seen nationally. School leaders have introduced new strategies to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, although they remain more likely to be absent than their peers.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From their starting points, current pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects. Levels of attainment are well above those seen nationally. Overall rates of progress are good and improving.
- Middle and higher ability pupils typically make good levels of progress although lower ability pupils make slower rates of progress.
- Pupils achieve good standards of attainment and improving progress in English and mathematics although they do not always get sufficient curriculum time to develop the depth of understanding to enable them to make more rapid rates of progress.
- Effective teaching enables pupils to make particularly strong progress in science and languages while challenging tasks and high expectations support pupils in achieving strong outcomes in RE and PE.
- More focused tracking and intervention to address the needs of disadvantaged pupils are leading to a consistent picture of improving progress for current pupils across a range of subjects and year groups. However, differences in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others persist as previous strategies were not successful in diminishing these differences rapidly enough.
- The improving levels of progress identified in the school's tracking information are

largely reflected in the work over time in books at key stage 4. However, this progress in books is less apparent at key stage 3 where a lack of consistent challenge leads to some pupils, particularly boys, making slower progress.

- The most able pupils achieve high levels of attainment and are making improving rates of progress across a wide range of subjects, particularly in science and languages. The current progress of the most able disadvantaged pupils is improving through more focused tracking and support, although their overall progress remains below that seen nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making improving rates of progress in line with other pupils and the vast majority are working at the expected level for their curriculum pathway.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The vast majority of pupils progress to further education. The proportion of pupils progressing to sustained education, training or employment is well above that seen nationally.

School details

Unique reference number	107769
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10008216

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	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,318
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Pickup
Executive Headteacher	Craig Jansen
Telephone number	01484 691 460
Website	www.holmfirthhigh.co.uk/
Email address	office.holmfirth@holmfirthhigh.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	July 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Holmfirth High School is a larger than average secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is low. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need or with an education, health and care plan is slightly above average.
- Holmfirth High School is a Teaching School, a Specialist Schools and Academies Trust Consultant School and a Leading Edge School.

- The school holds Investors in People status, the National Gold Healthy Schools Award, the Nurture Group Network Quality Mark and the Leading Parent Partnership Award. It also holds the Sports Mark Award with Distinction.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out observations of learning across a wide range of lessons, a number of which were jointly undertaken with senior leaders.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, lunchtimes and at playtimes.
- Inspectors examined the quality of work in books, in folders and in displays around the school.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the associate headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders. Inspectors also talked to a wide range of staff. The lead inspector met members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met groups of pupils, including the student council. They also talked to pupils in tutor period, in lessons and around the school site about aspects of their learning, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors looked at the school's work and considered documents including the school's own evaluation of its work, the school improvement plan, curriculum plans and information relating to pupils' achievement and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Malcolm Kirtley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Fiona Dixon	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Smith	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Ofsted Inspector

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