

Inspection of The Mirfield Free Grammar

Kitson Hill Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire WF14 9EZ

Inspection dates: 12–13 February 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The executive principal and new leaders have turned the school around. Pupils, parents and carers and staff recognise the rapid improvements made over the past year. A better curriculum has led to effective learning. Behaviour in class has improved considerably. Staff have high expectations for all pupils.

Pupils are proud of their school. They are polite. Pupils respect the views of others and are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Pupils get along well together. There are positive relationships between pupils and staff, with good attitudes to learning.

Pupils feel safe. There is very little bullying. Staff deal with bullying quickly. Pupils receive high-quality pastoral support. They know staff will help them if they have any worries. Pupils enjoy a wide range of visits and enrichment activities. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are positive about the Thrive and Link facilities that give extra support to them.

Leaders and governors are making a significant difference to the school. They have overcome a period of turbulence and have stabilised staffing. They are considerate of staff workload. Staff morale is high and leaders support staff effectively in developing their skills.

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

Leaders are ambitious for pupils. They have designed a curriculum that is well organised. Subject content is taught in the right order. Pupils understand their work much better than in the past. They are remembering more over time.

Teachers recap and revisit pupils' prior knowledge using 'Do Now' tasks at the start of lessons. They question pupils effectively to check pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils can apply their knowledge to more difficult learning. Notable examples were seen in drama, history and science.

Teachers use assessment well to check what pupils know and can do. When necessary, they adjust what is being taught to fill in any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Skilful implementation of the curriculum is improving pupils' knowledge across a wide range of subjects. The new mathematics curriculum is being taught effectively. A previously weak mathematics curriculum has left gaps in pupils' knowledge that staff are tackling.

At the end of key stage 4 in 2019, there was strong improvement in progress in English and languages. However, overall progress was below average. It was skewed by a small minority of pupils with challenging needs and health issues.

A new curriculum in languages is sparking much greater enjoyment in French and Spanish. Currently, too few pupils follow a modern foreign language in Year 11. However, good progress is being made in increasing numbers in coming years.

Disadvantaged pupils' work is comparable to that of other pupils. Pupils with SEND are well supported. Teachers have high expectations of these pupils. The school is willing to go the extra mile to support pupils with SEND. A range of strategies is used to make sure that all pupils have access to mainstream classes.

There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills in form time and across subjects. Extra support for reading is given to the weakest readers. They say it increases their self-esteem and helps them learn better by developing vocabulary.

Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. Pupils are clear about what is expected of them. They have positive attitudes to learning and work hard. The attendance team works hard to support pupils and families and ensure attendance is above average. Few pupils are regularly absent.

There is a high-quality offer for pupils' personal development. It is designed around the school's core values of respect, integrity, teamwork and aspiration. There are many educational visits and opportunities for leadership development. Careers education is a strength of the school. There is work experience for all older pupils and learners in the sixth form. Many employers contribute to the careers programme right from Year 7.

Learners in the sixth form benefit from a wide range of opportunities to develop leadership skills that prepare them for the future. Learners are highly positive about the support they receive with university and job applications. Leaders have started to increase the range of courses to better match the needs of some pupils. Learners repeating GCSE English and/or mathematics make strong progress.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. The well-being and safety of pupils are key priorities for everyone. All staff and governors have completed safeguarding training. They are vigilant and know what to do if they have safeguarding concerns. Leaders identify pupils who may need early help to prevent them being at risk of harm. They work with parents and a range of agencies to protect children from harm. Pupils know how to stay safe. Governors assure themselves that leaders make all the appropriate checks to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils in Years 9 to 11 have gaps in their mathematical knowledge. The curriculum was not designed and implemented well in the past. Leaders should further develop the work they are doing to close gaps in pupils' mathematical

knowledge in these years. They should ensure that gaps close quickly and pupils achieve well by the end of key stage 4.

- Sixth-form study programmes are not yet well matched for the least able students. These learners have not achieved well because the courses they take can be too demanding. It is clear that leaders have recognised this and started to provide a wider range of vocational courses. Leaders should further develop sixth-form study programmes to match the needs of all learners.
- The curriculum for each subject in the sixth form is well planned, but on occasions, some subjects are not taught well. As a result, some learners do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should make sure there is a well-designed programme of professional development for those sixth-form teachers who need it.

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	136674
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10121714
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,487
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	359
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jennifer Ryan
Principal	Lorraine Barker (Executive Principal)
Website	www.themfg.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 October 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The executive principal returned to lead the school in June 2018. She had been supporting other schools in the trust. There have been significant changes in senior leadership and staffing since the previous inspection.
- The school uses three alternative providers for a very small number of pupils. The alternative providers are Brian Jackson College, ETHOS and Reach Academy.

Information about this inspection

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

- During the inspection, we spoke to pupils and learners, both formally and informally, about their work and life in school.

- We met with the principal, other leaders and a wide range of staff about their work. We spoke with the trustees and members of the local governing body of the school. We spoke with a local authority adviser who works with the school.
- We scrutinised a wide range of documentation relating to the school's work to safeguard pupils. We checked the school's single central record, which includes the checks made on staff to ensure that they are safe to work with pupils. We checked the certification of designated safeguarding staff. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding leaders. We spoke to staff about safeguarding and child protection.
- The inspection particularly focused on English, mathematics, science, history and drama. Other subjects were also considered as part of the inspection. We spoke to curriculum leaders, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. We held discussions with teachers and pupils.
- We took account of the views of staff, pupils and parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaires and Ofsted's Parent View.

Inspection team

Jim McGrath, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tim Johnson	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Sheriff	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Cresswell	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Horn	Ofsted Inspector

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