

Mill Hill School

Peasehill, Ripley, DE5 3JQ

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement in English and mathematics has varied too much over time.
- The attainment of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below that of other students. Progress is also weaker for some students who have special educational needs and the more able.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Achievement in the sixth form is not as strong as it should be in A-level and AS-level courses.
- Teaching has not been good enough across the school since the last inspection to raise achievement strongly. The teaching in too many lessons requires improvement.
- Some lessons lack pace and challenge, and work does not meet the needs of all students. There are too few opportunities for active and independent learning.
- Students' attitudes to learning are inconsistent because of the variable quality of teaching.
- Speaking skills are underdeveloped because of limited paired and group work, and not enough extended discussion and questioning.
- Leadership and management have had limited impact on improving teaching and raising achievement since the previous inspection.
- Uncertainties over school leadership have meant that planned actions and policies have not always been followed through.

The school has the following strengths

- Achievement and progress in many subjects are on a gradually improving trend. On some measures, attainment is above average.
- There is an increasing amount of good and outstanding teaching because of well-tailored individual training and support.
- Attendance is rising and exclusions reducing, due to actions taken since the previous inspection.
- Behaviour around the site is orderly and students are safe. Bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively when reported.
- Leaders and managers understand what needs to be done to improve the school. There are appropriate plans in place that are already having an impact on improving teaching.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 37 lessons, six of these jointly with senior leaders and managers. They also made shorter visits to some classrooms to look at group-support sessions and marking.
- The team visited many different areas of the school and the site during lessons and at break times.
- Meetings were held with four different groups of students, members of the governing body, senior staff, and subject and progress leaders.
- The inspection team examined a range of school documentation, including school development plans and policies, lesson plans, records of lesson monitoring and checks on students' work, and the minutes of meetings, including those of the governing body. Inspectors examined a range of data, both those available to the public and those used by the school to monitor current rates of students' progress and attendance.
- There had been 16 responses made to the online questionnaire Parent View by the end of the inspection. These were considered, along with staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

David Martin, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Renee Robinson	Additional Inspector
Andrew Clark	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Needham	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The number of students on roll has fallen in recent years.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premiums broadly average. This is extra government funding to narrow gaps in achievement among students eligible for free school meals, looked after children and other students.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is higher than average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in secondary schools.
- There have been numerous changes to leadership and management and staffing since the previous inspection. The school is currently led by an acting headteacher in the absence of the substantive headteacher.
- In total, around a dozen students study for part of their education at other centres, mainly for one or two days a week. In Year 11, a small number of students attend Derby College for motor vehicle studies. Very small numbers study for a diploma in motor studies at Alfreton Vocational Centre, for a construction course at Aldercar School or receive out-of-school tuition in core subjects. A very small number of students in Year 10 study health and social care courses along with English and mathematics at Acorn for three days a week.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the overall quality of teaching so that it is mostly good, with more that is outstanding, by making sure that:
 - lessons have sufficient pace and challenge
 - students are actively involved in class and are given opportunities to work independently
 - there are more opportunities for discussion, paired and group work, and extended questioning
 - all students enjoy their learning and develop the positive attitudes and behaviours seen in the best lessons.
- Match work much more closely to students' needs, in order to raise standards of attainment and improve the progress that all students make to at least expected levels, with more achieving beyond, particularly for:
 - students for whom the pupil premium provides support
 - some groups of disabled students and those who have special educational needs
 - students who are more able
 - students in the sixth form studying A-level and AS-level courses.
- Governors must provide stability and continuity for the school by resolving present leadership issues so that current plans for improvement can be implemented.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Although performance in many subjects has improved over the last few years, students' achievement requires improvement because some groups of students do not make sufficient progress and attainment is too variable in English and mathematics.
- In many lessons, across all subjects, students gain a good range of skills and knowledge. In other lessons, students have too few opportunities to develop their speaking and group-working skills and are not given opportunities to develop as independent learners.
- Achievement in mathematics has improved over the last few years, although the results of recent early Year 10 GCSE entries were below expected levels. School leaders and managers have developed detailed plans to improve these results by the end of Year 11 so that more students achieve target grades.
- More-able students do not always make as good progress as they should, particularly in mathematics. Recent changes to the school's examination entry policy should mean that more students will be able to re-sit the examination if they underachieve.
- Year 7 'catch up' funding is used to give students additional help with literacy when they first start at the school. This is speeding up the progress that these students make in reading and writing skills.
- Some groups of pupils have not made such good progress. Those for whom the pupil premium provides support achieved on average more than a grade below other students in 2012, including in English and mathematics. This gap reduced to around half a grade in 2013 due to careful tracking and support, but remains too wide.
- Many disabled students and those who have special educational needs make the same progress as other students because their needs are identified early and they are given additional support. The small number supported through school action plus made significantly weaker progress in 2012 because their particular and complex needs were not fully met.
- Attitudes to learning vary according to the quality of teaching. Where students are encouraged to be active learners and where work is well matched to their needs and interests, they show very positive attitudes. In other lessons, students are passive learners, leading to off-task behaviour.
- Students who attend off-site provision all undertake courses that lead to a suitable qualification. These students achieve in line with their ability, and the courses help to encourage and motivate these students to focus their efforts and attain well in other subjects.
- Students start in the sixth form with attainment that is below average. For those studying A-level and AS-level courses, attainment remains low, although there has been a slowly improving trend over time. The progress that they make is, therefore, only at or just below expected levels.
- The growing numbers of students that take vocational courses in the sixth form attain better-than-average results, and make good progress. This is because the courses are well suited to their needs, interests and future aspirations.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Improvements in teaching since the last inspection have not been rapid enough to make a significant impact on the progress that students make. Inspectors' judgements of the current quality of teaching broadly support those made by senior leaders and managers.
- Around two-thirds of the teaching seen in the inspection was good or better, with some that was outstanding. Around a third of teaching required improvement, but very little was judged to be inadequate.
- Where teaching requires improvement, not enough learning is taking place in the time spent. Students are not all engaged with the tasks they are set because they do not find them interesting or motivating. Often, this is because work is not matched to students' different abilities, particularly to meet the needs of more-able students. Students are not given enough opportunities to work independently or to find things out for themselves.
- While presentation is good in many books, in others work can be incomplete or untidily recorded. Marking is inconsistent. In some cases, poor spelling is not corrected and marking does not provide helpful suggestions and advice.
- Questioning is used to involve all students, but there are few times when students are encouraged to briefly discuss before answering, or where they are required to build on each other's ideas. This limits opportunities for students to develop their speaking and listening skills. Too many lessons are dominated by the teacher talking at the expense of students engaged in purposeful activity.
- Teaching in the sixth form is a little better than in the main school but has not been strong enough over time to accelerate achievement. One key feature of better sixth form lessons is in encouraging effective independent learning, both in class and through unsupervised school and homework tasks.
- Where teaching is good, subject knowledge is strong, and activities are well planned to meet the different needs and interests of all students. Activities are often varied and interesting, requiring students to think more deeply and take responsibility for their work.
- Other features of stronger teaching include a good use of targets, levels and grades to motivate and encourage students. Feedback helps students to know how well they are doing, and often encourages students to respond and improve their work or to check on their own learning.
- Good teaching is conducted at a lively pace that challenges the most able but supports those who find learning more difficult. Teaching assistants provide good support because they know what the teacher expects of them and have good relationships with students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Staff questionnaires confirm that behaviour is managed inconsistently and that there are differences in teachers' expectations of conduct. As a result, students develop good attitudes to learning in some lessons, but are more passive and occasionally off-task in others.
- Most students conduct themselves sensibly and in a respectful manner around the site, although occasional boisterous behaviour and a little bad language was heard during the inspection.

Students told inspectors that this was typical for the school.

- Tutors and other key adults know the students well as individuals, and provide a good quality of care and guidance. Students report that there is always an adult that they can get help from if they have any personal or work issues.
- There are many opportunities for students to take roles of responsibility through, for example, the school council and as sports leaders. Sixth formers act as 'buddy readers' for younger students and feel actively involved in the wider life of the school.
- The understanding of different types of bullying, such as cyber-bullying and prejudice-based discrimination, is taught well. Students say that bullying incidents are rare and feel confident that adults usually deal with any issues quickly.
- Parental and staff responses report that students are safe and happy in school. However, there are some concerns about bullying and students say that there may be a few incidents of harassment that are not reported and, therefore, may not be known to adults.
- Attendance is improving towards average levels as effective school initiatives have an impact. The proportion of students who are regularly absent from school remains above average. The school recognises that current efforts need to be sustained with the support of parents and carers.
- The school records and follows up on punctuality and any behavioural incidents rigorously. Fixed-term exclusions are reducing quickly towards average levels as alternative sanctions are used for less-serious incidents.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have maintained a gradual improvement in the performance of the school, but actions have not led to a marked and sustained improvement in teaching or students' progress.
- The school improvement plan outlines key objectives, and specific actions to be taken. These priorities are reflected well in subject and team plans. However, it is not always clear from these plans who will check that actions are making a difference, or how they will undertake this work.
- The acting headteacher and senior staff have a clear understanding of the priorities facing the school as it seeks to improve. Each member of the team has clearly defined roles and responsibilities, although some are relatively new to post.
- Leaders and managers at all levels are aware that they have responsibility for students' progress and the quality of teaching. Subject leaders have clear targets for improvement and this is already making a difference, although it has not yet made a strong impact on achievement.
- Current systems for tracking students' progress are strong, and look closely at the progress of all individuals and significant groups of students. This more regular collection of data leads to staff more quickly recognising where any students are falling behind and following this up with appropriate support.
- A number of subject leaders are undertaking nationally recognised training programmes to

develop their leadership skills. The training has a focus on closing the gaps for identified groups of students, which ties in well to school priorities.

- A literacy coordinator has recently been appointed in recognition of the needs of many students joining the school with weak literacy skills. These and other developments show a commitment by senior leaders to develop leadership at all levels in the school.
- Subject plans have now been brought into line with the school's priorities. Training for individual staff is linked well to these priorities. The next step of establishing a teaching and learning group and developing coaching for staff has started but is yet to make a significant impact.
- The curriculum has been reviewed to provide increased academic routes at GCSE. At the same time, appropriate vocational courses have been successfully added in the sixth form in response to students' needs. This is having a growing impact on results in the main school and sixth form.
- Students attending alternative provision off the site all study for appropriate qualifications. The school receives regular reports on progress and daily notification of any absence. School staff visit the providers to make sure that the courses are appropriate and of good quality.
- Students' social and moral development is promoted well through the curriculum. There are not enough opportunities for spiritual development or to broaden students' awareness of other cultures in order to prepare them for life in a modern Britain.
- Students say that they receive good advice about courses of study in the school, and about options at age 16 and on leaving the sixth form. This advice is independent and unbiased, and the school encourages outside partners to discuss alternatives with students in assemblies.
- The leadership of the sixth form has been recently strengthened. Students' progress is now carefully tracked and the sixth form centre is well organised, with good facilities for study and recreation. The wider opportunities for students are good and prepare them well for the future.
- The school receives good support from the local authority, particularly in handling sensitive staffing issues and in support for the governors. The school is actively developing partnerships with other schools in the local area and beyond, particularly in developing teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The school has not had continuity in senior leadership since the time of the previous inspection. Governors are making good progress towards resolving this situation in order to achieve a more stable leadership team.
 - Although now well informed, governors have not secured rapid improvement in the performance of the school, partly due to uncertainty in senior leadership and staffing changes.
 - Together with senior leaders, the governing body has set teachers clear targets, including for students' achievement that they must meet in order to progress through the pay structure. Underperformance has been tackled effectively, and internal promotions have rewarded staff who perform particularly well.
 - Governors understand school data well, and know the strengths and weaknesses in performance. They have been actively involved recently in all stages of reviewing the school vision and action plans.
 - First-hand information about the school is gained from regular visits. These are well recorded, and resulting actions are followed up and shared with the full governing body. Governors ask challenging questions of school leaders and managers in their meetings.
 - Governors plan for their own training and have been involved in a number of recent training

events. They have received support from the local authority.

- Financial management is sound. The school has successfully reduced a deficit budget and handled difficult staffing reductions in the face of falling numbers joining the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	113001
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	425052

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	825
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Johson
Headteacher	Sarah Graham Carey Ayres (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2011
Telephone number	01773 746334
Fax number	01773 746334
Email address	enquiries@millhill.derbyshire.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

