

Heathfield Community School

School Road, Monkton Heathfield, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 8PD

Inspection dates 22–23 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The successes of this outstanding school are founded upon a school-wide focus on nurturing and enhancing the learning, achievements and well-being of every individual student.
- The headteacher leads the school with unwavering moral purpose which permeates all areas of the school's work. The focus on continual improvement for all within the community is conspicuous and highly effective.
- Leadership is very productively distributed. At all levels, those with leadership responsibilities are resolute in their goal to help each and every student to succeed. Furthermore, the principle that all within the community should be involved in shaping the school is valued and embraced.
- GCSE and sixth form results are typically much higher than average, sometimes from quite low starting points. Students achieve particularly well in English, mathematics and science, preparing them very well for further study and employment.
- The school's performing arts specialism makes an exceptionally strong contribution to the achievement of students; it enriches their school experience and promotes strong cultural, personal and social development.
- Relationships between staff and students are highly positive, and teachers employ their considerable expertise diligently. The quality of training and support for teachers and support staff is exceptionally high. Students consequently make very good progress as they move through the school.
- Students enjoy their school experiences, are motivated to work hard, and attend school regularly. Their behaviour is outstanding. They are typically courteous, respectful to all people and take care of their environment.
- Students feel very safe in this school, and parents agree. The school's work to keep students safe and secure, both within the school and in a wider context, is outstanding.
- The sixth form provides specialist courses and experiences for the performing arts and is outstanding. Students typically leave the sixth form well equipped to pursue careers in performance and associated roles, or to utilise their increased confidence and personal skills in other areas.
- Governors are highly committed to the academic and wider achievement of students, and to their safety and well-being. They carry out their monitoring and evaluation roles with conviction and to good effect, often coming into the school to see their work in action.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited parts of 41 lessons, seven of these jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- They observed behaviour in lessons and around the school during break and lunchtimes.
- To collect student views of the school, they held meetings with five groups of students of different ages and abilities, and talked to many more during lessons and around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders and also with a range of staff members, including those responsible for subject areas, student achievement, support and behaviour.
- The lead inspector met with a group of governors to discuss their roles and responsibilities, and checked arrangements for safeguarding students.
- The lead inspector also held a meeting with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team examined a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation of its performance, its plans for improvement, information on students' progress, attendance and behaviour, and the minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors considered a range of evidence relating to the views of parents, including the 110 submissions on the online survey (Parent View), a letter and a telephone call, and the outcomes of the school's own surveys.
- They also took into consideration the views of 88 members of staff and a letter from one student.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Goodall, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Robert Faulkner	Additional inspector
Duncan Millard	Additional inspector
Marian Marks	Additional inspector
Paul Barns	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Heathfield Community School is larger than the average-sized secondary school. The sixth form is relatively small, however, as it specialises in the performing arts and does not offer other subjects except for students working towards achieving GCSEs in English and mathematics.
- The school has a performing arts specialism, and the Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre is located at the school. This is used by the community as well as being part of the school's provision.
- The school is the only secondary DfE Teaching School in Somerset and is part of the Taunton Teaching Alliance.
- The school works in partnership with many other schools, but in particular it acts as a cluster hub school within the Somerset Challenge partnership.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in secondary schools.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is just above the national average.
- There is a specialised base for autism (The Cedar Centre) that is attended by 11 students. Most of these attend regular lessons for at least part of the school day.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding provided to support the learning of looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is much lower than the national average. (This group of students is referred to as 'disadvantaged' within the report.)
- The school does not currently use alternative providers for vocational courses, but a very small number of students attend the Taunton pupil referral unit.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to extend and refine the way teachers use their assessments of students' learning to ensure all groups of students, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve as highly as possible.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Since the last inspection, this school has continued its journey of excellence in purpose and achievement. The headteacher ensures that the work of the school always focuses on the achievement and personal development of each and every individual student. This underpins the distinctive and inclusive ethos in which everyone strives to improve.
- Leadership is successfully distributed throughout the school, extending to leaders who are responsible for subjects, behaviour and student support and well-being. Most notably, all take ownership of the school's work, and participate in decision-making regarding the school's direction; they understand their accountability for meeting targets and the need for rigour. Subject leaders are particularly effective in ensuring that standards of teaching and learning are kept high.
- The systems of support and training for staff are a significant strength of the school. A variety of approaches is employed very effectively, including coaching, small-group research and well-focused training sessions. Teachers have a clear idea of what to improve in their teaching and are given extensive support to do so. Some students are trained in lesson observation skills, and their contributions to team reviews and teacher training are valued by all.
- School leaders ensure that students are kept safe and all safeguarding statutory requirements are met effectively. In particular, there is an ethos of respect and tolerance within the school community. Discrimination of any kind is actively discouraged and the focus on meeting the needs of individuals, regardless of background, ability, ethnicity, faith or sexuality, pervades all elements of the school's work.
- Work to reduce gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged students and others in the school has been effective. Although not yet closed, gaps are reliably predicted to do so within the next two years.
- The range of academic and vocational subjects on offer is suitably wide to enable all students to follow courses of interest and relevance to their futures. The large majority of students are currently encouraged to follow two languages. This has facilitated the study of languages at A level. The school has recognised, however, that for some students, it would be better to take only one and achieve a higher grade. This is being addressed by the school.
- Students typically leave the school with a strong set of results that enables them to move on to further education or training of their choice. Students in the sixth form achieve exceptionally well. Advice and guidance for career choices is systematic and effective throughout the school. Links with businesses are particularly strong and impact significantly on the development of enterprise and employment skills.
- School leaders monitor the achievement, behaviour and attendance of the very small numbers of students attending the pupil referral units to ensure they are kept safe and benefit from this provision.
- In addition to their academic achievements, students develop personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills through the extensive range of activities and opportunities available. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain. The performing arts specialism makes a major contribution to students' wider development, but there is also a wide range of other options, including sport, inspirational links such as the Comenius Projects, and a wealth of motivating clubs and activities.
- The school encourages students to reflect on life, debate challenging issues, take care of their own mental health, and consider and support the needs of other people. In particular, the school is making sure that students have opportunities to discuss key world issues such as the Ebola outbreak and the 'Islamic State' conflict. Also of significance is the abundance of opportunities to appreciate the beauty of art, music, movement and the spoken word. There is a politics debating club, and the two 'Youth Members of Parliament' for the area who attend this school, promote involvement in community life.
- The school works in partnership with the local authority which has overseen the provision on a 'light-touch' basis. The authority has valued the impact of the school's outreach and partnership work as part of its programme of support for other local schools, especially involvement in the 'Somerset Challenge'.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors regularly review their roles and responsibilities to ensure that they meet the needs of the school. In particular, they come into the school as often as possible to discuss teaching and learning with subject leaders, and to see the school's work in action. They understand school priorities well and are steadfast in their support of the school's aims to meet the needs of each and every student. They engage in challenging discussions about the quality of teaching and learning to ensure this happens. They have been fully involved in setting the policy for assessing the performance of teachers and in how the school rewards them for achieving high standards. They ensure that the school meets the statutory requirements for safeguarding students and provide the school with secure financial management.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is outstanding.
- Students are tidy, courteous, friendly and respectful of other people and the school environment. There is very little litter in the school and no obvious graffiti. Students do not damage displays and artwork.
- There is a lively and energising 'buzz' in the school, although students move between lessons purposefully and calmly. Students are very appreciative of what the school provides for them and how they are supported. They value the way teachers 'go the extra mile' to help them, and want to reciprocate.
- Within lessons, students are typically keen to learn, and they adhere to teachers' high expectations of behaviour and completion of work. They also demonstrate that they can manage their own learning when required, and have high expectations of themselves. They take pride in their work, even when they find writing and presentation challenging. Most students are confident and articulate. They adapt quickly to different learning scenarios such as group work or individual tasks.
- Parents and students say that behaviour is generally of a high standard. Any disruptive behaviour is dealt with quickly, and school records show that the frequency of such incidents has reduced considerably.
- Exclusion rates have also reduced over the last three years. There have been no permanent exclusions in recent years. The very small numbers of students with behavioural issues benefit from their pupil referral unit experience where they receive specialised support to help them adopt more positive attitudes.
- Students in the sixth form are good role models for younger students.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- There is very little bullying, and racial, homophobic or other discriminatory incidents are rare.
- Students feel safe in this school, and parents agree. They develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe both in and outside of school. This is because there is a comprehensive programme of awareness development, with some aspects delivered through theme-based days and assemblies. This includes risks when using the internet and the implications of giving out personal information and images to others.
- Because students enjoy school and value their learning, attendance throughout the school is good. Any absence is followed up systematically and thoroughly. Where students attend the local pupil referral unit, any lack of attendance or concerns about safety are communicated quickly to the school. Students in the sixth form have more freedoms, but their attendance and safety remain a priority.
- Overall, the vast majority of parents say that the school promotes good behaviour and keeps students safe.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Over recent years, the achievement of students when they leave the school has been above average, especially in English and mathematics. This is because individual teachers strive to ensure that each and every student is a successful learner.
- Training and support for teachers is a strength of the school. A variety of approaches, including coaching and small focus group work, successfully motivate teachers to seek and achieve continual improvement.
- Relationships between teachers and their classes are a vital ingredient in this process. Based on mutual trust and respect, students generally value and enjoy lessons. Furthermore, students are motivated to develop their ideas and structure their own learning. By the time they take their GCSE examinations, most have developed secure revision and self-study skills.
- Teachers use interesting and motivating topics to engage students in their learning. Learning is enriched through off-timetable days, projects and visits where they can see subjects being used in real life. The Comenius Project involves students setting up small businesses, such as producing beeswax products and developing 'Café Paramo' links with a community in the Dominican Republic. Teachers use opportunities such as these to develop students' literacy, numeracy and enterprise skills.
- Teachers assess how well students are achieving using a range of indicators, including their attitude, effort and acquisition of skills. This enables them to move students on academically and develop their skills as learners. In Key Stage 3, the school is gradually moving to a system to assess students' progress and achievement without using levels. Leaders are developing ways in which progress information is best used

to support teaching and learning and also to inform parents.

- Students value the way their teachers and learning support assistants support them in their learning, and most make very good progress. Autistic students particularly benefit from in-class support.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Over the last three years, the achievement of students in their GCSE examinations has been high, especially in English, mathematics and science. Students often secure above-average results from below-average starting points.
- GCSE results for French and German were below average in 2014. This was because students were encouraged to study for two languages, taking French in Year 10 and German in Year 11. Students moving to post-16 study in languages benefited from this policy as it better prepared them for their career path. While having slightly lower grades did not disadvantage them, it did impact negatively on the achievement of others who did not achieve high enough grades. The school has recognised this dilemma and has taken steps to adjust the option choice programme to better meet the needs of all students.
- The school does not use early-entry approaches for any subject except French, and this is being adjusted to ensure that no students are disadvantaged.
- Although all groups of students make at least good progress, disadvantaged students have not achieved as highly as others within the school. In 2014, on average, they achieved around a half of a GCSE grade below others in English and in mathematics. Compared with others nationally, however, they are only just below the average GCSE grades in these subjects. While there remain gaps between the progress of disadvantaged students and that of others in the school and nationally, those gaps are closing rapidly. This is because the school has put a wide range of support measures in place to promote rapid progress, especially in literacy and numeracy, and to raise levels of confidence and improve learning skills.
- The most able students are catered for well because the school aims to ensure that all students achieve as highly as possible. These students are offered a wide choice of academic courses, opportunities and significant guidance to prepare them for future career paths. They are prepared very well indeed for their examinations and acquire independent learning skills and habits.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs mostly make very good progress because of the whole-school focus on high-quality support. The skilled, specialist provision offered by the Cedar Centre is based on personalised strategies to help each student access lessons and activities. Consequently, students make good and often outstanding progress.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are given a high priority, especially for those joining the school with low levels of reading and numeracy. English and mathematics lessons, smaller class sizes, extra support, clubs, activities and projects all contribute to ensuring high standards in literacy and numeracy.
- The very small minority of students who attend the pupil referral units benefit from personalised teaching and learning, with a focus on the development of appropriate learning skills and attitudes.
- Achievement in the sixth form is well above the national average.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- The sixth form provision is housed in a purpose-built facility situated next to the Tacchi-Morris Centre. Together they provide an exceptionally stimulating and professional environment for young people to develop dance, drama, musical theatre and film expertise. The sixth form has an excellent reputation and, like the school, is oversubscribed. The majority of students come from schools over a wide area.
- Within this bespoke environment, activities mirror those they would encounter professionally within a performing arts company. Frequent visits from artists and workshop groups enrich students' experiences. Inspirational teaching is a major factor in the very high achievement of students in the BTEC Extended Diplomas in performing arts.
- Some students joining the sixth form have not yet achieved GCSE English and mathematics at grade C or above; a few have only achieved low grades in their examinations. All continue to have separate lessons in these subjects. To try to increase the number of students who successfully achieve these qualifications, more teaching is now delivered within the context of performing arts.
- Students are typically highly motivated by their sixth form education and attend regularly. They fully contribute to the life of the school and are good role models.
- School leaders have shaped the development of the sixth form expertly and are proud of its successes.

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	123883
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	453397

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	Community
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	1,192
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracy Evans
Headteacher	Peter Hoare
Date of previous school inspection	13 December 2006
Telephone number	01823 412396
Fax number	01823 413119
Email address	Sch.585@educ.somerset.gov.uk

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