

Hinchingbrooke School

Brampton Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE29 3BN

Inspection dates	26–27 April 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- There has been a marked improvement in provision and outcomes since the last inspection.
- GCSE results in 2015 were significantly better than the previous year, with overall standards rising to well above the national figure.
- Currently, from their different starting points, pupils make good progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The principal, supported by senior leaders, has carefully steered the school's improvement and strengthened teaching, even in subjects that have experienced staffing difficulties.
- New leaders have taken effective action to target support and improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability.
- The sixth form is good. Learners achieve well because of effective teaching and good guidance and support
- The 'Gateway' alternative provision in school, and the arrangements to educate a small minority of pupils off-site, ensures that their varying academic and welfare needs are met effectively.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel safe and well looked after. Staff know pupils and prioritise their well-being and safety.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and, in general, behave very well in lessons. Their conduct around the school is good and often exemplary.
- Governors provide effective challenge and support for the principal and senior team.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Improvements in science and modern foreign languages have not been as rapid as in other subjects.
- Targeted support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs or disability has not yet closed gaps in performance.
- Some parents and carers feel that the school does not communicate well enough or respond to their concerns about achievement in science.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement where provision has only recently been strengthened by:
 - plugging gaps in pupils' learning, particularly where pupils have not yet experienced high-quality specialist subject teaching
 - securing the best possible outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability
 - sharing the best practice in teaching and use of assessment so that all teachers have the same high expectations of what pupils should achieve in each lesson.

- Develop communication with parents and respond to their concerns so that they are clear about what the school is doing to support their child's academic progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The principal has shown considerable determination in leading the school's improvement by focusing sharply on the most vital issues in order to fulfil the school's vision 'to inspire excellence and fulfil potential'. He has worked diligently to recruit skilled leaders who are committed to making a positive difference for pupils.
- Leaders and governors know the school well and accurately identify its priorities for further improvement. Their development plan underpins all of their work. For example, achievement in mathematics has improved considerably for the least able, and the school's feedback and assessment policy underpins improvements in pupils' progress.
- Leaders have successfully strengthened teaching. They review useful information about pupil achievement and use this to decide whether staff should receive pay increases. From this monitoring, teachers receive training which improves their teaching. Leaders also support staff to develop their own careers. For example, they have inspired a number of their support staff to train as teachers. Staff acknowledge the positive impact of training on their own effectiveness in the classroom.
- Middle leadership is effective in securing improvement. Most subject leaders regularly check on pupils' achievement and attitudes, and intervene with those who are struggling or not trying hard enough. Effective line-management systems have made a positive contribution to the overall quality of teaching since the last inspection.
- Leaders are using the school's additional funding effectively to improve opportunities and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. A new assistant principal is pinpointing what help each individual needs to be successful and is ensuring that they get it. This includes additional revision materials, the loan of a laptop, literacy intervention, motivational speakers and tuition-based revision sessions. Additionally, this intensive work is giving staff specific guidance about how they can plan more effectively to help these pupils to learn well in their lessons.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability has improved. New leadership, qualified and effective teaching assistants, and accurate assessment mean that more pupils are getting the right help in their learning. Much of this work is new and has not yet had enough time to improve overall achievement in all areas.
- Leaders have created a broad and balanced curriculum, and pupils are given useful guidance on how to make suitable choices when deciding on which courses and subjects to pursue. There is a wide variety of clubs, extra exam tuition, trips and experiences. Many pupils get involved in these and say that this is increasing their confidence to develop new skills.
- Pupils who access the 'Gateway School', on-site alternative education for individuals who find accessing mainstream school challenging, receive valuable support, guidance and care, which boosts their academic achievement and effectively promotes their personal development. Some pupils with particular needs also benefit from education off-site that is carefully organised and well monitored.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are well prepared to be the next generation of adults in modern Britain. They generally work together well and show respect for different viewpoints and beliefs. The curriculum actively encourages these values through tutor time, personal and social health lessons, external speakers and assemblies. Many older pupils act as responsible role models. For example, they support others who have little or no English when they first join the school. This helps those who are new to develop their language skills, access their lessons and make friends quickly.
- Leaders have taken suitable steps to recruit, retain and train suitable staff in shortage subjects, particularly in science. This has mitigated the impact of staffing difficulties. However, the lack of high-quality specialist teaching has impacted on the progress of some pupils, and has led to frustration from some pupils and a few parents, some of whom are understandably outspoken about weaker teaching.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body is effective. Governors have a wide variety of backgrounds and skills and use them to monitor progress against the school priorities for improvement. They are relentless in their dedication to raising achievement.
 - Governors visit regularly, review the information that they receive thoroughly, and ask insightful questions. They challenge the senior leadership team, particularly about pupil achievement and the difference the additional funding is making to pupil outcomes.

- The governing body ensures that pupils are safe. Governors take their responsibility for safeguarding very seriously. The safeguarding governor is relatively new to this particular role but thoroughly understands statutory guidance and uses this effectively to check on school systems. There is also a second governor who regularly spot checks the single central record. The governing body makes sure that the staff are thoroughly checked, well trained and maintain pupils' safety and well-being.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff training is regular and specific. There is a range of curriculum and online information accessed by pupils about how to stay safe. The work of the assistant principal, who acts as the designated safeguarding lead, and the inclusion team, is highly professional, very thorough and precise. They have clear systems that they review and improve to ensure that the work they do is timely, effective and makes a difference.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and, where substantive staff are in post, is consistently good and often outstanding. Effective teaching enables most pupils to make good progress and achieve well. Teaching is particularly strong in English, mathematics and humanities subjects, as well as in music and art.
- Evidence from the school's monitoring of teaching and learning shows that teachers have high expectations and make good use of assessment information to set ambitious targets and plan work that is both challenging and interesting. Teachers have the expertise and confidence to redirect and extend pupils' learning and explore ideas in depth. In one Year 7 geography lesson, pupils were questioning what they saw on a video clip as they could not understand why there was snow on a mountain, when they believed that this should not be the case. The teacher then skilfully used the pupil's question to ask the rest of the class to come up with an explanation. In a Year 11 art lesson focused on pottery, pupils were applying their skills to mould and create high-quality work, with one pupil developing his own form of clay.
- Additional in-lesson support and extra-curricular tuition is helping the most-able pupils to fulfil their potential and achieve excellence, especially in English, humanities, art and physical education. They are positive about the opportunities that they get to improve their work and the chance to undertake 'taster' lessons when preparing to choose their courses for future study. These are sometimes in qualifications of which they have limited previous experience, for example astronomy.
- Most teachers follow the school's policy on providing feedback on pupils' work. Inspectors saw many examples of subject-specific feedback which helped pupils to improve their learning. However, teachers' expectations about the presentation of work are inconsistent.
- Learning and progress for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability is improving because staff are forensic in identifying barriers to good achievement, and pupils' needs are more precisely identified. Teachers are routinely held to account for pupils' progress and achievement.
- Literacy development, especially for those pupils who have gaps in their learning, is good. This is because there is an accurate identification of pupils' needs, precise planning to help them improve and a range of creative activities to enable them catch up. One example was a literacy session, where everyone was becoming more confident in a range of skills, including public speaking.
- Weaker teaching, notably where the school has struggled to recruit and retain well-qualified staff, has hampered efforts to develop consistently good learning and progress. However, leaders have been resourceful in finding solutions, and other subject staff have worked hard to take on the additional burden of planning and assessment to secure reasonable outcomes in these classes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are able to talk confidently and clearly about different issues. They appreciate the work of the staff who support them in their studies and look after their welfare. They generally enjoy school but are very specific about where they are not getting enough challenge or support. They are welcoming to new people and often volunteer to help those who are new to the school, by showing them around or mentoring them.

- Pupils are enthusiastic about the opportunities that are available to them. A large number are involved in the well-organised school council and various school committees. This council acts as a way for pupils to develop leadership roles and express their views to the senior leadership team and staff. Pupils speak highly about all that is on offer to them, such as the sports facilities, the additional revision tuition, the music lessons, lunchtime clubs, visits and trips. The school performance is also an opportunity for a large number of them to show their various skills in areas such as set design. One pupil spoke about how this helped them to 'make new friends' in other year groups and feel a part of the school.
- Pupils care for each other and their community. Many support each other in their learning and revision. They also respect each other's different beliefs, including others' rights to access different provision for prayer within the school. Some pupils undertake community volunteering and charity work. This helps them to build their confidence to talk and work with people of different backgrounds and beliefs.
- Most parents, pupils and staff are very positive about the welfare support provided by the school. The work of the year teams, support staff and inclusion groups is personalised. Pupils get advice and guidance that is relevant to them as an individual and supports them to make informed choices about the next stages in their training, education or employment. As a result, they make highly successful choices, alongside their parents.
- Pupils are well looked after and know how to keep themselves safe. The curriculum provides many opportunities to help them to avoid dangers, including some very thorough work on healthy relationships. Tutorial sessions, assemblies, external speakers and 'personal development' days all contribute to developing this. Although a small minority of pupils and parents expressed a concern about bullying, they generally say that when it does occur, it is dealt with effectively by staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils conduct themselves impeccably and walk around the large school estate sensibly and considerately. They move through corridors calmly and navigate the large school well so that they arrive to lessons punctually. They were very helpful to inspectors who were lost or needed directions. Break and lunchtimes are orderly, and pupils interact well with each other and adults. Some attend the various lunchtime clubs that are available to them and participate fully, including a very effective history club seen during the inspection.
- Pupils respect and look after their school. They use bins for their litter, keep to the footpaths to ensure that the grassed areas are well kept and take good care of the buildings. They appreciate the extra performance and sports facilities and use these appropriately.
- Most lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils want to do well and as a result are very appreciative of the support offered to them. They listen well and try their best. Where pupils and some parents raised concerns about behaviour, they were clear this was only where teaching was not as strong and that the leadership team dealt with this poor behaviour effectively.
- Pupils value their education and most take responsibility for their conduct. Attendance is good and overall persistent absence is low. Attendance for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability is not as good as their classmates; however, school systems are now beginning to have an effect on improving this.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Achievement has improved sharply since the last inspection, with significantly better GCSE results in 2015 compared with the previous year. Results in English, mathematics and humanities are particularly strong, with pupils making better progress and achieving higher standards, overall, than nationally,
- Inspection evidence supports the school's view that results are likely to improve further over the next few years. Predictions, based on accurate assessments, indicate that even subjects that underperformed in 2015, for example science, will achieve better this year.
- The learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability has hitherto lagged behind that of their classmates. However, current school information and the evidence seen during the inspection confirm that these groups are now making significantly better progress because of the effective interventions employed by the school. Gaps in performance are narrowing, both for Year 11 pupils and particularly for younger pupils, who will have more time to benefit as recently introduced strategies are embedded.

- The most-able pupils achieve well, particularly in English and mathematics, where the proportions of pupils achieving better than expected progress exceeded the national figures in 2015. The school's work to promote pupils' independence and resilience prepares the most-able pupils particularly well for the next phase of their education, post-16.
- The provision for those who are educated partly through the 'Gateway' at the school or through off-site education is very good. Relationships are excellent as staff know each of their pupils well. Leaders in this area have enormous energy and persistence. They are committed to ensuring that these pupils experience success and achieve well. Pupils are taught how to resolve their own challenging situations well through one-to-one support and counselling. Leaders find the right courses for pupils and monitor their achievement, attendance and welfare well. As a result, many complete their courses, successfully gaining the expected qualifications.
- Pupils are ready to move onto the next stages in their training, employment or education. The effective support teams and the curriculum guidance on offer mean that pupils know the range of options that they can choose from and they are helped to achieve the course of their choice. Consequently, almost all pupils attend appropriate courses.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The sixth form is good. It is well led, teaching is proficient and the curriculum offers a range of opportunities to learners to prepare them for the next stage in their lives.
- The curriculum meets the needs of learners. The sixth form is popular and larger than most school sixth forms. Although the majority of the learners undertake AS or A level courses, there are also vocational options, which are popular with some. Those who wish to take courses not available at the school get access to these at local colleges with specialist facilities. Leaders review the subjects on offer and have clear strategic plans to develop this over the next few years. For those learners who have not achieved grade C or above in GCSE English and mathematics, the school provides additional timetabled lessons and support. This is resulting in improved results in resit examinations. This is especially strong in English, where, more often than not, learners are achieving their Grade C in their retakes.
- Staff use their thorough understanding of subjects and of the examination syllabus to plan effective lessons. For example, in one Year 13 mathematics lesson, the teacher used the common errors made in examinations to explain how to avoid these. Learners were able to then break down the complex topic into manageable sections. Additionally, in an A-level history lesson, precise questioning was used by the teacher so that learners were well prepared to consider a number of different viewpoints in their written response.
- Personal development and welfare in the sixth form is good. Regular 'personal development' days, safe driving talks, tutorials and careers events ensure that learners get access to impartial and wide-ranging advice. There are extra-curricular opportunities, including chances to take part in sports, dance, drama and music. External speakers, tutor time mentoring, the school council, newspapers, community work and work experience also support learners to get more opportunities beyond their study. This provision helps learners to get ready for their next stages as citizens in Britain. Consequently, almost all go on to study or train in highly appropriate careers, further study or training.
- Learners are happy, courteous and responsible. They actively volunteer for a large number of roles in the school, such as running the school council and the school committees, running their own extra-curricular clubs and much more. They are positive about the support that they get in school, although a few would like some more advice on post-18 apprenticeships to build on the work that the school already does in this area.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good and improving. Leaders set high targets, and expectations are raised about what learners need to do to achieve high standards.

School details

Unique reference number	137475
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10011800

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

Type of school	Other secondary
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	1872
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	387
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Fenney
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Andrew Goulding
Telephone number	01480 375700
Website	www.hinchingbrooke.net
Email address	communications@hinchbk.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 February 2014

Information about this school

- Hinchingsbrooke School converted to become an academy on 1 September 2011.
- This is a large secondary academy with a large sixth form.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special education needs or disability is in line with national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium (government funding to support disadvantaged pupils and looked after children) is well below the national average.
- A small number of pupils spend some of their time in the on-site provision known as the Gateway School. A few pupils attend off-site provision at a small number of registered providers, who are recommended by the local authority.
- The academy meets the government floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 61 lessons or parts of lessons, including learning walks on behaviour and safety. A number of joint observations were carried out with the academy's senior leaders. Inspectors also made short visits to tutor periods.
- Meetings were held with a number of nominated senior and middle leaders, governors, pupils and the local authority.
- Pupils' views were sought between classes, during lessons and breaktimes. Inspectors also scrutinised work from history, science, English, geography and modern foreign languages.
- Inspectors analysed the academy's own parent survey results, 193 responses to Parent View, the online survey provided to parents by Ofsted, 155 responses to pupil questionnaires and 101 responses to staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team scrutinised documents which included the academy's self-evaluation and action planning documents, minutes of governors' meetings, the academy's own assessment information, safeguarding records and school policies and procedures.
- Inspectors scrutinised the various forms of communication the academy uses, including the website and information sent to and from parents and other stakeholders.
- Following the original inspection in April 2016, Ofsted decided that additional evidence was needed to secure the judgements. On 16 May, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors visited the school to gather the additional evidence and spoke to five senior leaders.

Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Ceri Evans	Ofsted Inspector
Cecelia Moore	Ofsted Inspector
Paul O'Shea	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Brooker	Her Majesty's Inspector

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