

Acton High School

Gunnersbury Lane, Acton, London, Middlesex W3 8EY

Inspection dates

21–22 February 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and governors do not ensure that safeguarding is effective. The school's systems to keep children safe are not robust.
- Leaders and governors have not acted quickly enough to improve the quality of education for pupils. In many subjects, including English and mathematics, progress is inadequate and there is little sign of improvement.
- Pupils are underachieving considerably. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is significantly below that of other pupils nationally with the same starting points. This group of pupils accounts for approximately half of the pupils in the school.
- The behaviour of some pupils in lessons is very poor. Some teachers do not take swift enough action to challenge this. Some pupils' behaviour at break- and lunchtime is unruly and pupils' punctuality is poor.
- The quality of teaching varies widely. In some lessons, teachers' expectations of how well pupils can do are too low. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities underachieve because their needs are not consistently well met.
- The school's assessment information for pupils in key stage 3 does not give a clear picture of the progress pupils make. Therefore, leaders and governors are unable to evaluate the achievement of pupils in these years.
- Record keeping for children looked after is haphazard. As a result, safeguarding processes to support vulnerable pupils are not securely in place.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form varies, as do the outcomes of students. Students do not receive effective guidance on their future pathways.

The school has the following strengths

- In the short time he has been at the school, since September 2016, the headteacher has had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and staff morale. However, the wider impact of his work is yet to be seen.
- Teaching in some lessons engages and challenges pupils, and consequently they make better progress. In these lessons, teachers are more effective because their planning matches pupils' needs. Pupils' behaviour is also better because they are motivated to learn.

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?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management so that:
 - the school's safeguarding and child protection practices meet the requirements of the most recent government guidance
 - a culture of vigilance is embedded throughout the school and all members of staff fully understand their role in safeguarding children, putting this understanding into practice
 - the school's assessment systems accurately record pupils' progress from their starting points across a range of subjects
 - leaders, governors and teachers review pupils' progress information regularly, acting promptly to reverse any underachievement for groups of pupils
 - the school uses the additional funding it receives to support disadvantaged pupils effectively, and complies with statutory guidance on reporting the impact of this funding on the outcomes of pupils
 - middle leaders are fully accountable for pupils' outcomes in their subject areas, swiftly tackling underachievement and promoting rapid progress for all groups of pupils
 - the curriculum meets the needs of all groups of pupils in the school, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provides pupils with effective careers advice and guidance
 - members of staff consistently follow the school's policies, and leaders monitor this closely, including the accurate and timely completion of the attendance register
 - governors are fully and accurately informed about all aspects of the school's provision and hold leaders to account robustly and in a timely manner.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that outcomes for pupils increase swiftly by ensuring that:
 - teachers' planning is well matched to pupils' needs and abilities, providing appropriate challenge so that all groups of pupils make at least good progress from their starting points
 - pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive appropriate support so that they make at least good progress from their starting points
 - teachers accurately assess the current progress of pupils
 - leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning accurately and use this to plan the support they give to teachers, so that the school meets teachers' professional

development needs effectively.

- Improve the behaviour of pupils at the school by ensuring that:
 - the school’s behaviour policy is fully and consistently implemented so that poor behaviour is eradicated and pupils have positive attitudes to learning
 - pupils arrive punctually to school and to lessons, and any incidents of lateness are followed up quickly and effectively
 - pupils show respect to each other and to adults, and behave well when moving around the school site between lessons, and at break- and lunchtimes.

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 should be undertaken in order to ascertain how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

It is recommended that the school should only appoint newly qualified teachers after discussion with HMI in the London region.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders and governors do not ensure that pupils at the school receive an adequate standard of education. This is because leaders' planning, monitoring and evaluation are not robust. Governors are not sufficiently well informed to hold leaders to precise account. This prevents leaders and governors taking effective action quickly. Leaders do not ensure that members of staff follow the school's policies consistently.
- Leaders and governors do not ensure that safeguarding is effective. Systems for protecting pupils are poorly managed and this puts pupils at risk. For example, attendance registers are not kept accurately. It is therefore unclear whether all pupils remain on site during the afternoon. Systems designed to support the most vulnerable pupils in the school are not securely in place.
- Leaders and governors do not evaluate the quality of provision at the school accurately. They are increasingly aware of the magnitude of the challenge they face, and have taken early steps to tackle poor behaviour. However, there is still much to be done. Inconsistency is the norm.
- Standards in all areas vary widely, including in pupils' outcomes and behaviour, and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Pupils' outcomes in 2016 showed that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, underachieved significantly across a wide range of subjects. Current information indicates that this pattern is continuing.
- Leaders and governors do not ensure that additional funding received to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. Leaders are unable to identify clearly how this funding is used to help the pupils for whom it is received, or the impact this funding is having on their outcomes.
- Leaders and governors have not acted quickly enough over time to ensure that pupils behave well, are safe and understand the expectations of the school. The new headteacher is right to have prioritised stabilising behaviour at the school. He has given very clear messages to pupils regarding expectations about their behaviour, which are understood. He promotes the staff's responsibility in ensuring that behaviour systems are followed through. Despite this, and in the face of some improvement, poor behaviour continues and, in some cases, puts pupils at risk of harm.
- Leaders and governors do not know the progress that pupils, including specific groups of pupils, are making from their starting points in key stage 3 across a range of subjects. This is because the school's assessment system does not provide them with this information. Therefore, leaders, governors and teachers cannot track the progress that groups of pupils are making or use this information to inform planning.
- Leaders do not monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment robustly. The quality of teaching varies widely from lesson to lesson. In some cases, it is very poor.

- Leaders acknowledge that the curriculum does not currently meet the needs of all

groups of pupils and lacks breadth, particularly at key stage 3. Leaders plan to improve the school's curriculum by creating different pathways for pupils of differing abilities. These plans have yet to be implemented. A greater range of extra-curricular activities is also planned, but is not yet in place. The quality of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is not secure.

- The school's leadership has been through a period of turbulence. Despite the recent appointment of the new headteacher, senior leaders remain overstretched. Governors have taken action and appointed two new deputy headteachers, but they are yet to start in post. Therefore, the impact of planned changes in senior leadership is yet to be seen.
- The school receives support from the local authority. While this accurately identifies the school's need for help and details areas for improvement, follow-up action has not been sharply focused or undertaken with sufficient urgency.
- Many middle leaders are relatively new to post. They report that they receive effective support with their professional development. The headteacher has accurately identified the need to give greater support for middle leaders in improving further the quality of their leadership.
- The headteacher has introduced a more ambitious culture to the school. Staff morale has improved since his appointment. While many barriers remain to improvement at the school, he has a clear vision for the future and is determined to succeed.

Governance of the school

- Governors do not ensure that the school meets its statutory duties in relation to safeguarding at the school. They do not ensure that children are safe.
- Governors do not challenge leaders effectively to ensure that the school provides a good standard of education. Governors do not insist that they receive the information they need to hold leaders to account. For example, governors' knowledge of how well pupils are doing is limited. This is because they did not receive information on the progress that pupils in key stage 3 are making from their starting points.
- Governors are very supportive of the school. However, they do not have an accurate enough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. While they acknowledge that there is much to be done, their assessment of the school's provision is overly generous. As a result, they have not acted quickly enough to insist that leaders tackle the many areas that need improvement.
- Governors have established a stronger leadership structure in the school. This includes the recent appointment of a new headteacher, and the future start of two deputy headteachers.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- The school's processes relating to keeping children safe are not robust and place pupils at risk. School staff do not demonstrate an understanding of their role and the importance of vigilance in relation to the safety and well-being of children.
- The school does not follow the latest guidance contained in 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2016), published by the Department for Education. Governors and leaders do not ensure that procedures are in place for appropriate action to be taken in a timely manner to safeguard and protect children. For example, leaders cannot account for the presence of some pupils during the afternoon. Leaders do not identify situations of risk consistently and therefore do not demonstrate that they understand those risks, such as child sexual exploitation, radicalisation or extremism.
- The school does not ensure that its policies and practices to protect and support the most vulnerable pupils are secure. This prevents the school taking effective action to support these children and, at worst, places them at risk of harm. The files for children looked after are incomplete and different systems for recording details are used concurrently.
- The school does not follow safe procedures regarding the storage and administration of medicines. A range of medication provided by parents and stored by the school for use in an emergency was found to be out of date. The school's view, in accordance with its policy, was that it was not the school's responsibility to alert parents that medication needed replacing. This reflects a culture in the school that does not give sufficient priority to the safety and welfare of pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching in lessons varies widely across year groups and subjects. Teaching is poorly planned in many lessons. Pupils make inadequate progress in these lessons.
- Expectations of how well pupils can do are too low. Teachers' planning does not take sufficient account of pupils' starting points and work set often lacks challenge. In some key stage 3 lessons observed, and particularly in mathematics, the work set by the teacher was far below age-related expectations.
- Teachers do not ensure that time in lessons is used productively to promote learning and progress. Low-level disruption by pupils is frequent and often goes unchallenged. In some lessons, the poor behaviour of some pupils prevents learning from taking place.
- Teachers do not follow the school's assessment policy consistently. Pupils' books show that they do not always complete the work they are set. Pupils make slow progress over time.
- The learning needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not routinely met. Teachers' planning does not cater for these pupils sufficiently.

However, in some lessons, the support of teaching assistants is more effective. In these lessons, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make better progress.

- The school's approach to supporting and improving pupils' literacy skills and reading is also inconsistent. Teachers' attempts to promote pupils' speaking and listening skills in lessons are hampered by disruptive behaviour. The development of pupils' numeracy skills is poor.
- The new headteacher has introduced clearer systems to monitor the quality of teaching which give leaders a more accurate understanding of the problems in some lessons. However, the full impact of these systems in improving the quality of teaching is yet to be seen.
- In some lessons, teachers' planning does provide challenge, and activities are well matched to pupils' needs. In these lessons, teachers use questioning well to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils' behaviour improves because they are interested and engaged, and consequently they learn well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- The school's procedure relating to the attendance register is lax. This places pupils at risk of harm. Afternoon registration occurs before lunch at 12.05pm. Leaders cannot demonstrate with certainty whether pupils remain on site after that time. Pupils are marked absent with no reason given. These absences are not followed up promptly, if at all. Leaders therefore do not ensure that pupils are safe from harm, because they cannot be sure where they are during the latter part of the school day.
- Leaders have planned an appropriate programme designed to meet the personal development needs of the pupils, including the promotion of British values and spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning. However, it is not monitored effectively to ensure that it is implemented consistently for all tutor groups. Tutor sessions lack focus and, in some sessions, pupils' behaviour is disrespectful of each other and of the school's provision.
- Attendance of pupils overall is in line with national averages. However, the attendance of pupils receiving support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is low and persistent absence is high. The school's policy of registration for the afternoon before lunchtime does not give an accurate picture of the number of pupils who remain in school for the whole of the afternoon session.
- Parents' views expressed through the online survey Parent View were generally positive. However, some parents expressed concern about the standard of behaviour at the school. Parents and pupils expressed concern regarding incidents of bullying at the school. New systems are developing to set high expectations and tackle bullying. However, they are not yet securely in place.
- The personal development and welfare needs of pupils in alternative provision are met effectively and their attendance is monitored accurately. Non-attendance is followed up

quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- The behaviour of some pupils is poor. In some lessons, particularly those that lack challenge, pupils do not have positive attitudes to learning and cause significant disruption. Teachers do not always take effective action to tackle incidents of poor behaviour.
- The start to the school day is not orderly. Many pupils arrive late, and lateness to lessons continues during the school day.
- Fights between pupils occur frequently. This puts pupils' welfare at risk. Pupils approached inspectors at breaktime and shared their concerns about the regularity of fights in the playground. Pupils' behaviour in some corridors can be boisterous. The atmosphere around the school site is disorderly.
- The number of exclusions, including fixed-term exclusions, is higher than the national average. In part, this is due to the new headteacher's rigorous approach to setting higher expectations for the standard of behaviour at the school.
- The headteacher has rightly prioritised improving pupils' behaviour. Some progress has been made in a short amount of time, but there is still much to be done. Pupils told inspectors that the headteacher has already made a difference.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes are inadequate because pupils make poor progress compared with that of other pupils nationally with similar starting points. Lesson observations and the work in pupils' books indicate that the progress pupils make over time varies widely.
- In 2016, outcomes show that pupils' progress was significantly below national averages. The progress of disadvantaged pupils, middle-ability pupils and those receiving support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities was particularly poor. The school's own assessment information for pupils currently in key stage 4 indicates that this situation is not improving. It shows that the same groups of pupils continue to underachieve significantly.
- The school has a high percentage of pupils who are disadvantaged compared with other schools nationally. These pupils underachieve significantly in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Therefore, the school's strategies to support disadvantaged pupils are not effective.
- The school does not have a clear approach to careers advice and guidance. Leaders have not ensured that there is focused and purposeful careers advice and guidance in place, although this is planned. A higher than average number of pupils do not progress to education, employment or training at the end of Year 11. Leaders have introduced some career-related activities, but currently these lack coordination.
- The outcomes of students in the sixth form are better than elsewhere in the school; however leaders accept that there is still much to be done. The progress that sixth-

form students make varies between subjects.

16 to 19 study programmes

Inadequate

- The provision in the sixth form is inadequate.
- The school's safeguarding procedures are ineffective.
- Provisional outcomes for sixth-form students in 2016 show a decline in the progress they make over time. Students who enter the sixth form with middle prior attainment underachieve significantly compared with other students nationally, as do students on vocational courses.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form varies widely. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and inconsistent across different subject areas. Students are not challenged sufficiently in a way that enables them to make consistently good progress. The accuracy of teachers' predictions relating to students' outcomes also varies.
- Students' attitudes to learning in the sixth form are not consistently positive. Students do not always arrive punctually to lessons and some demonstrate an overly casual attitude to learning.
- Education relating to personal development and welfare in the sixth form requires improvement. Teachers' delivery of the planned curriculum is inconsistent. Students told inspectors that they would like greater focus on practical skills and relevant issues, such as budget planning and current affairs.
- Leaders acknowledge that improving the retention of students in the sixth form is a priority. In 2016, around a third of Year 11 pupils continued into the school's sixth form. Three quarters of pupils continued from Year 12 into Year 13. Most students now leaving Year 13 progress to higher education, with some joining work apprenticeships. This represents an improving picture.
- The school provides an effective re-sit programme for students who need to re-take English and mathematics GCSEs. Students undertaking re-sits in the sixth form perform well compared with national averages, and particularly well in English.
- Leadership of the sixth form is improving, but there is still much to do. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the priorities and have rightly prioritised improving the quality of teaching and learning. Attendance in the sixth form is improving.

School details

Unique reference number	101932
Local authority	Ealing
Inspection number	10023730

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	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,349
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Guy Fiegehen
Headteacher	Ken Mackenzie
Telephone number	0203 1102400
Website	www.actonhighschool.co.uk
Email address	enq@actonhigh.ealing.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about the impact of pupil premium funding for the current and previous academic year.
- The school is larger than the average-sized comprehensive school. There are significantly fewer girls than boys at the school.
- Pupils who attend the school have slightly lower than average prior attainment from their primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly above the national

average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is significantly above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is significantly above the national average, as is that of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school currently meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the time they leave school.
- The school currently uses two alternative providers: Jubilee Academy and West Thames College.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 44 lessons, over half of these jointly with a senior leader.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and the chair of the governors' quality committee. The lead inspector also met with representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation provided by the school, including: minutes of governing body meetings; school policies and procedures; information relating to attendance, behaviour, curriculum and assessment; and the school's records relating to safeguarding, including the single central record of pre-employment checks.
- Inspectors undertook a scrutiny of work in a range of pupils' books and analysed pupils' work during observations of learning.
- Inspectors met pupils and students both formally and informally. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break- and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered 37 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 32 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View. There were no returns made to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

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David Boyle	Ofsted Inspector
Nardeep Sharma	Ofsted Inspector
Carmen Rodney	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sam Hainey	Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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