

Inspection of Huntcliff School

Marske Mill Lane, Saltburn-by-the-Sea, North Yorkshire TS12 1HJ

Inspection dates: 27–28 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Huntcliff School is a friendly place. Pupils are welcoming to visitors. For the most part, pupils seem happy. The school is tolerant of people with different cultures, appearances and beliefs.

There is no question that leaders are committed to pupils doing well. They have spent time and energy in preparing a curriculum that will challenge pupils to do so. Teachers generally know their subjects and push pupils to want to achieve. There is more work to do to embed the curriculum and improve examination results.

Pupils' behaviour is a mixed picture. In some lessons, with some teachers, it is good. In other lessons, it is less so. Too many pupils have to put up with regular disruption in their lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not well served by the behaviour system. A significant minority of pupils are absent from school too much.

As a rule, pupils, staff, parents and carers do not think that bullying is a problem at Huntcliff. However, a minority of pupils and parents think that the school could deal with it more effectively when it happens.

Leaders have made decisions about safeguarding matters, such as removing the doors from pupils' toilets, which were not well thought through. Part of the boys' toilet was visible to pupils, staff and visitors from the corridor and an outside area of the school. This made some pupils feel unsafe and uncomfortable. It placed pupils, staff and visitors in a vulnerable position. Additionally, leaders did not follow statutory guidance when dealing with an allegation against a member of staff.

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

Leaders have started the process of introducing a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils. In some subjects, such as English, mathematics and history, the curriculum is well thought through. It maps out what pupils need to know, and when. For example, pupils make links in English between the different ways writers present 'the family' in Victorian literature. In history, pupils reach back into what they learned about the Tudors to help them grasp the causes of the English civil war. In other subject areas, however, the knowledge that pupils need is not as organised. In these parts of the curriculum, work is not as demanding or does not help pupils to build up their knowledge and skills in a helpful order.

As a result of the curriculum taking shape and teaching that is improving, pupils have started to do better in their examinations at the end of Year 11. This is especially the case in English. Even so, overall, pupils do less well than they should. This is particularly the case in mathematics, modern foreign languages and some of the 'options' group of subjects.

The rate of entries to the English Baccalaureate group of subjects (English, mathematics, science, history, geography and languages) was well above the national average in 2019.

During the inspection overall, pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school was calm and orderly. They were polite and friendly to inspectors. Occasionally, in lessons visited, there was a little bit of chatting and fidgeting by pupils while the teacher was talking. However, all of the pupils who spoke to inspectors said that it was not unusual to have disruption in some of their lessons. They told inspectors that this was usually caused by the same pupils in the same lessons. Worries about disruption were also shared by a number of parents and some staff. Leaders have started to address the rate of exclusion of pupils with SEND. However, they continue to be excluded a lot compared to other pupils. This is not an acceptable situation.

Leaders' ambition is that the curriculum will help pupils do well. However, the effectiveness of this is limited, because a significant minority of pupils are absent from the school too often. This is a situation which has gone on for a number of years. Leaders were asked to sort this out at the previous inspection but have not. Pupils' attendance is getting worse.

The school offers lots of opportunities for pupils to get involved in activities beyond the classroom, especially in sport and the arts. The 'Life Skills' curriculum teaches them about preparing for life outside the school. Pupils described the school as tolerant and respectful. However, pupils could not remember learning about the dangers of people who spread extremist and radicalised views. The school has successfully put in place the 'Gatsby Benchmarks' for careers guidance, which help pupils make well-informed decisions about their future. As a result of effective careers guidance, a very high rate of pupils move on to appropriate next steps at the end of Year 11.

There have been some recent changes in the leadership of SEND. Inspectors saw some effective practice in different subjects, where pupils with SEND were appropriately supported. However, quite a few parents of pupils with SEND do not think that the school meets their children's needs as well as they feel it should. At present, leaders' systems for checking the effectiveness of their support for pupils with SEND are weak.

Most staff who made their views known feel proud to work at the school. They think that leaders are interested in staff well-being. A number of parents do not think that the school communicates with them well enough and find it difficult to get hold of the right person to deal with concerns in a timely way.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders' decision-making and judgement reflect significant weaknesses in the culture of safeguarding in the school. For example, leaders removed the doors to

pupils' toilets. This was to prevent vandalism and limit opportunities for bullying. However, it led to pupils feeling unsafe and uncomfortable. It caused some parents to feel concerned. It placed staff and visitors in a vulnerable position. Governors did not check the safeguarding implications of this decision.

Additionally, although leaders investigated, they did not report an allegation against a member of staff to the local authority, as set out in statutory guidance.

Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that bullying is not really an issue in the school. When it happens, they said that there is always an adult in the school they can tell. However, some pupils do not think the school deals with bullying very well when it occurs. They think that the bully is sometimes treated as the equal of the victim. A number of parents share the view that bullying could be better handled. This is an area which leaders should address.

With regard to the checks which must be made about staff before they start to work at the school, leaders fulfil the necessary requirements. Staff with particular safeguarding responsibility for pupils make appropriate referrals to external agencies in a timely way.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are weaknesses in leaders' actions following an allegation about a member of staff. Leaders did not take all the action required of them under statutory safeguarding guidance. They should ensure that they make the necessary referrals to the appropriate authority when dealing with such allegations.
- Leaders, including governors, did not think through the potential safeguarding consequences of removing the doors to pupils' toilets. Leaders started to re-fit the doors during the inspection, once the matter had been raised with them, recognising it had been an unwise decision. However, leaders should take care to think through more carefully any decisions which could have safeguarding consequences.
- Much of the school's curriculum is well thought through, with careful planning about what pupils need to know, and when. The extent to which this is consistent across the curriculum is variable. Leaders should continue the work they have already started to put in place a coherent, sequenced curriculum which is ambitious for all pupils.
- Systems for monitoring the effectiveness of strategies to support pupils with SEND need to be reviewed, improved and re-launched, so that provision for pupils with SEND is strengthened.
- The attendance of a significant minority of pupils has been too low for several years and is declining further. Systems to improve attendance have not been effective. Leaders should ensure that the recently formed pastoral and attendance team takes the necessary steps to improve pupils' attendance. Leaders would be

assisted in this work with more support from those parents who, against the school's guidance, take their children out of the school for term-time holidays.

- The behaviour of some pupils is not good enough, leading to the disruption of the learning of others at times. This is because leaders' systems to manage pupils' behaviour are not as effective as they need to be. Exclusions, especially of pupils with SEND, are high. Leaders should take action to reduce the rate of exclusion, especially of pupils with SEND, and to establish consistently applied behaviour management processes so that low-level disruption is much reduced.
- A minority of pupils and parents are not convinced that leaders' systems for managing bullying effectively are working as well as they should. Leaders should review the ways in which they identify bullying, help to resolve it and manage reports of bullying, and take the necessary action to further improve their approach.
- While pupils have a general awareness of how to keep safe, especially online, they do not have an understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. Leaders should take action so that this aspect of pupils' personal development and safeguarding is strengthened.

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're 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	111726
Local authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	10087638
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	540
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Richard Dowson
Headteacher	Peter Eyre (executive headteacher)
Website	www.saltburnlearningcampus.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 December 2015

Information about this school

- The executive headteacher was appointed in September 2015. A new head of school was appointed in September 2018, after the previous post-holder left the school. The school is federated with Saltburn Primary School, with which it shares the site.
- The school makes use of three providers of alternative education: Education Plus, Strive and Archways.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- We met the executive headteacher and head of school. We met senior staff with responsibility for behaviour, attendance, pupils' personal development and SEND.
- An inspector met the chair and other members of the governing body. An inspector also met a representative of the local authority.
- As part of this inspection, we carried out detailed reviews, known as 'deep dives', in: English, mathematics, science and history. Each 'deep dive' consisted of: a meeting with the subject leader to get an overview of the curriculum planning and how it works in practice; a visit to several lessons in different year groups, accompanied by a leader; a meeting with some of the teachers whose lessons were visited; a discussion with some of the pupils from the lessons visited; and a scrutiny of the workbooks of some of the pupils from the lessons visited. We also met the leaders of other subjects.
- We met with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding. We considered the records of accidents, bullying and behaviour. We sampled case files to check on how leaders identify and support pupils who need help. We looked at the processes for vetting staff who work at the school.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone with one of the providers of alternative education used by the school.

Inspection team

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