

The Mirfield Free Grammar and Sixth Form

Kitson Hill Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire WF14 9EZ

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, senior leaders and governors have not provided the leadership and direction needed to ensure that the highest standards of performance and quality are maintained. Despite recent improvements, the quality of teaching is too variable and does not promote consistently good progress.
- Teaching does not always meet the needs of all pupils because tasks are not pitched precisely enough to ensure that pupils are challenged in their learning to deepen their knowledge and understanding sufficiently.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities do not make as much progress as other pupils who have similar starting points.
- Middle leaders have begun to check the work taking place in their faculties and departments more frequently. This work is not embedded sufficiently to ensure that all teaching rapidly improves to the standard of the best for all groups of pupils.
- Governors, many of whom are also directors of the multi-academy trust, are not keeping sufficient oversight of school planning and progress. They do not challenge robustly or find out for themselves through visits and discussions with pupils the impact that decisions and plans are having on their learning and achievement.
- School planning is not sharp enough to drive improvement. Nor is it assiduously monitored.

The school has the following strengths

- The principal is inspiring pupils and supporting staff to do their best. Her high expectations, guidance and direction have begun to secure improvements.
- Pupils' personal development, safety and welfare needs are very well supported. Pupils value the school's Well-Being Centre for its helpful advice.
- A culture of positive behaviour has blossomed over the last year due to an increasingly consistent and fair approach to applying the school's behaviour policy.
- The 16 to 19 study programmes are good due to high-quality specialist teaching and strong, effective leadership in the sixth form.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that the progress of all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, is consistently good by:
 - making sure high standards and expectations of teaching and learning are consistently shared and practised across all subject teams
 - ensuring that teachers use all the information available to plan lessons which deepen pupils' learning and challenge their thinking
 - making sure that curriculum plans progressively develop and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding in each subject.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leaders and the governing body by:
 - making clear in school plans the targets and timescales and ensure that all those charged with implementing them and driving improvement are clear what success means to pupils and the steps to achieving it
 - increasing the rigour with which governors and leaders at all levels directly check the difference that plans are making.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, senior leaders and governors have provided much support to other schools. The unintended consequences of this action resulted in a lack of drive and attention at Mirfield to maintain the highest standards of teaching, learning and achievement of pupils.
- The current principal has worked exceptionally well, in the short period since her appointment, to turn things around. However, she is the first to acknowledge that there is still room for improvement. She has set a purposeful direction for the school and has identified very swiftly the priorities and actions that are required. The targets and timescales are not as clear in school plans, and the role of governors in monitoring them and holding leaders to account is not as sharp as it needs to be.
- The senior leadership team members have a clear understanding of their roles and are working cohesively together with the principal to promote school-wide improvement and to hold staff to account. Together, they have ensured that staff and pupils are clear about their respective responsibilities. They have re-established good behaviour and attitudes to learning for all pupils, and significantly reduced the high levels of exclusions that had persisted until very recently.
- Middle leaders, many of whom are new to their roles this year, have identified the strengths and weaknesses in the areas they are responsible for and the next steps. Checks on the quality of teaching and learning have identified a need to strengthen the curriculum and increase the pitch and challenge for the most able groups. However, inconsistency in the quality of teaching persists because sufficient stretch and progression are not yet included in the schemes of learning for all pupils. Faculty leaders and heads of department are currently working to provide this guidance to their teams.
- Procedures for evaluating teachers' performance are strong and securely focused on the difference they make to improving pupils' progress. Monitoring systems are thorough and include a wide range of procedures including work scrutiny, observations and pupils' feedback. Leaders are realistic about the impact of training so far. Leaders' self-evaluation is detailed and acknowledges that there is still work to be done to improve teaching and the outcomes for key groups of pupils.
- Through her initial detailed assessments, the recently appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is ensuring that special educational needs funding is used purposefully. She has identified the activity and support needed to meet the specific needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. High-quality information has been shared with teachers to help them to promote better learning and swifter progress for these pupils. However, this work is at a very early stage.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain through the delivery of an integrated studies programme that enables pupils to learn about different faiths and beliefs and discuss topical issues.
- Parents value the school's work, particularly in terms of the care and safety of their

children, teaching and the information they receive about their children's progress. A small number of parents feel that the school could do more to respond to their concerns and some have had concerns about leadership at the school.

- At the start of the inspection, the school's website did not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish. The website is now compliant. During the inspection, leaders ensured that missing information was updated.

Governance of the school

- Governors do not currently exercise sufficient scrutiny of the school's performance to fully hold the school's leaders and teachers to account.
- Minutes of meetings demonstrate an over-reliance on the principal's and senior leaders' reports of the school's performance. Opportunities to hear from pupils and to see the quality and work of teachers and pupils have not been used enough.
- Governors have been slow to explore options and the implications of their decisions about the curriculum and, as a result, some pupils have not always achieved as well as they could.
- External funding to help Year 7 pupils catch up in English and mathematics is well targeted to help individuals and is securing improvements. Governors are implementing recommendations from an external review of their use of pupil premium funding. Extensive, additional support is more firmly directed to support disadvantaged pupils. This is starting to narrow achievement gaps in English and mathematics in some year groups.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that robust procedures for keeping children safe are in place at the school and in the alternative provisions attended by a small group of pupils in key stage 4.
- Checks made for recruiting staff meet statutory requirements. Staff are well trained to spot signs of abuse, neglect, child exploitation and extremism. Staff know how to report potential risks, including those related to radicalisation.
- The school works closely with local and regional agencies to provide care and guidance to vulnerable pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Many pupils benefit from very effective teaching but this is not consistent across the school. There is too much variability in the quality of teaching, particularly within and between subjects. Information is not used well enough to plan lessons to meet pupils' needs. As a result, some pupils are set work which is well within their capabilities and offers little stretch or challenge.
- Work in pupils' books and folders shows a very mixed picture in mathematics, English, music and languages, where opportunities to consolidate and deepen pupils'

knowledge and challenge their thinking are sometimes missed.

- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. This lack of challenge is preventing some pupils, including the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, from making good progress.
- In some lessons, opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills by exploring different texts and connected activities make strong demands on pupils. For example, pupils are required to use evidence from their reading to support them in explaining their ideas orally and in writing. Yet, in other lessons, opportunities for these same pupils to write at length are constrained by the use of worksheets which make basic demands of them.
- Pupils' enthusiasm and positive attitudes in some subjects, such as geography and physical education, contrast starkly with the slower pace and passive response in other subjects.
- The need for additional support and learning sessions across all year groups and subjects demonstrates the shortcomings in teaching. Staff put a lot of energy into providing additional sessions and this extra help goes some way to minimise the impact on pupils' progress. Year 11 pupils value the support they receive from teachers and say that staff are 'approachable and willing to help you if you don't understand'.
- Many pupils benefit from high-quality teaching where teachers use their specialist knowledge and passion for their subject to ensure that learning is well structured to build pupils' understanding, skills and confidence. The quality of teaching in design and technology motivates pupils and enables them to reach high standards of creative and original work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff work hard and are vigilant in the care and welfare of pupils. Pupils know who to contact if they have concerns in school and are confident that they will receive appropriate assistance should they need it.
- School records show that incidents of bullying are reducing. Some parents believe that the school does not always deal well with bullying. Pupils said that bullying is rare and that, if it happens, incidents are dealt with quickly.
- Pupils are positive about the support they receive for emotional well-being. Pupils receive good counselling and access to a wide range of support through the on-site Well-Being Centre. Good signposting to other sources of help is also a strong feature of the facility and good links are established to health, social services and other external agencies.
- A well-constructed programme of integrated studies enables pupils to learn about and discuss a broad range of topics including different faiths, extremism and drugs. As a result, pupils are beginning to share their views and develop further their

understanding of respect and tolerance.

- The school's values of respect, integrity, teamwork and aspiration are embedded in a wide range of sporting activities, drama productions and opportunities to work together to help others. These contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils from different ethnic groups work together well in lessons and activities where structured opportunities encourage them to do so.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new behaviour reporting system. Pupils have responded quickly to this and expectations are clear. Teachers are quick to recognise and reward good behaviour and are equally swift to implement a wider range of sanctions when high expectations are not met. Pupils say 'it is stricter and fair'.
- Incidents of low-level disruption and high rates of exclusions have reduced dramatically over the last year as the higher expectations are helping to ensure that pupils are focused on their learning. Most pupils are attentive and are keen to engage in lessons when given the opportunity to do so.
- Behaviour in and around the school is good, and pupils' conduct is positive and orderly. Considerable efforts are made by staff and pupils to ensure that movement around the school at the changeover of lessons, at break and lunchtimes is smooth and calm. Pupils willingly respond to instructions from lunchtime supervisors and other staff. They treat staff and each other with respect.
- Overall attendance is above average. Within this strong picture, strategies to secure improvement are finely focused on small groups of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs. As a result, the attendance of all groups of pupils is improving.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision are developing confidence in learning in response to the high levels of support they receive. Pupils are able to use the strategies they have been taught to stay calm and in control. Their behaviour and their attendance are improving significantly. They are well supported for transition to employment, education and training.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Typically, most pupils enter the school with higher achievement than pupils nationally. Over the last three years, Year 11 pupils made significantly slower progress compared to pupils nationally with similar starting points. Provisional results in 2017 show that progress has quickened and pupils are making a similar level of progress as their peers nationally. The progress of disadvantaged pupils remained much lower than that of other pupils nationally.
- Leaders recognise that, overall, progress needs to continue to improve. School information for current pupils' progress shows that it is inconsistent across the curriculum, and there are weaknesses in mathematics and modern foreign languages.

- Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work show that some pupils are learning very well. However, many pupils, including the most able pupils, do not make rapid gains in their knowledge and understanding over a range of subjects including mathematics, languages and humanities. This is because the work they are given does not challenge them enough to move on from what they already can do.
- An extensive programme of additional support sessions has begun to secure improvements. Gaps are diminishing in the progress that disadvantaged pupils make in English and mathematics compared to others in school with similar starting points.
- Sharper identification of the barriers to pupils' learning and carefully targeted support have led to swifter progress for disadvantaged and most-able pupils in Year 11. As a result, their knowledge and confidence in English has increased and gaps have closed.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities achieve less well than other pupils in school because the additional funding has not been targeted effectively to lead to consistently good outcomes. Leaders are rectifying this through advice and guidance to staff to enable them to better meet their individual needs.
- Year 7 catch-up funding helps pupils to make accelerated progress. For example, all pupils have made gains in their reading through successful literacy support. Their reading has become increasingly fluent and their comprehension skills have improved.
- Pupils' enjoyment of reading is well supported through an extensive range of texts and reading material in the school library. They have been well chosen to interest and challenge readers of all abilities.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps through effective careers education. As a result, the proportion of pupils moving into education, employment and training at the end of Year 11 is above the national average.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. Teachers know students well and tailor lessons to meet their needs. Teachers have high levels of subject knowledge and often exude great passion and enthusiasm for their subject. This leads to high rates of engagement by students and strong progress.
- Students enjoy their studies and this is reflected in their high rates of attendance and retention.
- Leadership of the sixth form is strong. It is characterised by high expectations and rigorous tracking of students' progress and attendance. The quality of teaching is rigorously monitored. There are robust follow-up systems to this and the school is fully aware of strengths and weaknesses.
- All students follow appropriate personalised study programmes. A rigorous process on admission to the sixth form ensures that students are following the right programme to build on their prior achievements and to meet their aspirations and future plans.
- Over time, value-added outcomes for vocational courses have been well above those nationally and much stronger than those for academic courses. In 2016, the value-added outcomes were significantly above national averages across vocational and A-

level courses. Provisional results for 2017 show that the value-added outcomes for vocational courses continue to be significantly above national averages, with academic courses likely to be below national averages. In 2016 and 2017, disadvantaged students' outcomes were impressive.

- Students who have not attained a grade C in GCSE English or mathematics receive appropriate teaching and support. As a result, they make good progress.
- Opportunities for students to undertake work experience enhance their understanding and are appropriately linked to their interests and aspirations. A range of non-qualification activities enhances students' personal development. These include supporting younger pupils with their reading and participating in an online programme of courses that helps to challenge and broaden their skills base.
- A strong personal development programme is provided. Led by tutors, it ensures that students' welfare and safety are given high priority and that students are aware of the risks to their physical and mental health and extremism and sources of help and support.
- Careers advice and guidance are a strength. Students value the information they receive and are well informed. They speak convincingly about their next steps and future plans. The 'spotlight' on an industry or profession and its programme of visiting speakers provides a useful source of impartial advice.
- All students move on to higher education, training or full-time employment. Many students take up university places. An increasing number successfully take up apprenticeships.

School details

Unique reference number	136674
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10032023

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	Academy converter
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	1,535
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	371
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Mrs Jennifer Ryan
Principal	Ms Hayley Clacy
Telephone number	01924 483 660
Website	www.themfg.co.uk
Email address	mfg@themfg.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 May 2012

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized school.
- The school is part of the Mirfield Free Grammar and Sixth Form multi-academy trust.
- Just over one fifth of pupils are from minority ethnic heritage, with many from Pakistani and Indian backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for their SEN and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils who have education, health and care plans, or

statements of special educational need, is below average.

- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- A small number of key stage 4 pupils attend alternative provision at Pivot, Brian Jackson College and Ethos.
- In 2016, the school met the government's floor standards. The floor standards set the minimum expectations for progress and attainment at key stage 4.
- 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.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has had much change to senior leadership and to teaching staff in the last two years. Of the 94 teachers currently in the school, only 32 of them started from September 2015. The principal took up post in September 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subjects and scrutinised samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils in each key stage, as well as informally with pupils, including sixth-form students, across the school site.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior and middle leaders, teachers, members of the governing body and the trust.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including: the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, monitoring records relating to the quality of teaching and learning and the school's analysis of pupils' progress. Information relating to safeguarding, the behaviour and attendance of pupils and minutes from governors' and trustees' meetings was also reviewed.
- Inspectors took account of 133 responses by parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

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Marianne Young	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Garrett	Ofsted Inspector
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George Gilmore	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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