

Highfields Inclusion Partnership

Highfields, Essex Road, Brinnington, Stockport, Cheshire SK5 8DR

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders do not have a sufficiently accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their action plan is not focused sharply enough on improving pupils' outcomes.
- Senior leaders do not hold middle leaders and staff robustly enough to account for the performance of pupils. Too much of the school's work is disjointed and lines of communication are weak. Consequently, not all pupils achieve as well as they could.
- There is a lack of coherence in managing attendance. Too many pupils are persistently absent. This is hampering their progress.
- The quality of teaching across the school is not consistently strong enough to make sure that pupils, including the most able, make good progress. Leaders do not make adequate use of information from assessments, pupils' work and lesson observations to raise expectations in some classes.
- The newly formed governing body does not have a deep understanding of the school yet. The governors are too reliant on the information provided by the headteacher. They do not keep a close enough eye on the use of pupil premium funding.
- Not all staff consistently follow the school's agreed policies and procedures. Leaders do not check routinely on all aspects of the school's work to assure themselves that everything is being done as it should be.
- Assessment and tracking systems do not provide leaders with timely and useful information about how well individual pupils, groups and cohorts are getting on.
- The school's curriculum does not set out the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils are expected to acquire in sufficient detail.

The school has the following strengths

- Despite most pupils joining the school with a history of educational failure, the overwhelming majority of Year 11 pupils move on to full-time education when they leave. A high number of younger pupils return successfully to mainstream school.
- A number of pupils make a success of their time at the school, improving their attendance, behaviour and catching up with their learning.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for. The school works well with pupils and their families to give them the advice and support that they need.
- Since their appointments, the headteacher and governors have resolved some of the most pressing issues, including finance and staffing, to put the school on a more stable footing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - leaders and governors having a more accurate view of how well the school is performing in order to focus on priority areas for improvement
 - developing rigorous systems to enhance the quality of teaching to improve outcomes for all pupils, including the most able
 - implementing effective systems to check on all aspects of the school's work so that governors and leaders can reassure themselves that policies and procedures are being followed
 - further developing the roles of middle leaders so that they make an effective contribution to school improvement
 - establishing rigorous and effective systems to provide leaders, including governors, with timely and accurate information about pupils' progress from their different starting points
 - clarifying everyone's roles and responsibilities and setting out clearly how their performance will be evaluated at both individual and team level
 - making sure that governors have useful information about the school which enables them to challenge and support leaders to improve the school's effectiveness.
- Improve teaching so that it is at least good or better, so that all pupils make consistently good or better progress, by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve, particularly the most able
 - teachers make good use of assessment information to set work which provides suitable challenge for all pupils
 - leaders ensure that assessment information provided by teachers is reliable and relevant
 - all teachers adhere to the school's agreed policies and procedures, including those on marking and feedback
 - teachers set out the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils should acquire in each subject across all year groups.
- Improve pupils' attendance by:
 - setting out clearly the roles and responsibilities of all staff in relation to pupils' attendance
 - ensuring that all absence is followed up swiftly and assiduously
 - making sure that leaders track pupils' attendance closely from their starting points to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's actions
 - keeping a close eye on attendance patterns and trends for individual, cohorts and groups so that any issues are dealt with promptly

- staff ensuring that any incidents of challenging behaviour are dealt with swiftly and pupils return to lessons without delay.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders, including governors, have an overly optimistic view of the school's overall effectiveness. Leaders have not ensured that they have a sufficiently comprehensive and reliable evidence base from which to evaluate all aspects of the school's performance.
- The school's improvement plan does not set out clearly how leaders are going to resolve weaknesses. Moreover, there are no identified milestones to make sure that plans stay on track, or clear measures of success in terms of anticipated improvements in outcomes for pupils.
- Governors, leaders and staff understand and agree on the aims of the school. However, lack of clarity around staff roles and responsibilities means that lines of accountability are unclear. Consequently, leaders, including governors, are not holding staff at all levels to account robustly enough for their contribution to improving pupils' outcomes, both academic and personal.
- Teachers and support staff take part in training organised by the school. However, not all staff make good use of what they have learned to help them do their jobs better. Leaders do not make sure that they take into account a range of evidence to evaluate teachers' effectiveness. Moreover, leaders do not use performance management well to improve the quality of teaching so that outcomes for pupils improve further.
- Policies and procedures, for example on behaviour and assessment, do not always reflect fully the practices that are taking place in the school. Leaders do not make sure that what is agreed by governors routinely happens, or that governors are consulted about any changes which are agreed by staff.
- The school collects a wealth of data about pupils' learning, behaviour and attendance. However, this data is held by different people in different places. Moreover, middle and senior leaders do not use this information smartly to evaluate pupils, groups and the school's performance over time. Opportunities are missed by leaders and governors do not join up this wealth of information to challenge underperformance and celebrate successes.
- The school has a clear rationale for its curriculum offer. Pupils are offered a broad and balanced range of subjects, which help prepare them well for school or college. However, the lack of detailed curriculum plans makes it tricky to assess whether all pupils during their time at the school acquire the key skills, knowledge and understanding they should. While pupils take part in The Prince's Trust, work experience, trips and visits, these are not incorporated into the curriculum to make sure that all pupils benefit.
- High mobility presents a challenge when making decisions around how to spend additional funding. The school has identified barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils and put in place strategies to help them overcome these. The school's own information shows that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their peers. However, middle and senior leaders are not routinely checking on whether this additional funding is helping these pupils to catch up as quickly as they should.

- The special educational needs coordinator has only been in post a few weeks. She has made sure that she has looked at all aspects of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and is making headway with the most pressing tasks. The school's baseline assessments help identify any additional needs when pupils join the school. The school works well with the local authority to make sure that these pupils receive the additional support they need.
- The headteacher and governors have had some considerable challenges to overcome since taking up post. They have been successful in putting the school onto a secure financial footing. They have not shied away from difficult decisions around staffing to eliminate weak teaching.
- The headteacher has the support and confidence of the local authority, governors, staff and pupils. She knows every pupil and their families. She is a visible presence around Highfields, leading assemblies and supervising lunch.
- Parents and pupils are very positive about the school and its work. Almost all pupils had experienced educational failure prior to starting at the school. For most of these pupils, Highfields Inclusion Partnership was their 'last chance'. Parents appreciate the help and support that their children receive to help them get their schooling back on track.

Governance of the school

- The recently formed governing body rely heavily on the information provided to them by the headteacher. However, the headteacher's reports do not provide them with the information they need to evaluate the patterns and trends in pupils' performance over time. Too few governors have visited the school. Moreover, there is not yet sufficient rigour in the visits made. As a result, governors do not know the school well enough yet to make a significant contribution to the school's improvement.
- Governors have not made sure that additional funding is used effectively. The school's plans for pupil premium spending do not set out clearly the barriers for these pupils, what actions the school will take to overcome these barriers and what the impact of this has been on pupils' outcomes. Governors do not monitor routinely the progress of these pupils.
- Governors have not made sure that the policies and procedures they have agreed are followed by all staff. They have not challenged any practices, including procedures for dealing with any challenging behaviour from pupils, which have not been agreed.
- Almost all members of the governing body have joined within the past 18 months. Although members bring a wealth of valuable skills and expertise, most have limited experience of education. New governors are keen to attend training to understand their roles and responsibilities fully. However, they have had a long wait for places on local training courses. The experienced chair has stepped in to guide them in the interim.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that checks are carried out to reassure themselves that staff are suitable to work with children. Staff attend regular training so that they understand their roles and responsibilities. Pupils

told inspectors that they feel safe at school. Pupils are confident that there is an adult they trust whom they could talk to if they had any worries. Pupils are adamant that there is no bullying at the school. They are confident that staff would deal with any rare incidents of bullying effectively. Staff work well with external agencies to make sure that pupils and their families get the advice and support they need. Pupils are taught about the different risks, including knife crime and child sexual exploitation, and how to keep themselves safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There is variation in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. Despite leaders' efforts to eradicate weak teaching, there are still some lessons where pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Not all teachers are marking work in line with school policy or providing pupils with helpful feedback so that they know how to improve.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise basic skills. Across the curriculum, pupils' work confirms limited opportunities for pupils to write at length. Too often teachers and support staff read for pupils, rather than encouraging pupils to develop fluency and expression. There are too few planned opportunities for younger pupils to develop higher-order reading skills to help them read more-challenging texts.
- Work in books and discussions with pupils confirm that there are teachers who do not plan work which takes into account what the pupils already know and can do. Too often these teachers are setting all pupils the same work. Consequently there is a lack of challenge to the most able pupils and work is too hard for others.
- Some staff lack the subject knowledge required to teach some of the subjects they are timetabled for. Lack of subject leadership means that there are no specialist teachers to check on the quality of teaching in key subjects and provide support for non-specialist members of staff.
- Teachers are not using questioning routinely to probe pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking. Consequently, pupils' misconceptions sometimes go unchecked and the most able pupils spend too long on tasks which do not challenge them. Those teachers who are using questioning to good effect increase pupils' motivation and encourage them to take more responsibility for their own learning.
- Leaders do not have an accurate view of the quality of teaching across the school. Leaders have been overly reliant on 'snapshot' observations. They do not check the reliability of the evidence from these observations, with information about pupils' progress over time, samples of pupils' work and discussions with pupils.
- Leaders have provided training for all staff to help them improve teaching and learning, including the sharing of good practice across the school. However, not all staff have incorporated this learning into their day-to-day practice. Leaders do not follow up rigorously enough to ensure that training is making a positive difference.
- Strong subject knowledge, effective planning and detailed curriculum plans are the keys to success for classes in which pupils achieve well. These teachers use information about pupils' learning well to help them plan tasks well matched to pupils' abilities and interests. Teachers make sure that pupils know what they need to do to

achieve the aspirational targets which are set. Pupils enjoy these lessons and are keen to do well. For many pupils these classes inspire them to want to continue with their learning as they move on to post-16 education. For example, more pupils are choosing art and design courses now, following their success in this subject at key stage 4.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to build their resilience and independence as learners. Some staff do too much for pupils in lessons. In these classes, staff are too quick to step in when a pupil is finding work hard, often taking that task away rather than encouraging the pupil to 'have a go'. Staff do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to build up their stamina in reading and writing or reasoning in mathematics. This approach is hindering pupils' academic progress.
- Older pupils receive a wealth of advice and guidance to help them make well informed decisions about their next steps. An increasing number of pupils are choosing courses such as art and catering, as a result of the opportunities they have had in school to try these subjects.
- Pupils treat staff and each other with tolerance and respect. Pupils are confident to share their opinions, but do so in a way which avoids offence. In some tutor groups, teachers and support staff are confident to challenge pupils' views and encourage debate. Racist and homophobic incidents are very rare.
- Learning mentors deliver a range of well-considered programmes to help pupils take good care of their physical and emotional well-being. Staff take time to talk to pupils about their lifestyle choices, tailoring advice and guidance to meet pupils' individual needs. The school makes sure that pupils have access to specialist drugs, alcohol and sexual health workers for confidential support. The school has been successful in reducing the incidence of smoking. The school makes sure that pupils have a nutritious breakfast and lunch as well as a healthy snack.
- The school's work with pupils looked after is held in high regard by the local authority. The school develops well-considered personal education plans in collaboration with parents, careers, social workers and other partners. They make sure that additional funding is spent wisely. Despite many of these pupils staying only a short time with the school, they achieve some notable successes.
- Pupils take time to organise events to raise money for charities. Last week, pupils baked cakes and held a coffee morning in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support.
- The school makes good use of a range of alternative provision to engage pupils who are struggling with full-time formal learning. For example, pupils who attend Cycloan learn valuable skills through their work servicing, repairing and rebuilding bicycles.
- The school makes sure that pupils understand the risks they face in their local community and further afield as well as online. Staff make sure that they respond to

any emerging local or national issues, for example knife crime, so that they can give pupils the information that they need.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Too many pupils are persistently absent from school. Leaders and staff recognise that attendance is key to improving outcomes for pupils. However, the lack of coherence in managing attendance means that there are no clear lines of accountability. Prior to joining the school, many pupils have had long periods of time out of lessons or out of school. The school's own attendance records show that individual pupils make improvements to their attendance as a result of the work of school staff. Some work has been done to monitor pupils' attendance lesson by lesson, and this appears to have reduced internal truancy. However, leaders do not track patterns and trends in attendance over time to evaluate the impact of the school's policy and procedures.
- The vast majority of staff have very good relationships with pupils. These positive relationships are key to improving pupils' attendance and behaviour. The school has clearly set out steps for dealing with any incidents of challenging behaviour in its policy. However, leaders do not challenge those staff who do not follow the agreed procedures and are too quick to remove pupils from lessons. Moreover, leaders do not make sure that these pupils return to lessons following any incidents. This is having a detrimental effect on pupils' learning as they miss out on valuable lesson time.
- Almost all pupils are permanently excluded or at risk of permanent exclusion prior to joining the school. Since the previous inspection, pupils' behaviour in lessons has improved considerably. However, as soon as they leave the classroom, pupils' behaviour deteriorates. Around school, some pupils are loud, boisterous and use inappropriate language. In lessons, typically pupils are quick to settle to task, try hard with their work, listen carefully to their teachers and speak politely to each other. Pupils are confident to ask questions during lessons. Pupils are quick to help each other where they can.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- When pupils join the school, they are almost all working at levels well below those of their peers. As a result of absence, poor behaviour or personal issues, many pupils have made very little progress academically since they left primary school. Pupils make progress from these low starting points. However, there is variability between teachers and subjects. Pupils perform particularly strongly in art, with nearly half the cohort gaining a GCSE qualification last year. Also pupils work hard and achieve well in level 1 and 2 qualifications, including home cooking skills and preparation for working life. However, in science only a handful of pupils gain any qualification.
- Across the school, there is less evidence about pupils' progress across the range of subjects. Pupils' work in books, assessment data and discussions with pupils do support the school's view that pupils make progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the school has limited evidence for how well pupils get on in other subjects. While middle leaders keep an eye on pupils in English and mathematics, there is no

evidence that other subjects are given the same level of scrutiny. Moreover, this information is not used to challenge teachers when pupils' progress stalls.

- The school does not analyse the performance of the different cohorts and groups. Middle leaders are responsible for the progress of all the pupils in their department but there is very little comparison of pupils' progress with their peers in school, locally or nationally. Consequently, leaders have no benchmarks from which to make realistic evaluations of pupils' performance.
- Teachers set targets for Year 11 pupils. These pupils are able to articulate their current grades, their target grades and what they need to do to achieve those goals. However, the same level of tracking is not in place for other pupils.
- Almost all pupils gain at least one qualification at the end of Year 11, regardless of how little time they may have been in the school. Quite rightly, the school prioritises qualifications in English and mathematics. Regardless of pupils' educational history, teachers give pupils the support they need, not only to gain essential subject knowledge and skills but also to gain the confidence to sit the examinations.
- Almost all Year 11 pupils now move on to full-time education. This is testament to the school's efforts to re-engage them in education. The work that the school puts in to prepare pupils for college pays dividends. Most pupils manage to sustain their placement and complete their course.
- The school is committed to giving as many of the younger pupils as possible a 'fresh start'. Local headteachers are impressed by how well prepared and supported pupils are when they start at their schools. Local headteachers are confident in the reliability of the judgements of the Highfields staff about pupils' readiness to return to mainstream schooling. The number of pupils returning successfully to mainstream has risen year on year.
- The school's own data, work in books and discussions with pupils support the school's view that there is little variation between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- The school makes good use of its initial assessments to identify any additional needs pupils may have, which could have contributed to their difficulties in mainstream school. Staff make sure that any emerging concerns are followed up so that pupils receive the support they need. Although a number of pupils move on to specialist provision, some parents are delighted with the support their child has received from Highfields staff and are determined that their children remain at the school.
- The most able pupils are encouraged to work towards GCSE qualifications so that they can access more-academic courses post-16. Despite the school's best efforts, these plans are sometimes overrun by events in pupils' home lives.

School details

Unique reference number	134623
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10024462

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	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Thomas
Headteacher	Kathleen Hopkins
Telephone number	0161 406 7922
Website	www.hip.stockport.sch.uk
Email address	kathleen.hopkins@hip.stockport.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school is not required to meet requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. However, much of the information published on the school's website at the time of the inspection was out of date.
- Pupils join the school at different ages and different times in the academic year. Almost all pupils have been permanently excluded or at risk of permanent exclusion prior to joining the school. Many pupils have not attended school, attended part-time or have been working outside the classroom for a long period prior to their admission to Highfields Inclusion Centre.
- The school is based on two sites which are approximately three miles apart.
- The school serves pupils from mainstream schools across Stockport local authority.
- Almost all members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, have been appointed since the previous inspection.

- The head of school took up post in November 2015. The previous deputy headteacher retired in August 2017. A successor has not yet been appointed.
- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic groups is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, supported by the pupil premium funding, is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are looked after is much higher than the national average.
- The school works with a number of alternative providers to broaden the curriculum offer for pupils, including Cycloan, where pupils service, repair and rebuild bicycles.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school, including joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors checked work in a range of pupils' books.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to headteachers of three local secondary schools.
- Inspectors spoke to a representative of one of the alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school improvement planning and assessment information.
- Inspectors spoke formally with pupils as well as informally during the school day and observed them during breaktimes. Six pupils responded to Ofsted's online survey.
- Inspectors spoke with a number of parents by telephone during the inspection. There were no responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, during the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke formally with a group of staff and considered the 24 responses to Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

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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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