

# The Holmesdale School

Malling Road, Snodland, Kent ME6 5HS

## Inspection dates

20–21 February 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Safeguarding is ineffective.
- Leaders have not acted effectively to secure an acceptable quality of education for pupils. Pupils do not achieve the standards they are capable of.
- Leaders at all levels are not held to account for the impact of their work. They do not check to see what difference their actions make.
- Plans for improvement are not evaluated routinely so that further improvement can be implemented.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. Teachers do not check pupils' understanding closely or use it to inform pupils' next steps in learning. Thus, pupils are not challenged to extend their learning.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment are not always accurate. This has led to leaders failing to target support where it is most needed.
- Pupils' work is often incomplete and poorly presented. Pupils do not know what they need to do to improve their work in order for them to make rapid progress.
- Some pupils, including the disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, have poor attendance rates.
- Pupils' literacy skills are not promoted consistently well by all teachers.
- Pupil premium funding is not used effectively to support pupils who are disadvantaged. These pupils make inadequate progress in English, mathematics and science.
- The curriculum for pupils' personal development is not fit for purpose.
- Sixth-form students are not offered the full range of non-qualification activities. The school does not meet the requirements of the 16 to 19 programmes of study.

### The school has the following strengths

- The support offered by Brook Learning Trust has helped the headteacher to accurately identify inadequacies in leadership, teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils feel safe at school.
- The school's improving culture and ethos ensure that pupils are polite and respectful to one another.
- Many parents, carers and pupils are positive about the difference that the new headteacher has made.

## 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, ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are effective by:
  - checking that staff accurately record pupils' attendance and quickly follow up on any pupil missing from education
  - ensuring that staff responsible for safeguarding swiftly report concerns and pass issues on to the relevant bodies.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils in all year groups, especially pupils who are disadvantaged and most-able pupils, make good progress by ensuring that:
  - teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and plan activities that are well matched to their abilities
  - teachers understand what effective teaching looks like and thus improve their own practice
  - teachers' assessments are accurate and used to target support where it is most needed.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - leaders implement sharply focused plans and evaluate the impact of their actions to improve the quality of provision
  - all subject leaders are fully accountable and develop the necessary skills to enable them to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching in their subjects
  - all pastoral leaders contribute to improving attendance and reducing incidents of poor behaviour
  - governors have the skills and understanding to hold school leaders to account for the school's performance
  - pupil premium funding has a positive impact on the attendance, progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve attendance and reduce the persistent absence of pupils by:
  - carefully evaluating the impact of the school's strategies for improving attendance to determine which strategies are effective and which are not
  - challenging and supporting parents of pupils with high levels of absence to ensure that their children's attendance improves.
- Improve the quality of provision in the sixth form by ensuring that students are provided with the full range of opportunities identified in the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- The recently appointed headteacher, supported by leaders of the Brook Learning Trust, has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The jointly constructed self-evaluation identifies significant concerns about the school's leadership, the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes, as well as pupils' attendance and behaviour. However, due to a lack of capacity in school leadership, the headteacher has not been able to address these concerns.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have not done enough to maintain the quality of education across the school. As a consequence, the vast majority of pupils, including those pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, have not made the progress that they are capable of.
- Leaders have struggled to recruit strong subject specialists in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. This has led to a number of temporary appointments which have affected the continuity of pupils' learning.
- Leaders' actions to improve teaching through training have not been effective. Consequently, there is still too much weak practice, with low expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, are not making enough progress across the curriculum.
- Leaders have ensured that all pupils are set subject targets linked to their prior attainment. Information about pupils' progress is collected regularly, and leaders analyse and monitor the progress of different groups of pupils. However, inspectors' evaluation of pupils' work, alongside school leaders, indicated that teachers' assessments of how well pupils are doing is inaccurate. Leaders agreed that their evaluation of pupils' progress is, therefore, likely to also be inaccurate.
- Leaders recognise that too many pupils in Year 11 are unlikely to meet their school targets. Leaders are using their knowledge of pupils to have challenging conversations with middle leaders to address how additional help can support pupils to make up lost ground.
- Historically, leaders' use of additional funding to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils has been ineffective and these pupils have made less progress than their peers. The new leaders responsible for managing the funding have created a suitable plan and have shared this with staff. However, it is too early to say whether these actions will make enough of a difference to these pupils' attendance and progress.
- Leaders responsible for behaviour have not acted quickly to ensure that staff follow the school's policy and record all incidents of poor behaviour. As a result, school behaviour records are inaccurate. Recently, a new 'behaviour for learning' policy has been introduced to staff and pupils by a leader from the Brook Learning Trust. However, it is too early to assess how this new policy will make a difference to pupils' behaviour and attitude.
- Leaders in charge of attendance have not routinely monitored the attendance of pupils. Some pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or

disabilities, have missed school for long periods of time. The work to reverse this trend has not been successful.

- There is currently no sixth-form leader. Consequently, no one is checking the 16 to 19 programmes of study or monitoring students' progress. Students following both A-level courses and the International Baccalaureate are making slower rates of progress than those following vocational courses. Students are not following an appropriate personal development programme, including work-related learning and careers.
- Historically, pupils sat too many GCSEs before they were ready. Therefore, some pupils attained lower grades. Leaders have subsequently changed the curriculum at key stage 4 so that pupils now follow an appropriate academic curriculum, receive the right amount of teaching time and sit their examinations when they are ready.
- Leaders responsible for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have not included sufficient experiences in order for pupils to have a clear understanding of different cultures and religions. Some pupils are, therefore, not aware of the diversity in modern Britain and of the need to respect others from different backgrounds or beliefs.
- The recently appointed headteacher has the confidence of the staff, pupils and some parents in improving the quality of education at the school. Parents who responded to Parent View identified her as instrumental in resolving their concerns.

## **Governance of the school**

- The governing body, appointed in January 2017, has been too slow to act. Consequently, the positive changes needed to support pupils and students have been delayed.
- Recent frank discussions at governors' meetings with leaders from the Brook Learning Trust and the headteacher have helped governors to understand that the quality of education provided for pupils is not good enough. Governors recognise that change is needed in order to improve. However, governors are currently over-reliant on external support.
- Governors are not monitoring the school's use of additional funding closely enough. For example, although they were disappointed with the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in 2017, they have only recently agreed a detailed plan to support current disadvantaged pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Governors regularly check the school's systems relating to safeguarding. The school's safeguarding policy is up to date and the register which records checks on staff meets statutory requirements. However, staff responsible for administering the school's policy do not always act swiftly enough.
- The school's designated safeguarding staff have been too slow to report concerns. Some information has not been passed quickly enough to the designated officer. Consequently, some pupils may have been put at risk.

- Staff receive regular training to ensure that their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding is up to date. Most staff understand their roles and responsibilities with respect to keeping pupils safe and know who to report incidents to should a concern arise.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe at school and know who to talk to should they have any concerns. The majority of parents feel that their children are safe at school.
- The headteacher, and some leaders, deal appropriately with incidents of bullying that may occur. However, not all incidents of bullying are recorded, and parents highlighted through Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, that some bullying is not dealt with.
- Leaders are very committed to supporting pupils in staying safe online. However, they are not yet taking effective action to educate pupils about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Inadequate

- The quality of teaching is too variable and there is too much that is weak across the school. Teachers' expectations of pupils are often too low, and learning activities lack sufficient challenge for most-able pupils. Time in lessons is not used well and much work is at a superficial level. As a result, pupils have gaps in their learning and are ill-prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils' work in books is often poorly presented and incomplete.
- Some teaching and learning activities are well planned and appropriately pitched. This is particularly so in drama, physical education and Year 10 geography. Interesting activities and effective questioning ensure that pupils understand their learning.
- Not all staff use the school's information about pupils' achievement well to plan for the different attainment levels of pupils in their lessons. Consequently, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, often disengage from their learning activities, as the work is either too easy or repetitive. The most able pupils told inspectors that they were 'often bored' in their lessons as they were not appropriately challenged.
- Some staff are not accurately or consistently using the school's assessment policy to check on the progress that pupils make over time. Consequently, most pupils are unclear about what they need to do in order to improve.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has an accurate register of which pupils have SEN and/or disabilities and of how best to support them in lessons. However, these pupils' support plans are not shared well with all staff. Some teachers are therefore unsure how best to support these vulnerable pupils. A few parents told inspectors that they were particularly frustrated that their children, who receive additional funding, were not being supported well in all aspects of their learning.
- Years 7 and 8 pupils with poor literacy skills receive additional support from the SENCo to improve their reading and comprehension. These support sessions are helping pupils to gain confidence so that their reading improves and they use their newly acquired vocabulary to develop their writing.
- Leaders have tried to develop a culture of reading across the school. Dedicated tutor time is set aside for pupils to read in class. Pupils told inspectors that they often use

this time to 'chat with friends or complete work'. Consequently, some pupils are not reading regularly.

- Most teachers use the school's 'routines for learning' to create a calm and positive learning environment. Mostly, this works well to help pupils to listen to others and follow instructions.
- Pupils are offered a range of extra-curricular activities, including a variety of sports, music and performing arts. These opportunities contribute positively towards pupils' social development.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Inadequate

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Leaders responsible for attendance have not acted swiftly enough to make sure that pupils are safe. For example, a very small minority of pupils have been absent from education for long periods of time without appropriate support or investigation to make sure that they are safe.
- Leaders responsible for the schemes of work relating to personal, social and health education have not thought carefully enough about the content and delivery of each topic. For example, lessons on 'sex and relationships' do not focus sufficiently on building strong relationships prior to sexual activity. As a result, some pupils leave these sessions either misinformed or exposed to conversations inappropriate for their age, while others are restricted on what they can discuss.
- A few pupils with complex emotional, behaviour and mental health issues attend a pupil referral unit locally. This is helping them to use strategies to manage their own behaviour.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying is dealt with more effectively since the arrival of the new headteacher. They know to talk to the pastoral team or a member of staff they trust if they are worried about anything.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Attendance is well below the national average for secondary schools and has declined over recent years. Leaders' recent work to address poor attendance has not yet had an impact. Consequently, current pupils' attendance has not improved.
- Pupils who misbehave in class have been removed from their lessons so that they do not disrupt the learning of others. Historically, the school's internal exclusion room has been used to accommodate these pupils. Too often these are pupils who are disadvantaged. Leaders responsible for monitoring this facility have been too slow to identify groups of pupils who attend this area regularly and have not taken effective action to help these pupils to improve their behaviour.
- During the inspection, inspectors observed that the vast majority of pupils are generally

well behaved and respectful to one another. The only incidents of poor behaviour observed during the inspection were linked to poor provision. Pupils told inspectors that the new headteacher has been instrumental in improving behaviour across the school.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Inadequate

- For the past four years, pupils' GCSE examination outcomes have been below the floor standards set by the government. In 2017, pupils' attainment in GCSE English and mathematics examinations rose, but pupils' overall progress declined further and too many pupils underachieved.
- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities made considerably less progress in their GCSEs overall. These pupils attained generally a grade below other pupils with similar starting points, in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. This illustrates how additional funding has not been used effectively to ensure that these groups of pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- All groups of pupils made poor progress from their starting points in GCSE examinations. However, the progress and attainment of the most able was particularly weak. These pupils typically attained a grade below others with similar starting points in most of their subjects.
- Current Year 11 pupils are following a curriculum appropriate to their needs, but due to weak provision over time they have not made enough progress to secure strong outcomes. Some pupils have also been hindered by poor attendance. Although additional support is now provided, most pupils in Year 11 have a lot to learn in order to reach their targets.
- Current pupils' progress is inadequate due to the inconsistency in the quality of teaching across the school. Pupils, including the most able, are not making the progress that they should in order to attain well and be prepared for their next steps.
- Pupils with weak literacy skills, who are supported through the 'transitional groups', are growing in confidence and taking a more active role in their lessons. For example, a Year 7 pupil studying food technology told inspectors, 'I'm not good at reading and writing but I'm getting better. I'm able to write down what I'm learning and I now listen more in class.'
- The few pupils who attend the pupil referral unit attend regularly and are learning how to manage their emotions well, while further developing their literacy and numeracy.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Inadequate

- Students are not offered a complete 16 to 19 study programme, and are therefore missing out on non-qualification activities, including work-related learning.
- Sixth-form outcomes are inadequate because students following A-level and International Baccalaureate study programmes do not make enough progress from their starting points. However, those who take vocational qualifications make good progress and attain highly.



- Students studying vocational qualifications in the sixth form are involved actively in their learning. Teachers ensure that their students understand the course requirements, how their work will be assessed and the progress they are making. Students appreciate the extra support offered by some of their teachers on how to improve their work, enjoy their learning and achieve well.
- Students revisiting GCSE mathematics are making positive progress. Despite having attempted the exam repeatedly, most are engaged in their learning and are actively trying to secure a standard pass.
- Students provide good role models for the rest of the school community. Students' attitudes are positive and optimistic. Many students, in their vertical tutor groups, act as helpers for younger pupils in the main school. Some students are involved in leading extra-curricular activities or charity work. This helps students to develop their confidence and personal skills.
- Students appreciate the ongoing independent careers advice they receive and the guidance on their next steps into education, training or work that the school provides.

## School details

Unique reference number	118796
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10039726

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
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	630
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	96
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Bob Huelin
Headteacher	Tina Bissett
Telephone number	01634 240416
Website	<a href="http://www.holmesdale.kent.sch.uk">www.holmesdale.kent.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@holmesdale.kent.sch.uk">office@holmesdale.kent.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	13–14 March 2014

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The vast majority of the pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have support for SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is also below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is similar to the national average.
- A few pupils are educated off-site at the pupil referral unit: The Cedars, 8 Bower Mount Road, Maidstone.

- The previous headteacher left in December 2016. An interim headteacher and a new governing body began in January 2017. The local authority asked Brook Learning Trust to support the school from September 2017. The interim headteacher became the substantive headteacher in November 2017.
- The school has a local authority autistic spectrum disorder unit on site.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress by the end of Year 11.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the 'percentage achieving the English Baccalaureate' or 'the retention rates for sixth-form students and their destinations' on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 41 lessons to observe learning across a range of subjects and year groups. Some of these lessons were visited jointly with members of the school's leadership team.
- Inspectors visited tutor groups and attended a house assembly.
- Inspectors met with pupils from all year groups in meetings, in lessons and informally around the school. They also listened to a group of Years 7 and 8 pupils read.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' written work across a range of abilities, subjects and year groups.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders, as well as representatives of the governing body. They also met with the chief executive officer and the executive headteacher of the Brook Learning Trust.
- Inspectors considered the school's policies, including those for safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, pupil premium and special educational needs. They reviewed the school's self-evaluation and rapid improvement plan. They also looked at records relating to current pupils' progress and attendance, as well as behaviour and exclusion logs.
- Inspectors reviewed 59 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 58 responses from parents on Ofsted's free-text service. They also took account of the responses from staff to the online questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Caroline Walshe, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Fearon	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Edwards	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

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](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018