

# Mount Grace School

Church Road, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 1EZ

## Inspection dates

31 January–1 February 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Leaders have failed to make significant or sustained improvements to the achievement, behaviour and attendance of pupils over time. Consequently, leadership is inadequate.
- Significant inadequacies in the monitoring of achievement have led to continued underperformance. Improvement plans are not robust.
- Middle leadership is developing but is not effective.
- Governors are overgenerous in their assessment of the quality of provision. They do not use the array of information available to challenge leaders effectively over the school's inconsistent picture of performance.
- Leaders have not used the additional funding to provide effective support for disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They have not thoroughly checked to ensure that the help given has made a difference.
- Leaders have not secured consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. An overgenerous view of the quality of education the school provides, combined with recruitment difficulties and staffing turbulence, particularly in science and mathematics, have slowed the pace of improvement.
- The attendance and behaviour of pupils require improvement. Inappropriate language is heard too often around the site. Incidents of poor behaviour are not reducing quickly enough. Pupils' attendance remains below the national average with little sign of improvement.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Although achievement is rising, attendance is not good enough. Some of the key components of the 16 to 19 programme of study are not being met consistently well. Not enough pupils partake in work experience, or work-related learning, that meets their aspirations and abilities.

### The school has the following strengths

- Teaching, learning and assessment are improving in English.
- Most parents are positive about the school, especially about the well thought out Year 7 transition programme into the school.
- Pupils are well cared for and know how to keep themselves safe. They report that bullying is rare and dealt with effectively by staff.

## Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - creating more robust development plans which have clear milestones so that leaders and governors can measure their impact rigorously and routinely
  - sharpening monitoring systems so that they take greater account of the progress that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make when evaluating the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
  - training governors so that they are better equipped to challenge leaders over the quality of provision in the school
  - ensuring that leaders and governors routinely evaluate the impact of pupil premium expenditure to better link spending to activities that improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, including for the most able disadvantaged pupils
  - supporting middle leaders to strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and achievement in their respective areas.
- Raise achievement by:
  - accelerating the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they attain higher grades by the time that they reach Year 11
  - urgently improving the quality of provision in mathematics and science, so that pupils make better progress from their various starting points.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form by:
  - ensuring that staff use their understanding of what pupils already know and can do to plan activities which challenge the most able and support the least able to make good progress
  - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons and over time
  - sharing effective assessment practice, particularly in giving feedback to pupils, so that pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work and further their learning.
- Strengthen pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - cutting out pupils' casual use of inappropriate language

- reducing further the poor behaviour that leads to fixed-term exclusions, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - improving the attendance of all pupils and reducing persistent absence, especially for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who attend alternative provision.
- Improve outcomes in the sixth form by:
- raising standards in academic subjects
  - improving the attendance and punctuality of students, especially in Year 13
  - sharpening leaders' evaluations of how effective they have been in ensuring that students secure appropriate progression routes in the various types of employment, training or education that they undertake when they leave the sixth form
  - ensuring that a greater proportion of students undertake work experience or work-related learning that is directly related to their aspirations, interests and/or current studies.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium and the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Leaders have been unable to secure stability and consistency in the quality of teaching. Significant staffing turbulence, including redundancies and challenges to recruit effectively to vital areas, means that pupils continue to experience inconsistency in the quality of the provision that they receive. Consequently, pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders and governors are overgenerous in their evaluation of the quality of provision in the school. They place too great an emphasis on small improvements, and do not challenge one another tenaciously enough on how well all pupils are doing.
- Leaders' systems for monitoring achievement are not effective in spotting quickly where things are going wrong. For example, leaders' systems did not identify the underperformance for pupils in 2016 until it was too late to make a difference to those pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders do not use the additional funding that they receive well enough to raise standards. The impact of Year 7 catch-up funding, as well as that for disadvantaged pupils and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is not evaluated rigorously enough. Too often, leaders use this money to support pupils, with little review of the specific impact that it has on the pupils for whom it is intended. Consequently these specific groups of pupils are not achieving, attending or behaving consistently well.
- Leaders have not been able to secure consistently good behaviour around the school or improve the attendance of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, there is a significant core of pupils who are still not attending well enough or behaving appropriately.
- Leaders' view of the quality of teaching does not take into account the progress that pupils make. For example, leaders reported that their monitoring of teaching and learning indicated that almost all teaching was good or outstanding last year, even though pupils made significantly less progress overall than other pupils nationally. Consequently, leaders have an overgenerous view of the quality of teaching.
- Leaders have recruited new middle leaders to the core subject areas and are supporting them to bring about improvements in their respective areas. However, the quality of teaching, most notably but not exclusively in mathematics and science, is inconsistent. Although these new middle leaders are starting to make a difference, it is too early in their work to see a significant and sustained impact on pupils' outcomes across all year groups.
- While most staff, parents and pupils are positive about the school's work, there are a significant minority who raise concerns about the high staff turnover, the size of classes, the high number of cover lessons, and the quality of teaching, especially in mathematics and science. There are also a number who raise concerns about low-level disruptive behaviour and the management of it.

- Leaders have now prioritised the need for more robust, reliable and informative tracking of progress and attainment. New systems and processes have been introduced to inform leaders where additional support needs to be targeted. The school works with 'Herts for Learning' and has started working with a number of other local schools to moderate and standardise their assessments in some subjects, particularly English. This has enabled leaders to feel more confident in the assessment process from September 2016.
- The school provides a broad and balanced range of subjects across the three key stages. These are supported by extra-curricular activities, trips and visits, including visits to Iceland and Dubai. A small number of pupils access the school's own 'Oasis' provision. Here they are supported with homework clubs, personalised interventions and resources to enable them to catch up or complete work. Leaders also monitor the attendance and overarching achievement of the small number of pupils who attend some form of alternative provision, or off-site provision, as part of their curriculum entitlement.

### **Governance**

- Governors are too reliant on the information provided by leaders and do not scrutinise or challenge this enough. Despite the fact that pupils in both 2015 and 2016 did not make enough progress, governors have not been sufficiently demanding in what they have required as evidence of leaders' impact. Consequently, governors have an overly positive view on teaching, learning, attendance, behaviour and achievement.
- Governors have not been effective in holding leaders to account for the impact of the use of the pupil premium funding. They have failed to make sure that this external funding to the school has helped disadvantaged pupils to make sufficient progress, or to attend school regularly.
- Governors are well trained and aware of their statutory duties for safeguarding pupils. However, they have not been sufficiently sharp in their monitoring of this. For example, in their review of the single central record, they had not identified that an essential check was missing.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Teachers have had regular training in safeguarding, including the dangers of radicalisation, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. Staff are aware of what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. There are also clear systems in place for the induction of new staff, including online training.
- Most pupils report that they feel safe at school. Pupils learn about a range of strategies to keep themselves safe. Pupils can talk about what they have learned about e-safety. Parents' replies to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, typically agree that their children are safe at school. Pupils told inspectors that there were staff whom they could go to if they had a problem or a concern, and that they appreciated this.
- Leaders make appropriate checks on the staff whom they employ in the school. However, when inspectors first checked the single central record, there were some minor clerical errors. These were corrected during the inspection.

- Staff make timely referrals when they are concerned about pupils. Leaders liaise with external agencies appropriately.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching varies too much throughout the school and does not enable pupils to make consistently good progress.
- Teachers do not use assessment information about their pupils sharply enough to ensure that they plan stimulating activities to stretch pupils and make them think. When work is not pitched at the right level, the most able pupils complete activities quickly and are made to wait for others, while the least able have not fully understood and/or completed activities before teachers move on.
- Teachers' use of questioning within lessons is often weak. Too often, pupils are asked questions which require low-level responses and pupils are given limited opportunities to explain their reasoning. Typically in mathematics, pupils are able to give an answer but they do not explain the process they used, so the opportunity to probe pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking are missed. At times, the urgency to move on to the next task means that pupils lose the opportunity to ask their own questions of their teacher. This inhibits pupils' progress.
- Pupils are not learning new knowledge quickly enough, nor being given sufficient opportunities to apply their learning and deepen their understanding. For example, evidence of work in languages at key stage 3 shows that pupils learn new vocabulary or develop a basic grammatical understanding. However, pupils do not apply this to more complex written and verbal communication as soon as they are ready.
- Pupils are not confident enough in their learning to tackle harder tasks or to make mistakes. For example, where teachers offer activities of varying difficulty, many pupils, including the most able, opt for the easier ones. Even where teachers encourage pupils to try the harder tasks, pupils are reluctant to do so. Consequently, pupils are not making the rapid progress from their starting points of which they are capable.
- Weaker teaching, learning and assessment in science and mathematics are not facilitating rapid enough progress for pupils across the key stages. Teachers' expectations vary markedly across these subjects. Too often, the pace and activities in the lesson do not meet the needs of pupils over time to ensure that they make good progress.
- Teachers are not applying the school's agreed feedback policy consistently. This means that some pupils do not receive the guidance or help that they need to correct mistakes, or deepen their subject knowledge. Too often, pupils are making the same mistakes over time.
- Learning support assistants (LSAs) usually provide helpful support to pupils. They monitor pupils well and provide effective help and guidance as and when required. Pupils respond positively to this support. This was seen clearly in modern foreign languages where the LSA could speak to pupils in target language and therefore support their learning and increase their confidence.

- Where practice is better, teachers have higher expectations of pupils, provide helpful feedback and plan work that makes the most of the learning time. This was seen in English and modern foreign languages.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Requires improvement**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Leaders have not been able to improve the attendance of all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, attendance has been below the national average for three years and shows little sign of improvement.
- Although pupils are safe, and work is undertaken to monitor the most vulnerable pupils, leaders are not sharp enough around their administration of some of this work.
- The school has a well thought out transition plan for incoming Year 7 pupils. Pupils and parents were enthusiastic about this provision. Current Year 7 pupils feel that this made them confident to join the school in September.
- Pupils are well cared for. Leaders ensure that the school is inclusive and that staff are approachable.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Although school information indicates some reduction in poor behaviour, fixed-term exclusions and low-level disruptive behaviour are still too frequent. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities account for a disproportionate number of these sanctions. Although behaviour in lessons is normally calm, all inspectors heard the use of inappropriate language around the corridors and between lessons.
- Pupils are generally polite when talking to adults and they are articulate about their experience in the school. Older pupils in particular told inspectors that while behaviour is improving, they are still often frustrated by the behaviour of their peers when this affects their learning.
- A significant minority of parents are frustrated by the relatively high proportion of staff changes and supply cover. They say that this impacts on the relationships that pupils develop with staff, and on behaviour and learning in lessons.
- Most pupils exhibit some pride in their work. This is especially the case in English, art and graphics. However, this is still variable, and teachers do not consistently encourage pupils to improve their quality work.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Most year groups enter the school with attainment that is broadly average. Since the previous inspection in January 2015, the overall progress of pupils in Year 11, in both 2015 and 2016, has remained significantly below the national average for each year. This represents a picture of poor historic achievement.
- In 2016, the progress that pupils made in English was significantly below the national average. However, improved teaching and thorough moderation processes mean that pupils' current progress in English is more secure.
- In 2016, the progress that pupils made in mathematics was broadly in line with the national average, although the least able pupils made significantly less progress. However, current teaching, learning and assessment are more variable, especially in Year 11.
- The performance of science for the last three years has been poor. The progress that pupils have made has consistently been in the lowest 10% of schools nationally. Although outcomes are now improving, the current teaching, learning and assessment in science are variable.
- Disadvantaged pupils in 2015 and 2016 underachieved. The progress that they made was significantly below the respective national averages for each year group, most notably in English and science. Disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress in English. However, it is not clear from leaders' monitoring how the additional funding is helping pupils to catch up with others nationally.
- Those pupils attending alternative provision are following suitable courses and are likely to achieve a range of qualifications including English and mathematics.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Requires improvement

- Not enough students are accessing work experience or a work-related learning opportunity which matches their aspirations or studies. Leaders are working to increase these, but there are still too many students not accessing this aspect of the programme of study.
- Leaders are beginning to have an impact on students' attendance, although more work is needed in Year 13, where overall attendance is still too low.
- Leaders work with another provider as part of the Chancellor's Mount Grace Consortium to ensure that they can offer students a wider curriculum. While parents are positive, a small number indicated that they felt that teaching in some academic subjects lacked subject expertise.
- Leaders are securing better careers advice and guidance, and students confirm that this is something they value. However, students feel that it is often too focused on university placements and does not always give a balanced picture of alternatives.



## School details

Unique reference number	137224
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10023361

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy single 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	783
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Daniel
Headteacher	Peter Baker
Telephone number	01707 655 512
Website	<a href="http://www.mountgrace.org.uk">www.mountgrace.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@mountgrace.herts.sch.uk">head@mountgrace.herts.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	14–15 January 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is a smaller than average-sized secondary school, with a below average number of girls.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic heritage or who speak English as an additional language is below that found nationally.

- Pupils who attend the school have broadly average attainment from their primary school education.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is in line with national averages.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly higher than national.
- A small number of students attend part-time alternative provision at Oaklands College or at Capel Manor.
- Some aspects of the post-16 curriculum are taught in partnership with Chancellor's School.
- There have been redundancies and staffing changes since the previous inspection, including changes to middle leadership.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of lessons, including the sixth form. They undertook joint observations with members of the senior leadership team and one middle leader.
- Inspectors observed the start and end of school, break and lunchtimes, an assembly and registration sessions.
- Pupils' work in books was scrutinised.
- Records and logs about pupils' behaviour, safety and attendance were analysed. Inspectors also considered the school's information about pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- Data and information about pupils' performance in public examinations, including recent in-school assessment data, were considered.
- The minutes of governors' meetings and the school improvement plan were examined.
- Inspectors listened to the views of pupils, via an online survey, in meetings and informally at social times, parents, 105 of whom responded to Parent View, and the staff. They held discussions with the governors, senior and middle leaders, the coordinator for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the head of sixth form and a representative from Herts for Learning.

## Inspection team

Vanessa Love, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Hood	Ofsted Inspector
Diana Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector
Sean Powell	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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