

Gosford Hill School

Oxford Road, Kidlington, Oxfordshire OX5 2NT

Inspection dates

11–12 February 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the school's leaders do not ensure that pupils make consistently good progress across subjects and year groups.
- Increasing numbers of pupils in Year 11 are making the progress expected nationally in English, mathematics and other subjects. However, this is not the case for all groups of pupils in Key Stage 3.
- New systems of assessment and tracking pupil progress have not yet secured good achievement in all year groups, especially for pupils who are disadvantaged, boys and those who have special educational needs.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not as strong in Key Stage 3 as it is elsewhere in the school.
- Teaching often does not offer sufficient challenge to all pupils. Teachers do not consistently use information about pupils to match learning activities to their abilities.
- Too much teaching in science is weak and does not lead to strong achievement for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons varies according to the subject and teacher. In some areas, low-level disruption slows the pace of learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The senior leadership team and dedicated staff have determinedly made many changes that have improved the school.
- Leaders' monitoring and evaluation of performance information, together with coaching and training for teachers, has led to some recent improvements to teaching.
- Well-established systems and practices ensure that the school's work to safeguard pupils is strong.
- Pupils' personal development, welfare and behaviour are good. The vast majority of pupils behave in a mature and respectful manner in lessons and around the school. Most try hard.
- Governors robustly hold the school's leaders to account. They effectively combine high levels of support with keen scrutiny and challenge.
- Teaching in the sixth form is strong and learners are supported well to meet their aspirations to progress to their chosen universities.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by improving the skills of middle leaders so that they identify where teaching needs improving and tackle it quickly and effectively, especially in science.
- Improve achievement by ensuring that:
 - recommendations from the recent external review of pupil premium are embedded into practice, enabling disadvantaged pupils to make accelerated progress and close the remaining gaps in their attainment with their peers
 - pupils who have special educational needs or disability make the same levels of progress as their peers
 - boys' achievement matches that of girls.
- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 3, so that it is consistently good by ensuring:
 - information about pupils' progress is used to make sure that all lessons are well planned and teachers' expectations of pupils are high
 - teachers' assessment and feedback gives pupils high-quality information on how to improve their work, and teachers ensure that pupils act on this information
 - teachers provide consistent challenge through activities which inspire and engage pupils of all abilities
 - more consistent behaviour management.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The school's leadership requires improvement because leaders' work to improve teaching and raise standards has not had sufficient impact on pupils' achievement across subjects. Leaders have not yet closed the achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, or between boys and girls.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have recently introduced a wide range of initiatives and systems which are beginning to make a contribution towards school improvement. Systems to monitor the standards that pupils are attaining, and the quality of teaching, are now in place and are beginning to take effect, but have not yet had a significant impact on pupil outcomes in all year groups.
- Senior leaders and governors are aware that the skills of some subject leaders are undeveloped. Some are new in their role and their impact on rates of progress for different groups of pupils is not yet evident.
- Middle leaders trust and respect the senior team and appreciate the challenge leaders bring to their work. Working together has ensured improvements to the teaching of Key Stage 4 classes in English, mathematics and across nearly all other subject areas. Leaders and governors are aware that more needs to be done to ensure that all teaching in Key stage 3 is consistently good.
- Teaching is now improving because the headteacher and senior leaders are linking the quality of teaching and assessment to its impact on pupils' progress. As a result, their judgement of teaching is more accurate than it has been in the past. The quality of teaching is checked regularly and appropriate support and coaching is provided to aid improvement.
- Leaders have recently refined the school's systems for staff training and professional development, and have linked these to the school's new monitoring systems. A small team of professional development leaders coordinate support for targeted teachers through coaching and sharing good ideas which teachers then use in their classrooms. It is too early yet to demonstrate the impact of this new system on pupil outcomes.
- Governors and senior leaders responded well to the recent external review of pupil premium. The school has introduced a new pupil premium charter. A revised package of interventions and activities, funded by the pupil premium grant, are targeted towards raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Although published information does not yet show a significant reduction in the gaps in standards achieved by disadvantaged pupils and their peers in mathematics, these gaps are closing for pupils currently in Year 11. More needs to be done to embed these improvements across all subjects, particularly at Key Stage 3.
- Leaders ensure that the Year 7 catch-up funding is used effectively to raise standards of literacy and numeracy for those pupils arriving in the school with lower-than-average attainment in English, mathematics or both subjects.
- The leadership of pupils who have special educational needs or disability has experienced difficulties due to a period of staff turnover. This has impacted on the progress that this group has made. The recently appointed leader of special educational needs has acted quickly to implement a range of suitable support and challenge for this group of pupils, but it is too soon to see an impact on their outcomes.
- Senior leaders and governors work closely with an independent adviser on key aspects of school improvement. Regular monitoring and review visits take place to confirm both the accuracy of leaders' self-evaluation and the quality and impact of their improvement work. In addition, close working relationships with other local schools have led to better teaching and leadership in a range of subjects.
- Leaders ensure that the school's maxim of 'learn, lead, inspire' is met through a curriculum that offers a broad and balanced education, together with a wide range of after-school enrichment opportunities including school productions, sporting events, trips and visits. At Key Stage 4, all pupils engage in appropriate work experience and receive good next steps guidance for their chosen careers or future study. Consequently, nearly all pupils progress to sustained places in education, employment or training.
- House assemblies are used particularly effectively to promote opportunities for reflection, and tutor time is used well to stimulate interest in a broad range of issues, inspired by current affairs. This, plus a well-planned religious education programme at Key Stage 3 and a range of opportunities in other subjects, combine to promote a good awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have responded well to a recent external review of governance. The governing body have ambitious aims and a clear vision for the school and they manage the performance of the headteacher well. The wide variety of training that governors are undertaking is giving them the ability to offer

increasingly robust and systematic challenge to specific aspects of the school's work that are not yet good.

- A planned calendar of focused meetings and visits enables governors to evaluate aspects of the school such as safeguarding, provision for pupils who have special educational needs and the quality of teaching. This has ensured that they have a good understanding of the school's day-to-day work.
 - Leaders report regularly on their areas of responsibility and governors check that they have suitable targets to bring about improvements.
 - Through effective checks on the fair and consistent application of policies, governors ensure that only good performance is rewarded with pay rises. They also make sure that finances are managed well, including checking that pupil premium funding is used to improve disadvantaged pupils' outcomes.
 - Governors scrutinise performance information thoroughly and use it to assess the success of the school against its own targets well.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils are well-looked-after at Gosford Hill School. All staff and governors receive suitable safeguarding training. This means that staff understand and carry out the school's policy and procedures well. Risk assessments and staff recruitment processes are sound.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good enough across all subjects, or within some subjects such as science, to secure good progress for all pupils. Although strong in English and becoming stronger in mathematics, pupils' progress in Key Stage 3 is inconsistent.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have not had a big enough impact on closing the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of others at Key Stage 3, nor the gaps in progress between pupils who have special educational needs or disability and their peers in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Teaching has not improved sufficiently to eradicate the gaps between the achievements of boys and girls in all subjects.
- Some teachers are not making good enough use of pupils' progress information to ensure that the work they set is suitably demanding for all pupils. This is particularly the case in science. In some science classes, pupils are not being required to explain key scientific concepts or link ideas to form explanations. In addition, some teachers do not insist that pupils complete the tasks set and this further slows pupils' progress. The new subject leader has secured some improvements to Year 11 teaching but more improvement is needed for younger year groups.
- The impact of teachers' questioning is variable. Some teachers, for example in English and catering, use their good subject knowledge and assessment skills to design engaging learning tasks and use probing questions to challenge pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils make good progress in lessons and over time. However, some teachers spend too long posing questions to the whole class that only a minority of pupils respond to. Consequently, not all the pupils, particularly the most able, are stretched sufficiently.
- Most teachers follow agreed approaches to giving feedback on pupils' work when they mark it. This is starting to have an impact on raising standards. In some subjects such as English, drama and geography teachers give regular assessment-based feedback which promotes learning for all pupils. Leaders are aware that this approach is not yet used so successfully across all subject areas.
- Where teachers know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses well, this helps to foster good learning. For example, positive relationships in the creative arts subjects support confident independent learning and progress over time. In some areas, such as French and science, teachers are less familiar with their pupils' prior attainment and so learning activities are not always sufficiently challenging enough.
- When lessons are less challenging, some Key Stage 3 pupils in particular can tend to be passive and not engage in learning. Occasionally, particularly in science, a few pupils can disrupt learning with off-task behaviour.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the 16 to 19 study programmes is much more effective; teachers know their learners well and set regular tests using examination questions from previous years. They model good answers and provide detailed feedback to demonstrate how sixth formers can improve on their performance in future tests. Teachers modify their teaching in response to any misconceptions highlighted by learners' answers to test questions.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Gosford Hill School cares a great deal about pupils' personal development and working relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Key Stage 4 pupils told inspectors that they particularly value the extra time and coaching that teachers willingly provide in English and mathematics as well as the wide range of after-school activities and trips. Parents agree and believe that these good relationships underpin the progress that their children make.
- Pupils are safe and secure in the school and they feel content here. Well-established systems are in place to offer help and support to vulnerable pupils, sometimes involving external agencies when appropriate. A large majority of parents responding to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, affirmed that their child is well-looked-after at school and happy here.
- Pupils value the opportunities that they have to learn about keeping themselves safe, in and around the school, as well as online. Learning about e-safety is given an appropriately high priority.
- Attendance is in line with the national average. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability have contributed disproportionately to absence levels in the past, but there are good indications that this is currently being addressed, although gaps do remain.
- Exclusions for poor behaviour are falling dramatically and are only used sparingly and as a last resort. In the past, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability have had higher exclusion rates than their peers. The school's recent investment in better resources and systems to support these groups of pupils has led to improved behaviour and attitudes. As a result, the differences in exclusion rates are being reduced.
- The small number of pupils in Key Stage 4 who learn elsewhere for part of the week benefit from their experience of a broader and more vocational curriculum. Their progress and welfare is overseen by a nominated member of staff who liaises frequently with the other providers. These pupils' learning in core subjects when back in school is carefully organised.
- Careers advice and guidance is well organised and effective and a good range of careers reference material is available. Pupils in Key Stage 4 are able to speak with confidence about the range of opportunities open to them at age 16, including the variety of courses, different institutions and qualifications needed to support their aspirations. They are well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well and show good attitudes towards learning. The school's house system and mixed-age tutor groups encourage a family approach to the welfare of pupils, encouraging them to socialise well and have a clear empathy for each other. They willingly engage in a variety of leadership opportunities such as becoming reading buddies to support younger pupils or making presentations in assemblies.
- In most lessons, pupils show an enthusiasm for their learning and engage well in the tasks they are given. Punctuality is generally good and the pupils come well equipped and ready to learn.
- In a small minority of lessons, behaviour is not as impressive. In these lessons, not all pupils receive the challenge they need to maintain their interest or keep them fully engaged in their work. Where this happens, it tends to be a small number of the boys who can disrupt learning with chatter or silly, off-task behaviour.
- Bullying is rare and limited to a small number of pupils and tends to be about day-to-day relationship problems. Pupils are very confident that any apprehensions can be shared with adults in the school whom they trust to handle any potentially awkward situations sensitively to resolve problems quickly.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils' outcomes, despite improvements, are not good. Examination results in 2015 showed that overall attainment increased on the year before; however, boys made significantly less progress than girls, and pupils who have special educational needs or disability made less progress than their peers.
- In 2015, although gaps between disadvantaged pupils' progress and the progress made by other pupils

narrowed in English, they remained wide in mathematics. Currently, in Year 11, better teaching has ensured that these gaps are narrowing in both subjects. However, in Key Stage 3 there are still gaps between this group and their peers in mathematics.

- Different groups of pupils do not make equally good progress in their learning. In Key Stages 3 and 4, in English, mathematics and science, gaps currently remain too wide between the progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disability and their peers.
- In 2015, pupils from all starting points made strong progress in English and the proportions making expected progress were in line with national averages in mathematics. In mathematics and science, the most-able pupils currently in the school are not consistently exceeding the progress expected of them across all year groups. This group have made slower progress because challenge and high expectations are not provided in all lessons and learning activities are not always matched to their abilities.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as, and frequently better than, their peers in the school. This is because the support that they receive is well matched to their needs and allows them to play a full part in lessons and the life of the school.
- Outcomes are not consistently good in all subject areas. Not all teachers check pupils' learning regularly enough to provide effective support and guidance for any who lag behind. Inspectors' scrutiny of current progress information and pupils' work indicates variable rates of progress, and a variable quality of work over time being produced in different subject areas.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Although the sixth form has reduced in size, the school provides effective careers advice and guidance and a suitable range of study pathways with clear routes to further study or employment. Learners in the sixth form are ambitious; most progress to further education, training or employment in their chosen field and many progress to good universities.
- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form well. They are ambitious and have detailed plans, and strategies in place to achieve them. The entry criteria have been reviewed, and a wider range of vocational subjects is being introduced in order to increase numbers of learners and improve on the number of learners who remain on the course right through to the end of Year 13.
- Subject leaders regularly check learners' progress towards demanding targets. A raft of support measures is delivered by subject teachers and tutors for any learners who start to fall behind. Sixth formers take a pride in their school and they appreciate the support that teachers give them.
- Teaching in the sixth form is much stronger than elsewhere in the school. Teachers have high expectations and use their good subject knowledge to design learning activities which engage and challenge learners. Teachers regularly ask probing questions which demand that learners think deeply and make connections between topics. Detailed feedback enables many learners to work independently to improve the quality of their work. As a result, they learn well in lessons and over time.
- Sixth formers make progress in line with national averages. Attainment in the range of A-level subjects, and the small but increasing number of vocational subjects, has been good in the past and continues to be so. Although many learners achieved the A-level grades they needed to take their places at university, for some their progress was below average in a small number of subjects. To improve outcomes in these subjects, leaders ensure that teachers work together to share good practice of what constitutes good A-level teaching.
- This year, progress in most A levels is good, but in some subjects such as further mathematics, psychology and sociology, progress is less strong. The progress being made in vocational subjects is consistently good. Leaders are aware of these variations and are reducing them by working closely with heads of department and subject teachers.
- Leaders ensure that the small number of learners who entered the sixth form without English or mathematics at GCSE grade C or above are supported to retake the exam and improve their grades. This is a significant improvement on the previous year.
- The conduct of sixth formers across the school is exemplary and they provide good role models for younger pupils. Sixth formers are mature, tolerant and respectful of difference. They have a very good understanding of how to look after themselves and be safe.
- Tutor time is used well to reflect on social and moral issues and help learners prepare for adult life. In addition, sixth formers told inspectors that they particularly value the wide range of enrichment activities that the school offers. Many learners take up leadership roles, for example, such as mentoring younger pupils or volunteer for community service. This contributes well to their development as responsible citizens.

School details

Unique reference number	138897
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10001080

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	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	885
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anna Moon
Headteacher	Stephen Bizley
Telephone number	01865 374971
Website	www.gosford-hill.oxon.sch.uk
Email address	office.4060@gosford-hill.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8-9 February 2012

Information about this school

- Gosford Hill School is an average-sized secondary school with a small sixth form.
- The school converted to become an academy in November 2012. When its predecessor school, also called Gosford Hill School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall.
- There are more girls than boys in the school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is below the national average. Some pupils are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- A small number of pupils in Key Stage 4 attend alternative provision at TRAX, hospital school or football academies to study vocational courses.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is in line with the national average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan is very low.
- Just over a fifth of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Most pupils speak English as their first language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils in 36 lessons in order to gather evidence to contribute to inspectors' evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment. In addition, walks around the school were conducted jointly with members of the school leadership team to observe what the school provides and pupils' learning. Inspectors also attended tutor periods, assemblies, visited the library and observed pupils' conduct around the site at break and lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the governing body, senior leaders, teachers and support staff, the school's improvement adviser and several groups of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation including that relating to: policies; the minutes of governors' meetings; strategic planning documents; safety; self-evaluation documents; pupil achievement; behaviour and attendance information and a wide range of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in 100 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

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