

Huxlow Science College

Finedon Road, Irthlingborough, Wellingborough, NN9 5TY

Inspection dates

25–26 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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

- Some students are not making enough progress during years 7, 8 and 9, especially in mathematics. Progress in mathematics in years 10 and 11 has not been good and, although improving, this is still not at a fast enough rate.
- Teaching is not always good enough and some work is not planned well enough to make sure that all students, especially those with weaker skills, make enough progress.
- Although students eligible for the pupil premium are starting to make much better progress, there is still a gap between their achievement in English and mathematics and that of other students.
- Teachers do not always mark work often enough. Some marking is not providing helpful information about how students can improve their work.
- A few students do not concentrate hard enough in lessons. Some are not taking enough care about the neatness and presentation of their work, especially in years 7, 8 and 9.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Results are improving but are still not good enough in all subjects.
- Leaders have not always ensured the good information teachers have about students' progress is used well enough to make sure that learning is good.

The school has the following strengths

- Students have achieved well in examination results in English, science and languages.
- Leaders know what needs to be improved and have taken actions to improve learning in mathematics, increase attendance and improve the progress of students eligible for the pupil premium.
- Some teaching is outstanding and there is much that is good.
- Students are proud of the school and they like its strong community feel. The school gives a good emphasis to ensuring they feel safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 41 lessons, of which 20 were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, they made some shorter visits to lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the school’s leaders and managers, and groups of staff.
- Members of the inspection team held meetings with four groups of students, representing all age groups in the school. Discussions also took place with students informally.
- A meeting was held with the Chair of the Governing Body.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work and scrutinised documents, including the school’s own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan and information about the progress, attendance and behaviour of students currently in the school.
- Inspectors looked at the work of groups of students and matched this against the school’s information about the progress they are making.
- There were 48 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and consideration was given to the views expressed by families in response to the school’s own survey completed in 2012.

Inspection team

David Bray, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Catherine Robinson-Slater

Additional Inspector

Elizabeth Needham

Additional Inspector

Susan Vasey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than average sized secondary school with a sixth form which is part of a shared consortium with The Ferrers School and Rushden Community College.
- Huxlow Science College converted to become an academy school in April 2012. When its predecessor school, also called Huxlow Science College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The large majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is slightly below average. The pupil premium is additional funding given to the school for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority or those who have a parent in the armed forces. The proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs supported by school action is slightly above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- A small number of students are enrolled on alternative courses at the CE Academy in Kettering.
- The school does not enter students early for their GCSE examinations.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2014 and was previously the deputy headteacher.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that students make better progress, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - teachers make better use of assessment information about groups of students to plan learning that is at the right level and which interests and motivates all learners
 - marking is carried out regularly and is of a high enough quality to enable students to improve their learning
 - students take more pride in the presentation of their work and respond to marking by correcting mistakes and improving their work.
- Improve leadership so that:
 - the school's focus on improving progress is giving enough attention to years 7, 8 and 9 as well as ensuring that a greater proportion of students make better than expected progress in mathematics at Key Stage 4
 - attendance continues to improve
 - the current gap between the achievement of students eligible for the pupil premium and other students continues to close and at a faster rate
 - achievement in the sixth form continues to improve and that more students make good progress from their starting point at the end of Year 11.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students start at the school with literacy and numeracy skills that are below average. In 2012, the proportion who gained five or more GCSEs at A* to C including English and mathematics was above average. This proportion fell to below average in 2013 and achievement requires improvement because the progress made by all students in mathematics has not been good for the last two years.
- Progress in mathematics is improving. The proportion making expected progress is now closer to average in Year 11 because teaching is better and systems for checking on progress have improved. The proportion making better-than-expected progress has also improved but not at a fast enough rate to be good. The progress of students in years 7, 8 and 9 is still not good enough, especially in mathematics.
- Students did not make good progress in GCSE humanities subjects in 2013 but, currently, students are doing better.
- In the sixth form, achievement is not yet good and requires improvement, because students do not make fast enough progress in all their subjects. Results have improved and school tracking information shows that standards are continuing to rise. The school has ensured that it monitors carefully the progress of students taught at Huxlow and how well students are doing when taught on other sites within the sixth form consortium.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, who have statements of special educational needs, or who are supported at school action plus, are making good progress. This is because of the additional lessons, coaching, mentoring and targeted support they receive. Students supported at school action are not always making good progress. This is because some lessons are not planned well enough to ensure that they are challenged and supported effectively. The school has started to ensure that this group make better progress through extra support in classes and extra individual support. Current data shows that this group are now starting to make better progress.
- In 2013, students eligible for the pupil premium made significantly less progress in English and mathematics than others in the school. Fewer secured five or more GCSEs at A* to C and their achievement was two full grades in English and two and a half grades in mathematics lower than others. The school has increased rates of progress in both subjects and the gap in attainment is being narrowed across all year groups. These improvements need to be maintained and increased further.
- Progress in GCSE English, science and modern foreign languages is consistently good.
- A significant group of students join the school with weak reading and writing skills and are supported effectively by the Year 7 catch-up funding. A range of support is provided, including extra tuition, and this is enabling these students to improve their skills and make good progress.
- A small number of students attend alternative provision. Their attendance has improved and current information shows that they are meeting their learning targets.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because not all teachers have had high enough expectations of students in years 7, 8 and 9 and particularly in mathematics.
- Information held about students' progress is not always used well enough to make sure that the work they get is at the right level. Some students currently in years 10 and 11 who started school with weaker skills have not made sufficient progress, although improved support and planning is enabling them to do better.
- Some work is not marked regularly enough and some is not marked in a way that provides helpful information for students on how to improve. Even when helpful comments are made, teachers do not always ensure that students use them to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants are often effective when supporting disabled students and those who have special educational needs. In some lessons the work of the teaching assistant is not planned well enough. Although some support students well because they are experienced and skilled, in a few cases they are not able to contribute to learning sufficiently.
- Some teaching is outstanding because expectations are very high; teachers have a good understanding of their subject and a high level of enthusiasm, which is infectious. Students really enjoy languages because the teachers are passionate about the subject and organise lessons that are enjoyable but also lead to rapid progress.
- Teachers often ask helpful questions which help pupils to understand ideas and learn effectively. Lessons are often paced well so that students do not waste time.
- Students appreciate the commitment of teachers to supporting their learning through additional study and support programmes before, during and after school. Older students have appreciated the opportunities to attend extra mathematics sessions. This has contributed to Year 11 students making better progress.
- Sixth form students appreciate the range of subjects offered through a consortium arrangement with two local schools. Teaching is improving as a result of ensuring that expectations are high enough and monitoring of how well students are doing is regular and leading to better progress.
- Teaching has improved in mathematics through better planning of work, clearer expectations for the progress of all students and more regular checking to see if progress is good enough. This has had a positive impact on achievement, so more students, especially in Year 11, are making good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. It is not yet good because a small minority of students lose attention and focus in lessons that do not capture their interest, or where work is too easy for them. They behave sensibly but are content to not work hard enough.
- Some students, particularly in years 7, 8 and 9 are not taking enough care about the neatness of their work or its general presentation. In all year groups, students do not always respond to marking by correcting work. They sometimes do not learn from mistakes and ensure that their next piece of work is better.

- Attendance is average for secondary schools. Attendance has risen over recent years because it has been a priority and systems for encouraging attendance have been improved.
- Students are punctual, settle well and most have good attitudes to learning. There is a good level of respect between students and adults. Many students and parents appreciate the strong expectations the school has for behaving well. The percentage of exclusions was below the national average last year.
- Sixth form students have good attitudes to learning. They are able to work well with students from other schools in the consortium and have good levels of perseverance. This is contributing well to improving achievement in the sixth form.
- Parents responding to the online survey were positive about behaviour. A majority of parents who completed the school's own most recent survey believe that behaviour is managed well.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are aware of the dangers of using the internet and of other potential threats to themselves from outside the school, such as social media.
- Students say they feel safe in and around the school site. Parents confirm the views expressed by students and believe the school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. A large majority of parents would recommend the school to other families.
- Students have a good understanding of different forms of bullying and express confidence that the school will deal effectively with any incidents.
- Sixth form students act as good role models, although they often travel to other school sites during the morning and lunch time, and this limits the opportunities they have to take responsibility within school.
- The school successfully promotes equality of opportunity and positive relationships, and ensures that discrimination of any type is not tolerated. Staff support the school's students whose circumstances might make them vulnerable well, and safeguarding and child protection work meets requirements.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have not secured good achievement in mathematics at GCSE, progress in Key Stage 3 is not always good and, although standards in the sixth form have improved, they are still not good enough.
- The headteacher has been in post for a few weeks but has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need to be improved, having previously been the deputy headteacher. Leaders have a clear focus on improving achievement in mathematics and this is leading to better progress, especially in Year 11.
- Leaders, including governors, have ensured that the school has made areas that require improvement a priority. They have identified that the achievement of students receiving pupil premium funding is not good enough. Actions have led to improvement for this group, although there is still a gap in achievement.

- The school has good information about the progress made by students. This information is not always used well enough to ensure that all groups of students are making enough progress. Students starting school with lower levels of achievement are still not doing well enough at GCSE, especially in mathematics. The use of catch-up funding is enabling younger pupils to make more rapid progress.
- Leaders have established a culture where staff have a good focus on raising achievement. The school improvement plan sets out clear priorities and has helped to ensure that leaders are clear about the progress being made. The school has improved progress in mathematics, the progress of those eligible for the pupil premium and the levels of attendance. Achievement in the sixth form has improved. Leaders have the capacity to bring about further improvements.
- The school has an accurate view of teaching and staff receive helpful feedback on how to improve further. This has led to a systematic review of mathematics teaching and improved progress, especially in Year 11.
- The progress of sixth form students has been monitored and subjects that have not performed well have been improved. Progress in most subjects is close to average but is not consistently good.
- The system for performance management is linked to the school's pay policy. Teachers' salary increases are now directly linked to students' progress rates. Staff are clear about their roles, responsibilities and the expectations of senior leaders. The headteacher has worked with governors to tackle underperformance robustly and has used formal procedures when required.
- Teachers receive training which is matched to targets for improvement. This is leading to better progress in areas such as mathematics.
- The school has ensured that students benefit from a curriculum that allows them to take courses that are academically rigorous and enables them to make progress in the next stage of their learning. A wider range of courses is offered for students where this is appropriate for their needs and interests.
- The school has not entered students early for GCSE examinations and has ensured that sixth form students have good enough skills in literacy and numeracy to have a good chance of success in their courses.
- A reasonable range of enrichment activities is offered and they contribute to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Sports and arts activities make a significant contribution to the life of the school.
- Safeguarding arrangements are well established and meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good range of skills and expertise and much of their questioning is rigorous and supports and challenges school leaders effectively. Governors have identified and attended training that has ensured they have the skills required to ask searching questions. Governors are aware of how pupil premium funding has been spent and have questioned the effectiveness of its use. They have helped the school to close the gap in the achievement of these students, but the gap is still too wide. They are not aware enough of the effectiveness of Year 7 catch-up funding. Governors are aware of the links between students' achievement

and teachers' salary progression. They ask searching questions of leaders in relation to the quality of teaching and its impact on the students' and school's performance. They are aware of the need to improve mathematics. Governors are committed to ensuring students are safe and meet their statutory duties, including those for safeguarding. They have ensured that the school's finances are efficiently managed and have accrued a significant budget surplus. Although there are plans for how this funding will be spent, governors have not ensured that achievement is good.

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	138030
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	440689

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
School category	Academy converter
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	805
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Kelby
Headteacher	Steve Gordon
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01933 650496
Fax number	01933 653435
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