

Inspection of Hallmoor School

50 Scholars Gate, Kitts Green, Birmingham, West Midlands B33 0DL

Inspection dates: 21–22 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff have worked hard to improve Hallmoor School over the last three years. Pupils are happy, safe and are getting a better deal. The staff are a positive team and are passionate about what they do.

The school prioritises the development of pupils' communication skills. Pupils' needs are carefully assessed when they arrive. Staff introduce different strategies to help pupils grow in confidence and share their thoughts and ideas. For example, some pupils arrive with limited language. Staff help these pupils communicate, using signs and symbols. Over time, pupils grow in confidence and learn to use these strategies independently, and they flourish.

The school manages pupils' behaviour very well. Pupils know that if there was any bullying it would be dealt with well. They are confident and look forward to the many clubs, including choir, mindfulness and craft clubs. Sixth formers are particularly proud of their weekly pop-up café, where they develop their life and social skills.

There have been several changes in leadership in recent years. The school is going in the right direction, but the quality of education is not yet good. A number of curriculum areas, including reading, require further development.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Trust leaders have established clear expectations of what they expect from staff and pupils. They have then started to review the curriculum to see if pupils are being taught the right knowledge and skills to help them to be successful.

Last year, leaders reviewed the teaching of reading and decided to introduce a new programme for phonics. The programme has had a positive initial impact. Many pupils are able to quickly recall the sounds they have already learned. However, teachers are not fully confident in using the new approach. They require further support and training. Leaders have not yet established a clear enough programme and timeframe for pupils to learn their letter sounds. This hampers leaders' ability to catch any pupils who fall behind or spot any teachers who may need extra support.

Leaders have also reviewed what pupils learn, and when they learn it, in science. They have begun to put in place a new programme. The programme is designed to help pupils remember key concepts more easily. Staff have received extra training to support their teaching of science. This training is helping staff think carefully about the content that is taught.

Leaders have begun to evaluate other areas of the curriculum. However, some of this work is at an early stage. In history and geography, some programmes and plans are too complicated. Pupils are sometimes introduced to too many different

ideas in a short space of time. As a result, pupils' memories are overloaded. They cannot recall important knowledge confidently.

The personal, social, health and education (PSHE) curriculum is developing. Leaders are thinking more carefully about the different ideas and skills that pupils are introduced to over time. Leaders are aware that they also need to give further thought to how pupils will remember and recall their learning.

The mathematics curriculum has developed considerably in recent years. Teachers follow a carefully planned programme of learning. This programme is matched to the needs of pupils. Appropriate activities and resources are selected to support learning. Pupils show confidence in mathematics lessons and recall their learning.

Leaders have not provided staff with enough training in some curriculum areas. As a result, teachers sometimes use resources and plan activities that are not well matched to pupils' needs.

Leaders have planned a well-sequenced curriculum in the sixth form. This curriculum allows students to further develop their mathematics and English skills and gain a range of qualifications. Leaders make frequent checks to ensure that students are learning well. Students are happy and develop independence. Careers guidance and impartial advice is well thought out. As a result, students successfully continue their learning beyond the sixth form.

Leaders have established a clear behaviour policy and have high expectations of pupils. Leaders use systems effectively in order to monitor patterns of behaviour and attendance. Staff support pupils well and act on any potential problems quickly. Attendance is improving. There have been no fixed-term exclusions in this academic year.

Helping pupils develop their social and independence skills is the bedrock of Hallmoor. Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong. Teachers deliver a wide range of lessons to help pupils learn how to keep themselves safe.

The board of trustees knows the school well. They have appointed several new leaders over the last 18 months and are in the process of recruiting a new headteacher who can take the school to the next level. These leaders are capable and enthusiastic. They have brought about much momentum for improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff prioritise safeguarding. They know how to act if they have a concern about a pupil. Training is well planned. It takes account of government guidance. Staff recently received additional training on radicalisation and extremism. Staff are alert to the possible changes that may occur in pupils' behaviour which could indicate they need support.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that the teaching of early reading has a clear enough programme or timeframe for pupils to learn their letter sounds. Consequently, pupils are not benefiting from a programme that ensures they learn at pace and are spotted quickly if they fall behind. Leaders should make sure that the new programme is implemented in full and enables pupils to improve their phonics skills quickly. Leaders should be alert to any pupils that fall behind the programme's expectations and take immediate action to help them catch up.
- Leaders have not designed the curriculum in some subjects in order to ensure that pupils have a rich store of knowledge. The curriculum is not adequately adapted in these subjects to meet the needs of pupils. As a result, pupils find some learning hard to access and do not achieve as well as they might. Leaders should review the curriculum further with staff and ensure that it is effectively designed and appropriately adapted to meet the needs of pupils.
- Leaders have not provided staff with enough subject-specific training in some areas of the curriculum. As a result, teachers do not select the most appropriate strategies or resources to deliver content, and some pupils find lessons hard to follow. Leaders must ensure teachers have the skills and knowledge to deliver the curriculum effectively in all subjects.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	144336
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10122438
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	254
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	54
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Lane
Headteacher	Fenella Dowler-Luke
Website	www.hallmoor.fet.ac
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Forward Education Trust. The trust is a group of three special school academies. The schools are all located in Birmingham.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils' needs include moderate and severe learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school admits pupils of all ages. During the inspection, there were two children in the early years. Most pupils stay on in the sixth form.
- Hallmoor School converted to become an academy school on 1 April 2017. When its predecessor school, Hallmoor School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the following senior staff during the inspection: the chief executive officer, the executive headteacher, the interim headteacher, the chair of the trust, two members of the board, and the chair of the local academy council.
- The following subjects were specifically considered as part of this inspection: reading, mathematics, history, science and PSHE. To explore the effectiveness of these curriculum areas, we: spoke to senior leaders to understand their aims and rationale for overall curriculum design; met with curriculum leaders to explore long- and medium-term thinking; visited lessons to see the curriculum in action and consider the activities chosen by teachers; considered work in pupils' books; and talked to teachers and pupils about their experience and understanding of the curriculum.
- The inspection of reading included a consideration of the following practice: how leaders prioritise the teaching of early reading; how the school fosters familiarity and interest in different books; the content of the phonics programme; the extent to which pupils' books match to the sounds that they know; how quickly phonics is taught at the start of the school year; how ongoing assessment is used to identify any pupils falling behind the programme; and how the school develops sufficient expertise in the teaching of phonics.
- To determine the effectiveness of safeguarding, we: reviewed the single central record; met with the designated safeguarding lead to consider how the school records information and makes decisions about the actions leaders take to safeguard pupils; talked to staff and governors about the effectiveness of safeguarding training; and reviewed attendance information.

Inspection team

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