

Earl Mortimer College and Sixth Form Centre

South Street, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 8JJ

Inspection dates

10–11 October 2017

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal, senior leaders and governors have established a clear ethos of care and high expectations of all. Staff are proud to work in the school and morale is high.
- Leaders and governors know the school well. They quickly identify and address weaknesses to ensure that learning and assessment and outcomes for pupils continue to improve.
- Teachers accurately assess pupils' progress. Leaders use this information well to provide extra help for those pupils who need it.
- Middle leaders form a united and hard-working team. Many are highly effective. However, some middle leaders are new to post and do not yet lead the improvements in their areas.
- Teachers plan lessons and activities that effectively take into account pupils' different abilities and needs. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils are all supported and challenged well in class.
- The development of literacy is strong across the school. Pupils who join the school with weak basic skills catch up quickly. The development of numeracy lags a little behind and, consequently, some pupils' basic arithmetic is not as strong as their reading, writing and speaking.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They have high expectations of pupils and relationships in classrooms are strong.
- In recent years, pupils have made consistently good progress in most subjects.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. They are smartly dressed, courteous and polite. Most pupils work hard in class and are keen to do well.
- The school's care and support for its many vulnerable pupils are particularly strong. Staff understand these pupils' needs well. They work closely with many outside agencies to provide them with the extra help they need.
- Leaders do not use information about behaviour as effectively as other forms of data. They are not always clear about the impact that their improvement strategies are having. Nevertheless, behaviour has improved over time.
- Staff make pupils' safety their top priority. Staff and pupils work together hard to prevent and reduce bullying.
- The sixth form requires improvement because some aspects of the 16 to 19 study programmes, including work experience, are not well planned and coordinated.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the sixth form by ensuring that all aspects of the 16 to 19 study programmes, including work experience, are carefully planned and of a high quality.
- Strengthen leadership by ensuring that:
 - data about behaviour incidents is carefully analysed to identify trends and to evaluate the impact that improvement strategies are having
 - all middle leaders have the skills and expertise to lead the improvement of their areas of responsibility
 - teachers' promotion of numeracy in lessons matches their current high-quality development of pupils' literacy skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal, senior leaders and governors have successfully embedded a shared vision of aspiration among staff and pupils, as articulated in the school's motto, 'Believe, Achieve, Succeed'. Expectations of pupils and staff are high. Almost all members of staff who responded to their inspection questionnaire said that the school is well led and they are proud to work there.
- Leaders and governors know the school well, including its strengths and weaknesses. They address weaknesses by drawing up and implementing clear, concise and well-focused improvement plans. For example, the school experienced a difficult year in 2016/17 with several staffing issues, challenging behaviour from a minority of pupils, declining attendance and weak progress in a small number of subjects. During the year, leaders put in place several strategies that have resulted in a sharp improvement in each of these areas.
- Senior leaders make good use of assessment information about pupils' progress. They know in detail how much progress individual pupils and groups of pupils are making. They use this information to identify pupils or groups of pupils who are falling behind their peers. They then ensure that additional support is provided and they check that the extra help is having the desired effect.
- Teaching is strong across the school because leaders have acted systematically to address weaknesses and to ensure a high degree of consistency among teachers. Training is used well to develop teachers' skills. For example, training in promoting pupils' literacy skills has resulted in a consistent approach from most teachers that is successfully helping pupils to make strong progress in this area. All teachers observe colleagues teach, and reflect on and improve their practice as a result. Newly qualified teachers value the high-quality support that their colleagues provide. Leaders ensure that teachers are set targets that are well focused on improving teaching and pupils' progress. Almost all staff who responded to their inspection questionnaire agreed that leaders use professional development to encourage, challenge and support their improvement.
- Leaders make effective use of pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Teachers make these pupils a high priority when planning lessons and marking work. They carefully and regularly check their progress. Extra help is provided for any pupil whose progress begins to falter. Learning mentors in English and mathematics provide effective one-to-one and small-group intervention. Additionally, leaders provide support for pupils and their families to overcome any other issues that are inhibiting their learning. For example, they subsidise school visits and support parents who struggle to ensure that their children attend school regularly.
- Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding is used well to support pupils who join the school with weak basic skills. Extra help, especially with reading and mathematics, means that most catch up with their peers during Year 7.
- The support provided to vulnerable pupils in the school stands out as being especially effective. The school has a large number of such pupils and each is known and supported well. Leadership of this area is meticulous. The school works closely with

many outside agencies including the police, health and social services to provide pupils with the support they need.

- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong and well led. Teachers have been well trained to plan activities that support these pupils. Learning support assistants provide high-quality extra support in lessons and at other times. They work closely with teachers to ensure that they provide just the right amount of help. They also regularly evaluate how successful their support has been. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because leaders make very good use of the school's special needs funding.
- The school's curriculum provides an appropriate balance of subjects in all years. Additional English and mathematics lessons are provided in Years 7 and 8 for some pupils. In key stage 4, despite small numbers of pupils, leaders have successfully maintained a broad range of option subjects to supplement the core curriculum. For example, physical education and music are popular options among pupils. The sixth form curriculum now only consists of a small number of vocational options since governors' decision to cease offering A levels. It attracts a small number of students, including several who might not otherwise remain in education.
- Staff provide a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. These include many sporting and musical activities as well as several subject-based clubs. Pupils told inspectors that they value and enjoy these opportunities. Several off-site visits take place during the year. During the inspection, a number of pupils from Years 10 and 11 were in France on a week-long residential visit.
- Together, the school's formal curriculum, its wide range of enrichment opportunities and its positive ethos contribute well to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Consequently, pupils are prepared for life after school with well-developed skills and mature, sensible attitudes.
- Senior leaders are highly reflective. They are keen to seek out good practice in other schools and to apply it to Earl Mortimer. For example, last year, leaders commissioned an external check on how they use the pupil premium. They used its recommendations to sharpen their practice. Leaders currently make effective use of support from Fairfield High School and Kingstone High School in the science and mathematics departments respectively.
- The local authority provides effective support for leaders. For example, from March to July of last year, local authority staff supported leaders in auditing and sharpening the school's practice in improving behaviour and tackling bullying. With regard to dealing with bullying, the local authority's external scrutiny has helped the school to ensure that its practice is effective – a view confirmed by inspection evidence.
- The school has several highly effective middle leaders. Senior leaders have successfully delegated responsibility for the leadership of several areas including special needs provision and literacy development. However, several middle leaders are new to role and others are still heavily reliant on senior leaders for guidance and direction. Consequently, they are not currently autonomous in leading developments in their areas.
- Leaders' use of data regarding pupils' behaviour is not as effective as their use of data about pupils' progress and attendance. They do not routinely analyse this information

to spot trends and patterns, so they are sometimes not aware of how successful their actions are being. For example, at the time of inspection, leaders were unaware that their efforts to improve behaviour this year has led to a halving of the number of pupils placed in 'reflection', the school's system of internal isolation.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is successful in its support for, and challenge to, leaders. It contains considerable expertise, especially in education and safeguarding. Link governors regularly check on several aspects of school life including safeguarding arrangements and provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A pupil premium link governor regularly meets with senior leaders and scrutinises the impact that pupil premium funding is having.
- Governors are committed to the school and especially its vision of providing the best possible education for the young people of Leominster. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and they hold leaders to account for the school's performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership of this area is thoughtful and meticulous. All safeguarding records are detailed, well organised and stored securely. All members of staff have been well trained and are regularly reminded and updated about safeguarding issues. Consequently, staff are vigilant to any signs that a pupil might need help. They pass on any concerns they have by using the school's crystal clear procedures. Leaders consider all concerns carefully and act on them appropriately. They regularly involve external agencies to provide support for pupils. When unhappy with the actions of an external agency, leaders readily challenge and escalate their concerns.
- During the inspection, inspectors spoke with a large number of pupils. Almost all told inspectors that they feel safe in school. The great majority told inspectors that bullying is rare and dealt with well by school staff. All members of staff who responded to their online questionnaire said that pupils are safe in school and that bullying is dealt with well.
- A small number of pupils told inspectors that they do not believe that staff deal well with bullying. Several respondents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, expressed the same view. A similar proportion of Parent View respondents said that the school does not make sure that pupils are well behaved. Inspection evidence overwhelmingly confirmed that pupils' behaviour is typically good. The weight of inspection evidence also confirmed that the school usually deals well with bullying.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan lessons that effectively take into account pupils' abilities and their specific needs. For example, teachers ensure an appropriate level of challenge so that the most able pupils do not find work too easy. They structure tasks so that lower-attaining pupils are able to complete them. With the help of learning support

assistants, they ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the right amount of extra help. They make disadvantaged pupils a high priority when circulating around the class and when marking books.

- Pupils who need extra help with their work receive high-quality support. Learning mentors in English and mathematics provide effective support for individuals and small groups of pupils, often those who are disadvantaged. Learning support assistants provide effective out-of-class support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, these groups of pupils make good progress in most subjects.
- Most teachers use questions well to make pupils think and so deepen their understanding of their work. They also expect pupils to answer in complete sentences, rather than accepting brief or cursory responses. Consequently, pupils are typically confident, articulate and ready to contribute in class.
- Relationships are strong in most classrooms. Teachers have good subject knowledge and pupils value their teachers' expertise. Expectations are high. Teachers expect pupils to listen attentively, contribute answers and work hard. Most pupils respond positively.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment and progress are consistently reliable. Consequently, teachers and leaders know when pupils, or groups of pupils, are falling behind in any subject. They then provide extra support to help them catch up.
- Teachers and other adults promote literacy very effectively. A whole-school strategy means that teachers consistently point out pupils' errors in spelling and grammar. Pupils then correct these errors. Pupils read regularly during tutor time in 'Everyone Reads in College' (ERiC) sessions. The well-stocked and attractive library is well used, especially by younger pupils and those who need extra help with reading.
- Teachers' promotion of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics is not as strong as their development of literacy. Leaders have produced high-quality guidance on agreed methods and subject-specific mathematical content and concepts. However, this approach has yet to see clear and consistent impact in lessons or on pupils' numeracy. Some pupils have weak basic mathematical skills and this has contributed to their weaker outcomes.
- Teaching is strong in most subjects. Outcomes and pupils' views confirm that English, languages and physical education are particular strengths. The teaching of mathematics and especially science has been weaker in recent times. However, teaching in both these subjects has improved considerably and continues to improve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are typically articulate, confident and mature. They form a tolerant, caring community of young people who accept those who are different from themselves. Several pupils told inspectors about the support that their friends had given them.
- Staff work relentlessly to promote pupils' well-being. Preventing bullying has a very

high profile across the school. Pupils are regularly taught about bullying through 'skills for life' lessons, other subjects and assemblies. Inspectors observed one such high-quality assembly delivered to pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 by pupil members of the 'Prevent bullying now' team. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe from a range of potential dangers, including those that can arise when using the internet. Pupils told inspectors how they can keep themselves safe online.

- Pupils who need extra help receive very high-quality support from the school's staff and from outside agencies. For example, staff deliver small-group support for pupils in developing emotional resilience and in avoiding 'fall-outs' in friendship groups. Similarly, some pupils have been involved in the 'Strong young minds' project that trains them to support friends with mental health issues.
- A small number of pupils attend an alternative provision placement for one day a week. They attend regularly, behave well and complete their courses successfully. Pupils told inspectors how their vocational course helps to motivate them in their other studies. Having enjoyed and succeeded on these courses, some pupils move to these providers full time when they leave the school at the end of Year 11.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour in lessons is good. Most pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, work hard and are keen to do well. Disruption to learning, caused by poor behaviour, is rare.
- The school is calm and orderly throughout the day, including at breaktime and lunchtime. At social times, pupils behave in a sensible and mature fashion. They are courteous and polite to each other and to adults. Even when not closely supervised, for example on the school playground, pupils behave well.
- Leaders use exclusion appropriately, as a sanction of last resort. The last academic year saw an increase in the use of both fixed-term and permanent exclusion in response to an increase in inappropriate behaviour. As a result, behaviour has returned to its previously high standard. The use of exclusion, and other sanctions, has declined considerably this year. Pupils who spoke with inspectors recognise, and are grateful for, the sharp improvement in behaviour this year.
- Attendance is now broadly average, having been below average in the last academic year. Leaders' review of procedures during the second half of last year has proved highly effective in stemming the decline in attendance and seeing it return to previous levels.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school with below-average prior attainment. In recent years, pupils have made good progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics, to finish Year 11 having achieved broadly average standards. Unvalidated GCSE results for 2017 indicate that pupils' progress was strong in several subjects, including English and languages, but a little slower in others, including mathematics and science.
- The school's assessment information, confirmed by inspection evidence, shows that current pupils are again making good progress in almost all year groups and subjects.

For example, pupils currently in Year 11 sat a GCSE in English literature at the end of Year 10. They performed considerably better than the previous year group. They are making good progress in most other subjects also, including mathematics and science. Pupils in key stage 3 are making strong progress across most subjects. However, the progress of pupils in Year 10 is currently a little slower, but it is improving.

- Effective use of pupil premium funding ensures that disadvantaged pupils in most year groups make good progress. In common with other pupils, their progress is strongest in key stage 3 and Year 11, where there is little or no difference between their progress and that of other pupils. It is improving in Year 10.
- The most able pupils make consistently strong progress across all subjects. For example, in unvalidated GCSE results for 2017, this group of pupils made progress that was a little stronger than that seen among similar pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points, across subjects and years. High-quality support ensures that they do not fall behind their peers. Those who join the school with weak literacy skills make particularly strong progress in reading during key stage 3.
- Almost all pupils move to education, employment or training when they complete Year 11. A small number stay on into the school's sixth form, but most move into education at other colleges or sixth forms. Effective careers guidance and in-school support means that the proportion of pupils who do not move to positive destinations at the end of Year 11 is consistently lower than that seen nationally.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Although the school's sixth form has several strengths, it requires improvement because some aspects of the 16 to 19 student programmes are not well organised or coordinated. For example, not all students currently undertake meaningful work experience. Similarly, other non-qualification activity is not well tracked, so leaders cannot be sure that all students are benefiting from a broad range of experiences that will prepare them well for life after school. Leaders are aware of these failings and have recently put plans in place to rectify them. It is too early to see the impact of these plans yet.
- The most recent published outcomes show students making reasonable progress from their starting points in most courses. More recently, leaders and governors have decided that the sixth form should not offer academic qualifications. It now focuses on a small range of vocational options and tends to attract students who might not continue in education were it not for this provision.
- Teaching in the sixth form is effective. Students benefit from small classes and individual attention from their teachers. Consequently, current students are making good progress in all subjects.
- Teachers and other adults provide high-quality support for students in their studies. Impartial careers guidance and ongoing mentoring means that students enjoy the sixth form. Almost all students successfully complete their courses and move on to higher education, employment or training. Leaders' efforts to encourage higher aspirations are seeing an increasing proportion of students go to university when they leave the sixth

form.

- All students who enter the sixth form without having secured GCSEs in English and mathematics at grades C or 4 continue to study these subjects. They are well taught and most are successful in improving their GCSE grade.
- In common with the rest of the school, safeguarding arrangements are strong in the sixth form. Students' behaviour is impeccable and they provide excellent role models for younger pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	116941
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	10037138

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
School category	Community
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	514
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Gosling
Principal	Adrian Long
Telephone number	01568 613 221
Website	http://earlmortimer.org.uk
Email address	admin@emc.hereford.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 October 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a much smaller-than-average school with a very small sixth form.
- It has a higher-than-average proportion of disadvantaged pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of pupils who speak

English as an additional language is below average.

- The school meets the current government floor standards, which define the minimum expectation of pupils' progress by the end of key stage 4.
- A small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 study for one day each week at one of Holme Lacy College, Herefordshire and Ludlow College, Redcastle Training, Horizon Training or Nova Training.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, and some of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils and talked to many others about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. They questioned pupils particularly about behaviour, safety and bullying. They observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors visited afternoon tutor time and an assembly.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about their reading.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised including information relating to governance, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' progress and the checks made on the quality of teaching.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and five governors including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority and spoke over the telephone with another.
- Inspectors considered 81 responses to Parent View, including 52 'free-text' comments.
- Inspectors took account of 43 responses received on Ofsted's staff inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Gwendoline Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Fisher	Ofsted 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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