

# Skilts School

Gorcott Hill, Redditch, Worcestershire B98 9ET

## Inspection dates

5–6 December 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Many staff do not manage pupils' challenging behaviour well. Pupils' poor behaviour has a detrimental effect on the well-being of other pupils and staff.
- Safeguarding is ineffective. Pupils are sometimes unsafe because staff physically restrain pupils too frequently in an attempt to manage their behaviour. This is not always done safely.
- Governance is ineffective. Governors do not have a good understanding of the school's performance, nor do they contribute well to its strategic direction.
- The quality of teaching is too variable to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Many teachers' expectations of pupils are too low, especially for the most able pupils.
- The acting senior leaders have too many responsibilities and therefore cannot give the necessary attention to the most important aspects of school improvement.
- Pupils do not make consistently strong progress in reading, writing or mathematics. Some pupils do not attain the standards of which they are capable.
- The curriculum is not fit for purpose. Not all pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum. There are weaknesses in the systematic teaching of basic skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar rates of progress to their peers. However, leaders do not target additional funding with sufficient precision or know how much impact it has on improving outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders' tracking and analysis of pupils' behaviour is not thorough enough. Leaders cannot convincingly show how pupils' behaviour improves, or otherwise, over time.

### The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have brought a renewed sense of purpose to school improvement.
- Teachers work hard to try to engage pupils in their learning through interesting activities.
- Despite significant and prolonged instability in senior leadership, the staff team remains galvanised and committed to improving the school.

## 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?

- As a matter of urgency, improve pupils' behaviour and their safety by:
  - minimising the use of physical intervention
  - carefully monitoring the use and appropriateness of physical intervention
  - tracking behaviour incidents with more rigour, analysing the tracking information to discern any patterns and trends and responding accordingly
  - putting in place interventions as necessary to help pupils manage and improve their behaviour
  - providing staff with training so they properly understand and respond appropriately to pupils' challenging behaviour
  - supporting teachers to devise effective strategies for the management of pupils with particularly challenging behaviour.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - safeguarding procedures are clearly understood and adhered to by all staff, especially in relation to making a written record of any concerns
  - governors have an in-depth understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and contribute fully to the school's strategic direction
  - all pupils have their full entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum which meets their individual needs
  - the curriculum and teaching are carefully adapted for those pupils who are not thriving and progressing with the current offer
  - leaders carefully monitor and evaluate the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils so that it is used well to help them make good progress
  - leadership is more effectively distributed so that middle leaders have a wider impact on pupils' achievement across the school.
- Ensure that teaching is at least consistently good and leads to good outcomes by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - identifying gaps in pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills, and addressing these rapidly
  - providing work which is more challenging and makes pupils think harder, especially for the most able pupils
  - develop pupils' reading skills across the curriculum so they are given more frequent

opportunities to practise and improve their reading.

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

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Pupils are unsafe due to the high volume of physical restraints staff use to manage pupils' behaviour. Some staff are too quick to resort to physical interventions before other non-physical methods are tried. Pupils told inspectors that they did not like 'being held' because it makes them 'more angry' and 'hurts'. Inspectors witnessed multiple restraints on pupils during the two-day inspection. Leaders do not keep accurate records of restraint.
- Turbulence and uncertainty in leadership, combined with staffing upheaval, have meant that improvements to the curriculum and the quality of teaching have not been sustained or seen through to completion. It is only very recently that leaders have begun to establish more consistent approaches to teaching and learning.
- The school's self-evaluation is inaccurate. Leaders and governors have an overinflated view of the school's performance. This means that, in the past, leaders had not accurately identified aspects of the school's work most in need of attention. Recent support from the local authority's commissioned school improvement adviser has helped leaders to reprioritise.
- The curriculum does not meet the needs of all pupils fully. Not all pupils receive an appropriate breadth and balance of subjects, and where they do, teachers' expectations are often too low. As a consequence, the school's curriculum does not provide enough opportunities for all pupils to acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding expected for their age or stage of development. Moreover, for pupils with the most complex needs, the typical classroom approaches are not working. These pupils therefore spend far too much time out of class and in corridors.
- At present, leaders do not check on curriculum coverage or its quality with sufficient rigour. Leaders do not ensure that the curriculum is appropriately adapted to meet the needs of those pupils with the most complex behavioural difficulties.
- Current leadership arrangements lack the capacity to secure rapid school improvement. Acting leaders show a clear willingness to bring about positive changes. However, they have too many leadership responsibilities, which means that they are too stretched and cannot consistently carry out their duties with the thoroughness required.
- While staff log pupils' behaviour incidents, leaders' analysis of record-keeping is weak. As a result, leaders do not respond as judiciously as they should to reduce the chance of pupils' negative behaviours from reoccurring. In addition, leaders do not systematically track whether pupils' behavioural, social and emotional development is progressing well enough, despite this aspect of learning being a core part of the school's purpose.
- Sometimes leaders ask parents to collect their children to take them home without this being recorded as a fixed-term exclusion.
- The quality of teaching is not improving quickly enough because, despite some checks on teaching and learning, leaders do not consistently follow up the advice given to teachers to ensure that it is implemented. This is partly due to the monitoring of teaching falling onto the shoulders of a few leaders. Most middle leaders have limited

influence on raising standards in their specific subject areas.

- Leaders and governors have not evaluated the impact of pupil premium funding on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. They know what it is spent on, but leaders are less clear about whether or not it leads to better outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher are hard-working, and in their relatively short periods of time in post have helped to secure a renewed focus on raising pupils' achievement. The acting deputy headteacher has led work on improving assessment practice. This is beginning to have a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning in some, but not all, classes.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is generally promoted well. Pupils experience a range of opportunities, including visits to places of worship and other places of cultural interest such as theatres. This helps pupils to be prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- The local authority has provided support to the school in relation to developing the skills and knowledge of the current interim leaders. Leaders value this support, which has enabled them to be more sharply focused on aspects of teaching that need most attention.
- The leadership of mathematics is developing well. The subject leader has an understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the subject, and has set about implementing a series of actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning. There are already some positive indicators that the leader's strategy is proving successful.
- Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

### **Governance of the school**

- The arrangements for school governance have proved ineffective. Governors fail to keep pupils safe and do not ensure that pupils are consistently taught well and make good progress in their learning. Governors' involvement in driving forward school improvement and providing strategic direction is limited.
- Leaders share information about the school's performance with governors. However, governors are still unclear about what needs to be improved in the school, including issues related to the effective management of pupils' behaviour. Governors do not hold leaders to account with any rigour, although they do acknowledge and state that 'things have been falling behind'.
- While governors carry out regular checks on safeguarding, they fail to notice that pupils are at risk from unsafe practice within the school, especially, but not solely, related to the physical restraint of pupils. Governors were completely unaware about the significant number of times pupils have been restrained since September 2017.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- The culture of safeguarding is weak. Many staff do not manage pupils' challenging

behaviour effectively. This leads to unsafe practices and the creation of tension around the school. Staff receive training in physical intervention. However, this is not effective. While staff often use physical intervention with the aim of keeping pupils safe, they do so too quickly, which escalates rather than de-escalates the situation. This results in the need for further or stronger intervention.

- During the inspection, pupils were observed climbing onto furniture and window ledges, repeatedly kicking doors and hitting out at staff. On too many occasions, staff did not manage these situations well. Some pupils say that they sometimes feel unsafe in school because of the behaviour of other pupils.
- All staff receive annual safeguarding training. However, there is not a comprehensive approach to recording safeguarding concerns that is understood by all staff. For example, some staff told inspectors that they would not always make a written record of a concern, despite this being a requirement of the school's safeguarding policy. Case folders were not thoroughly organised, providing scope for papers to be lost or removed.
- The building and particularly the school site are difficult to supervise. For example, pupils are able to climb over perimeter walls and leave the school premises without permission. This was observed happening during the inspection.
- All staff have been properly checked to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.

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

### **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching is too variable across the school. Too much teaching is not yet good because teachers do not consider pupils' individual needs carefully enough when planning the curriculum and associated learning experiences.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are sometimes too low. This means that some pupils are not given enough work which challenges them. As a result, these pupils do not make strong enough progress to start to catch up with their reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Too often, older pupils are set low-level tasks which keep them occupied but do little to extend their knowledge and understanding. At other times, particularly in writing, too many prompts are provided for the most able pupils. This prevents these pupils from demonstrating their true potential.
- Pupils are sometimes unsure how to improve their work because not all teachers follow the school's assessment policy. In other classes, feedback and guidance from teachers is much more effective and helps pupils make good progress in their learning.
- The quality of phonics teaching varies considerably. Some sessions are crisp and snappy, focus on the right sounds and enable pupils to quickly develop their reading skills. Other sessions are slow-paced and are taught by staff who have weak subject knowledge, sometimes pronouncing sounds incorrectly. This prevents pupils from making rapid improvement in their basic reading skills.
- Teachers provide pupils with interesting opportunities to write for a range of purposes. However, the systematic teaching of basic written skills, including handwriting and

spelling, are not taught consistently well. Teachers' spelling in pupils' books is occasionally incorrect.

- A few teachers do not consistently use classroom resources well to promote good learning. Despite resources being readily available, sometimes groups of pupils share one resource and have to wait for their turn. Pupils become distracted and lose focus. This holds them back and slows progress.
- Despite some of the weaknesses in teaching, teachers adopt creative approaches to engage pupils in their learning. For example, pupils practise their spelling skills through playing word-based board games.
- The teaching in key stage 1 is stronger than in key stage 2. This is because teachers take better account of pupils' specific learning and behavioural needs. Key stage 1 staff create a positive learning environment where most pupils thrive and achieve well. As a result, pupils respond well to teachers and produce some good work.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving as a result of teachers' training and development. Pupils are developing a more secure understanding of number and extending their mathematical language well.
- There is a good sense of teamwork between staff to support pupils' learning. Positive and nurturing relationships between staff and pupils helps encourage pupils to achieve. Teaching assistants help to keep pupils focused on the task in hand.
- Teachers frequently adopt a hands-on practical approach to teaching which encourages pupils' enjoyment in the learning process. For example, in a history lesson on the Second World War, pupils created different types of boats and tested them to see if they would float. These types of activity contribute well to pupils acquiring a good work ethic.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Inadequate**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Leaders organise the afternoon teaching sessions so there is a strong focus on supporting pupils' personal development. These sessions contribute well to pupils' social and emotional development. For example, in one session, pupils used role play very effectively to develop their skills in controlling their anger. In another lesson, pupils were able to identify people that they could trust and talk to.
- Teachers weave in aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education into the curriculum skilfully. For example, pupils are helped to consider financial management issues through writing tasks such as 'Do people spend too much money at Christmas?' Most pupils are confident to talk to visitors about their learning. They say that teachers help them to learn, although they also comment that quite frequently their learning is disrupted by the behaviour of a few pupils in class.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare. They understand the different forms that bullying can take and recognise that bullying is not tolerated. Pupils have produced and displayed

useful posters to remind one another that bullying is unacceptable. They can identify a trusted adult to talk to if they have any concerns and feel that any bullying would be dealt with.

- Pupils have been taught how to appreciate and understand the different lifestyles that exist in society. Pupils' attitudes to those who are different to themselves have been developed well.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the risks associated with technology. They can describe clearly how to stay safe online.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- The school's system for behaviour management works for some pupils and has little impact on others. Consequently, there is some very poor, aggressive behaviour, including swearing. At other times, pupils' classroom behaviour is settled and pupils are well focused. Too often, staff do not manage pupils with particularly challenging behaviour well.
- Leaders have not ensured that behaviour has been managed appropriately. A significant minority of pupils take themselves out of classrooms and disengage from learning. At times, these pupils are unsafe because they are unsupervised by staff or because staff physically intervene too quickly.
- Pupils describe the behaviour of their peers as 'unpredictable', and this makes some feel unsafe. In some classes, a domino effect often follows an initial disagreement between two pupils, where other pupils then become involved in the altercation.
- Pupils' behaviour on the playground is generally acceptable and orderly. The area is not particularly well resourced, and some resources, such as trikes for older pupils, are not suitable for their age and size.
- There has been an increase in the number of exclusions since the time of the last inspection.
- In a few classes, teachers make their expectations clear and set pupils suitably challenging tasks. In these classes, pupils' behaviour is better.
- Pupils take pride in their work. Their books are usually well presented.
- Attendance is improving, although it remains below the national average for primary schools. Leaders take effective action to curb poor attendance.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **Requires improvement**

- Pupils enter school at different times throughout the academic year, many having missed some time in education and therefore having gaps in their learning. However, teachers do not systematically identify and address these gaps to enable all pupils to make good progress.
- Over time, pupils' progress is inconsistent. A few pupils make good progress. Others do not make enough progress in order to catch up and achieve closer to age-related



expectations. A significant minority of pupils underachieve because their behaviour is not well managed and this has a detrimental impact on their learning.

- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are not making sufficient progress in their learning because the work they are given is often too easy. However, variability in the quality of teaching means that rates of progress for these pupils are better in key stage 1 than in key stage 2.
- The large majority of pupils are disadvantaged. They achieve similarly to those who are not disadvantaged.
- Pupils' basic skills, particularly in handwriting and spelling, are not improving quickly enough. This holds back pupils in being able to communicate effectively and make good progress in their writing.
- Evidence from books shows that current pupils are making better progress in mathematics. Pupils' progress over time in writing is weaker than reading and mathematics.
- Pupils' achievement across the wider curriculum is patchy because of teachers' different expectations. For example, in computing, pupils achieve well because the subject leader has good subject knowledge and higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Conversely, in art, outcomes are weaker because of teachers' lower expectations.
- Even allowing for pupils' low starting points, the standards attained in reading by the end of Year 6 are low, which hampers their ability to fully access future learning. Consequently, some pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education. Many pupils start at Skilts with poor attitudes to learning. Teachers are successful in engaging many pupils in activities which enable them to understand the benefits of learning and start achieving.
- More recently, leaders have put in place better systems for those pupils who are at risk of falling behind in their learning to ensure that they receive timely and effective support. However, the impact of this work is still too early to measure.

## School details

Unique reference number	103617
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10025414

The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lesley Burgess
Headteacher	Dominic Crompton
Telephone number	01527 853851
Website	<a href="http://www.skilts.bham.sch.uk">www.skilts.bham.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiry@skilts.bham.sch.uk">enquiry@skilts.bham.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	18–19 March 2014

## Information about this school

- The headteacher was not present during the inspection. There has been an acting headteacher in post since February 2017.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the physical education (PE) and sports premium, key stage 2 assessment results or the school's accessibility plan for disabled pupils on its website.
- Skilts School provides day education and part-time mid-week residential care during term-time for boys with social, emotional, mental and health needs. Pupils are referred to the school by Birmingham local authority and other nearby local authorities.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. Many pupils have additional needs, including autistic spectrum disorders and dyslexia.

- Just over half of all pupils are White British. Other ethnicities include Black or Black British Caribbean, Mixed White and Asian, Mixed White and Black Caribbean. A very low proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes, including PE in the school hall. This included some joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors reviewed a wide range of pupils' work, particularly in English and mathematics books.
- Inspectors interviewed pupils and spoke to them during lessons and at other times to gather their views.
- Inspectors held meetings with the acting headteacher, deputy headteacher, the designated leader for safeguarding and the leader for mathematics. The lead inspector met with two representatives of the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- There were insufficient responses from parents and carers to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) to draw any conclusions. Inspectors took into account three free-text responses from parents.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors considered 35 responses to the staff questionnaire. No pupils completed the pupil survey.
- This was an aligned inspection with social care. An inspection of the residential provision was carried out at the same time and a separate report was produced.
- The inspection team took into account a wide range of information, including the school's website, development plan, pupils' assessment information and leaders' documentation from the monitoring of teaching and learning. Inspectors reviewed documents relating to safeguarding, as well as governing body minutes and notes of visits from the local authority.

## Inspection team

Tim Hill, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda McGill	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Morris-King	Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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