

# Prospect School

Cockney Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire RG30 4EX

## Inspection dates

30 April–1 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have not improved the school sufficiently. Despite recent developments in teaching and pupils' outcomes, they are not consistently good enough across the school.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. Strengths in some lessons are not evident throughout. Some teachers do not plan lessons carefully enough to provide either enough challenge for the most able or appropriate support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Teachers do not consistently communicate high expectations, either of good behaviour or the standard of work that they want pupils to achieve. Low-level disruption slows learning in some lessons.
- Leaders have started to improve pupils' attendance, but absence remains too high, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils.
- Provision for pupils with SEND is not planned well enough to enable them to make good progress.
- Governors have not been effective in holding school leaders to account for the progress pupils make. Governors' checks on aspects of the school's work are not thorough enough.
- The sixth form requires improvement because standards are not high enough, and enrichment and work-related opportunities are not individualised.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has quickly introduced many new systems to improve the areas of highest priority. Staff and pupils are supportive of his passion, vision and high expectations. Morale has risen considerably.
- Middle leadership is a strength of the school.
- Teachers show strong subject expertise across the broad curriculum.
- In many lessons, pupils conduct themselves appropriately. Where routines are clearly established and expectations are high, pupils behave well and demonstrate respect.
- Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Pupils feel well supported and cared for. Strong relationships with staff help pupils to feel safe and secure.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, to enable all groups of pupils to achieve well, by:
  - planning lessons to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, particularly by increasing the challenge for the most able and providing the necessary support for pupils with SEND
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of and making sure that pupils understand what is required of them
  - challenging all pupils, particularly the most able, to think deeply and explain what they have learned precisely.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - improving the attendance of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged
  - eliminating low-level disruption in lessons
  - ensuring that leaders and staff respond consistently to pupils whose behaviour does not meet expectations.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by:
  - ensuring that strategies to improve the learning of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are used consistently throughout the school and that their impact on pupils' progress is regularly evaluated
  - increasing the challenge provided for the most able pupils, so that they achieve their best in each subject.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - continuing to implement and evaluate plans to improve pupils' outcomes rapidly
  - reviewing the arrangements for the leadership of the provision for pupils with SEND
  - improving the quality of leadership of the sixth form
  - strengthening governance, to enable governors to hold school leaders to account more effectively.
- Improve provision for students in the sixth form, by developing students' individual 16 to 19 study programmes so that they derive greater benefit from work experience and non-qualification activity.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since taking over the role in November 2018, the headteacher has demonstrated a clear, aspirational vision for the school. Following the previous inspection, standards at the school declined. Aply supported by the deputy headteacher, the new headteacher has taken rapid action to improve teaching, pupils' progress and behaviour. It is too soon for their actions to have fully changed the culture of the school, but improvements are noticeable.
- Staff are supportive of the headteacher's resolve and a very large majority are proud to work at the school. Throughout the school, staff are hard-working and committed to ensuring that pupils thrive, feel safe and achieve well. Pupils and staff appreciate the improvements underway, although they recognise there is more to do.
- Leaders at all levels identify the school's strengths accurately. They know which aspects of the school need to improve most urgently and are taking useful steps to tackle them. This has led to helpful bespoke training and support, which is showing early signs of impact.
- Newly qualified teachers are supported effectively. The previously rapid turnover of staff has slowed as leaders have stabilised the school. Nevertheless, some pupils have experienced several changes of teachers in a range of subjects across the curriculum, and this has limited their motivation and progress.
- Subject leaders show strong expertise and a determination to improve the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress. As a result of leaders' higher expectations, teaching is improving, although some variation in the quality of teaching persists across and within subjects.
- Provision for pupils with SEND is underdeveloped. Leaders' overview of pupils' academic progress is not clear. A few parents expressed concerns about the lack of appropriate care and support for pupils with SEND.
- Previously, leaders had not used additional funding effectively to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have recently sharpened their analysis of how this funding is used, leading to better-focused actions to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. There are a few early positive signs of the impact of these changes.
- Additional funding for Year 7 pupils who need to catch up with their literacy and numeracy is used effectively. Consequently, most of these pupils are making better progress with their English and mathematics.
- The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced across key stages 3 and 4. Subject choices for key stage 4 have been broadened to build more effectively on pupils' starting points and preferences. The curriculum is enriched by a range of extra-curricular provision, and pupils particularly enjoy educational trips and the wide range of sports available.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective and is embedded throughout the curriculum, particularly through personal, social, health and

economic education lessons. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain, through the successful promotion of British values across the curriculum and a strong sense of equality, in this richly diverse school.

- A low proportion of parents and carers responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View. Of those who did respond, two thirds would recommend the school to other parents.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors are committed to the school and visit frequently. They monitor safeguarding carefully.
- Governors had previously not held leaders to account rigorously enough to make sure that the effectiveness of the school is good. As a result, governors have not provided the challenge that leaders needed to improve outcomes at the school over time.
- Governors sensibly commission external agencies to help them evaluate the school's effectiveness. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and, broadly, areas which could be improved. However, their knowledge of the performance of groups of pupils, such as the most able, pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, is imprecise. This limits governors' ability to hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions on pupils' progress.
- As part of their work to improve their effectiveness and to provide necessary educational expertise and support, governors are exploring plans to form a multi-academy trust with some local schools.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff have positive relationships with pupils and know them well. This means that staff are alert to any changes in pupils that may indicate a concern. Pupils feel safe in the school. They are confident in knowing that there is always a trusted adult they can speak to if they are worried about something.
- Staff have received appropriate training for their roles and responsibilities and know what to do if they have a safeguarding concern. Training covers local and current concerns, and designated safeguarding leaders are fully versed in the potential risks to pupils' safety.
- The school has well-developed systems in place to secure the well-being and safety of pupils. Safeguarding records are up to date, and referrals are followed up promptly and are well documented. Safeguarding leaders work well with other agencies to help families receive the necessary support.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Requires improvement**

- Pupils make variable progress, because of the inconsistent quality of teaching they experience. Pupils' overall learning experience is, at times, further impeded by changes of teacher, leading to more variability.
- Overall, however, pupils benefit from teachers' strong subject knowledge across a wide range of subjects. Where teaching leads to good achievement, teachers' expectations are high, and consistent routines help pupils settle well and focus intently on learning.
- The most successful teaching takes close account of pupils' individual starting points and uses a range of strategies to meet their needs. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not consistently use assessment of pupils' progress to set work at an appropriate level or devise engaging activities.
- Where teaching is weaker, teachers' expectations are too low. Lesson activities do not encourage pupils to persevere and write in detail about their learning. Some pupils lack the confidence and practice to be able to express their understanding clearly. In lessons where pupils do not receive effective support, pupils give up too easily and become restless, making it difficult for other pupils to concentrate.
- Sometimes, the most able pupils are not given challenging enough tasks and do not make the progress of which they are capable. At other times, pupils are presented with tasks which they are not equipped to tackle, because teachers have not checked their level of understanding carefully enough.
- Questioning by teachers is variable. Sometimes skilful questioning probes pupils' thinking to develop deep understanding. On other occasions, teachers move on to the next task without fully challenging pupils' responses. This limits pupils' opportunities to think more deeply or apply their learning in unfamiliar contexts.
- There are examples of effective feedback from teachers, in line with the school's expectations. In these instances, pupils clearly understand what they must do to improve and they act on this feedback. However, there are occasions when the school's feedback policy is not being used effectively to help teachers plan the next steps in pupils' learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The staff's care for pupils is highly evident. Pupils generally care about each other and are respectful of the diversity within their school community. However, this does not always prevent a small minority of pupils from behaving unkindly towards each other.
- A few parents and pupils have lingering concerns, both about the behaviour of some pupils and about continued bullying. However, most pupils told inspectors that staff act swiftly and effectively to stop any bullying that does happen.

- Pupils are supported well by pastoral staff. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are strong. Staff know pupils well and are alert to any difficulties pupils may be experiencing.
- Staff in the school show determination to help pupils overcome the difficulties they face. They make sure that vulnerable pupils receive the right emotional and practical guidance and support. The school's pastoral support teams work effectively with a range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the care and support they require.
- Leaders place a commendable emphasis on support for mental health and emotional well-being. There is a suitably graded response to helping pupils overcome their concerns, including counselling by professionals.
- Staff offer effective support for pupils who join the school mid-year, including some refugees.
- Pupils who attend provision off site are monitored to make sure that they are attending, achieving well and safe.
- Careers education and independent advice and guidance are a strength of the school. Leaders have devised a programme to raise pupils' awareness, from Year 8 onwards, of the range of opportunities available to them. Pupils benefit from a variety of careers initiatives, including wide-ranging careers fairs and mock interviews, supplemented by highly personalised support. This helps to prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The atmosphere around the school is mainly purposeful and orderly. Most pupils are polite and show respect and consideration for others.
- However, pupils do not always display good attitudes to learning, typically in lessons where teachers' expectations for purposeful learning have not been made clear. In these lessons, some pupils' chatter leads to low-level disruption, which slows their progress and that of their classmates.
- Pupils' reflections about behaviour in the school are mixed. They recognise that things have improved, particularly in lessons, but remain concerned about some behaviour. A few staff feel that leaders sometimes manage poor behaviour inconsistently.
- Leaders have taken useful steps to reduce the proportion of pupils whose behaviour results in a fixed-term exclusion.
- Leaders have made improvements to the way they deal with poor attendance. Reorganisation of the school day has encouraged pupils to attend more promptly. Greater resources and tireless efforts by staff to ensure that pupils attend school regularly are making a difference. Staff work closely with families to tackle persistent absence from school. As a result, rates of persistent absence have reduced. However, overall attendance remains below the national average, and the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils remains too high.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- In recent years, by the end of Year 11, pupils have not made enough progress in a range of subjects. In 2018, pupils' progress was in the lowest 20% of all schools nationally. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with high prior attainment made considerably less progress than other pupils nationally. The school's performance information shows that current Year 11 pupils are on track to reach higher levels of attainment this year.
- Senior and subject leaders understand the need to place a high priority on ensuring improvements to pupils' outcomes. Strategies to improve both the curriculum content and quality of teaching are beginning to have a positive effect. However, some pupils, particularly in key stage 4, display gaps in their knowledge and show some misconceptions, following the legacy of previously weaker teaching.
- Standards are rising across the school in many subjects, due to sharper leadership and better teaching. The school's performance information and work seen during the inspection show that progress is improving in all year groups. However, there is variability between and within subjects, and pupils' outcomes require improvement because the progress that they make is not yet consistently good enough.
- Across the school, the most able pupils do not achieve well enough. Too many do not develop the wide knowledge and deep understanding needed to achieve the higher standards. Teachers' expectations of the most able pupils are sometimes too low. Overall, disadvantaged pupils are not yet progressing strongly enough to catch up from their lower starting points.
- Scrutiny of work from pupils in Years 7 to 11 showed that, overall, the standard is appropriate for pupils' ages and abilities. However, there was considerable variation within subjects and between subjects. Some work was of a very high standard, but other work lacked depth. Some pupils with lower prior attainment are struggling to keep up.
- In many lessons, staff do not provide adequate support for pupils with SEND. As a result, this group of pupils is not making consistently good progress. Interventions for pupils with SEND which take place out of lessons and in 'The Bridge' resource centre are more successful.
- The provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is a strength of the school. Pupils make good progress in developing their English language skills. This supports them to make stronger progress across the curriculum.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Requires improvement

- In 2018, students' progress on their A-level courses was below that of students with similar starting points nationally. Leaders do not monitor the effectiveness of teaching or students' progress adequately.
- Standards remain variable across the sixth form. Current students are making better progress than in the past, in both academic and vocational subjects, but do not achieve as well as they should.

- Teaching in the sixth form shows many strengths. Inspection evidence, including through talking to students and looking at their work, shows that teachers' secure subject knowledge, high expectations and skilful questioning are extending students' learning well. Teachers' strong subject expertise helps to interest students and promote engagement.
- However, there is variation between subjects and within subjects. Where learning is less effective, students are not routinely expected to explain their thinking accurately and succinctly. Expectations are not consistently high enough to enable the most able students to achieve the highest A-level grades across the curriculum.
- Retention of students from Year 12 into Year 13 is in line with national levels. Recruitment from the school's Year 11 dropped in 2018. Senior leaders have sensibly redesigned the post-16 curriculum more appropriately to build on students' starting points, interests and aspirations. Applications for September 2019 from the school's Year 11 are higher. Pupils in Year 11 are well informed about the range of post-16 opportunities available to them.
- Leaders have had some success in improving attendance. Students now come to school more regularly than in the past. However, attendance remains lower than it should be, especially for Year 13 students.
- Leaders do not ensure that each student's individual 16 to 19 study programme fully combines qualifications with other activities tailored to their prior attainment and career goals. Non-qualification activities are available but are not closely monitored for effectiveness. Suitable work experience for students is in place for some, especially those following vocational pathways, but work experience for most students following academic pathways is not well planned or systematically evaluated.
- Personal development and careers programmes are effective. These programmes have a positive effect on students' well-being and future employability. Students benefit from individual guidance to support their next steps.
- Almost all students who left the school in 2018 went on to further education, employment or training. The majority take up places at universities.



## School details

Unique reference number	136876
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10058140

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
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	1037
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	114
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Thomas
Headteacher	David Littlemore
Telephone number	01189 590 466
Website	<a href="http://www.prospect.reading.sch.uk">http://www.prospect.reading.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiries@prospect.reading.sch.uk">enquiries@prospect.reading.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	29–30 September 2016

## Information about this school

- Prospect School is a larger-than-average-sized mixed comprehensive school with a sixth form.
- The current headteacher moved into the post of acting headteacher from his deputy headteacher role in November 2018. He has recently been appointed the substantive headteacher following the retirement of the previous headteacher.
- The proportions of disadvantaged pupils, pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are all above the national average.
- An above-average proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans attend the school. The school uses a specially resourced provision 'The Bridge' for up to 30 pupils

with moderate learning difficulties.

- A few pupils currently attend alternative provision at Cranbury College, Hall Place Equestrian Centre, Reading Football Club and Rushall Farm.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 43 lessons across a range of subjects and year groups. Many of these lessons were visited jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, other staff and governors.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- The lead inspector spoke to the headteacher of one of the schools in the proposed multi-academy trust.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, around the school and during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and around the school. They also met formally with groups of pupils and took into account 41 responses to the pupils' online questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the 91 responses to the online staff survey.
- Inspectors reviewed the 43 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent survey, considered 41 free-text responses and had one phone call with a parent.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including information available on the school's website, and records relating to pupils' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour. Information on governance, including minutes of governors' meetings, was examined. The school's self-evaluation summary and improvement plans were scrutinised, along with records of the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe.

## Inspection team

Theresa Phillips, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mark Bagust	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Cartwright	Ofsted Inspector
John Burridge	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Doherty	Ofsted Inspector

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