

Inspection of Notley High School and Braintree Sixth Form

Notley Road, Braintree, Essex CM7 1WY

Inspection dates: 25–26 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Name calling and bullying are features of everyday life for too many pupils. This is often because of pupils' individual characteristics, such as the way they look. There are throwaway comments about different sexualities and taunts about wearing glasses. This creates a culture where pupils are not comfortable being themselves.

Attitudes in the sixth form are more positive. Although sixth-form students recall poor experiences in Years 7 to 11, things get better when students move into Year 12.

Pupils do not learn as much as they should. This is partly because lessons are routinely interrupted by poor behaviour. It is also because the curriculum is not structured or taught well enough.

Too often, too little is expected of pupils. They are not challenged to achieve as well as they could. Trustees have begun to implement changes in the curriculum, such as reviews of practice in the school, which are starting to bring about change. However, pupils are not accessing a good-quality curriculum or good learning opportunities.

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

The behaviour of a significant minority of pupils has a detrimental impact on the education of many. These pupils routinely interrupt lessons in key stages 3 and 4. The systems for improving their behaviour are not working. The same pupils are regularly removed from lessons. They disregard the school's behaviour policy. Being excluded from school does not stop the same pupils continuing to behave poorly.

Behaviour out of lessons is also concerning. Pushing and shoving in corridors make pupils feel unsafe. Bullying and teasing mean that pupils cannot be free to be themselves. This is not a healthy environment in which to grow up and learn. Some pupils seek sanctuary in the library, as they do not feel safe in the school.

Although not inadequate, there are weaknesses in the quality of education at the school. Leaders do not do enough to ensure that pupils learn what they need to at appropriate or required times. In art, for example, the work pupils do in key stage 3 is not considered in the context of what they learned at key stage 2. In mathematics, curriculum plans do not accurately reflect the rate at which teachers and pupils complete the work. Late changes are being made to what pupils currently in Year 11 business studies classes are being taught. Pupils have not learned sufficient amounts previously, and there are now gaps in their knowledge.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not supported to learn as well as they could. Staff have not been trained in how to meet pupils' needs. Leaders do not check the work teachers do to support pupils. They do not

have high expectations of what teachers should do to help pupils. This means pupils do not get enough help when they need it.

Leaders are in the process of developing provision for pupils' personal development. They have introduced a curriculum to teach resilience. This is in its infancy and taught more effectively in key stage 3 than in key stage 4. The 'pledge passport' allows leaders to monitor participation in extra-curricular activities. This shows that participation in these activities by disadvantaged pupils is low. Leaders are seeking to address this. Sixth-form students enjoy aspects of the weekly personal development tutorials they have but would prefer some of these to be more precisely focused on their needs.

Leaders, governors and trustees have taken some positive steps to improve aspects of the quality of education. They have brought in new approaches to teaching, such as focusing on teachers' use of questions to develop pupils' understanding. These techniques are not embedded and are often not used well. The leadership of the sixth form has been overhauled, and this is beginning to have an impact. Governors and trustees have adapted the way in which they monitor the work of school leaders. However, these changes have not had sufficient impact at this stage. At key stages 3, 4 and 5, pupils achieve less well than they should.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Records of recruitment and vetting checks are kept in line with requirements. Leaders have systems in place to ensure that staff concerns about pupils' welfare are recorded and followed up. Governors and trustees check that systems for safeguarding pupils are in place.

These systems are undermined by the school's culture. Too many pupils do not feel they are able to share concerns with an adult in school. They fear it will make them seem weak. They are not confident that adults deal with bullying well. They are concerned that reporting it may have no effect or even make the problem worse.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not secured a positive culture of mutual respect and appropriate behaviour. A significant minority of pupils regularly disrupt others' learning, spoil others' experiences of school and make others feel uncomfortable being themselves. Leaders need to establish an ethos of kindness and respect, where rules are followed and difference is celebrated.
- Leaders have not made the school a place where pupils feel safe to pass on concerns or where pupils are confident that concerns will be dealt with effectively.

This means that too many pupils feel there is not an adult to turn to in the school. Leaders need urgently to ensure that all pupils have an adult in school to talk to if they are worried and that all adults deal well with concerns that are brought to them.

- Leaders' curriculum plans do not set out well when pupils should learn different topics, meaning that some work is disjointed, does not follow well from the previous topic or does not advance pupils' understanding at an appropriate rate. As a result, pupils do not learn as much as they should. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans set clear aims for what pupils should learn and when.
- Too many teachers do not use the leaders' chosen pedagogical strategies effectively. For example, teachers do not use questioning well to make pupils think hard about their learning. This limits pupils' interest and their depth of understanding. Leaders need to ensure that their strategies to secure high-quality teaching are used by all teachers.
- Leaders do not train teachers effectively on how to meet the needs of pupils with SEND and they do not check how well teachers use the strategies that pupils need. As a result, pupils do not get sufficient support to achieve well. Leaders should provide teachers with appropriate training and check that teachers make use of the strategies leaders' identify to help pupils with SEND.

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	137013
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10133411
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1468
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	221
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Gask
Headteacher	David Conway
Website	www.notleyhigh.com
Date of previous inspection	17 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school is part of the North Essex Multi-Academy Trust. The trust has some common policies and practices, but delegates much of its work in holding the school to account to a local governing body.
- The headteacher of the school is also the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust.
- The school provides specialist education for 20 pupils with speech, language and communication needs.

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 did deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, art, religious education, and science. We met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons and reviewed pupils' work in these subjects and spoke with teachers and pupils.
- In addition to the deep dives, we looked at provision in other subjects, visiting lessons, reviewing pupils' work and speaking with leaders.
- We spoke with the headteacher/CEO of the trust, the deputy CEO of the trust, and members of the local governing body and trust. We reviewed minutes of governing body meetings.
- We reviewed the school's information on behaviour and attendance. We reviewed safeguarding records and spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding arrangements. We held meetings to discuss the leadership of safeguarding.
- We considered the 212 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View and the 209 responses to the free-text option; the 111 responses to Ofsted's staff survey; and the 115 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- We spoke with staff and pupils about different aspects of provision.

Inspection team

Andrew Hemmings, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Kay Leach	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Sutton	Ofsted Inspector

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