

Inspection of a good school: Mill Hill County High School

Worcester Crescent, Mill Hill, London NW7 4LL

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 September 2021

Outcome

Mill Hill County High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school with a diverse and happy community. Pupils are polite and courteous and typically treat everyone with respect. There is a culture that encourages mature and sensible behaviour. Pupils respond positively to this expectation in classrooms and around the school.

Pupils enjoy their learning and are safe. They are encouraged to be as independent as possible. In the online surveys, pupils, parents and carers typically agreed that the school is good at dealing with any bullying. However, a few pupils in the survey said that teachers are not good at resolving it.

Leaders have high academic expectations for all pupils. Pupils study a broad range of subjects, for as long as possible. Lessons are taught by teachers with strong subject knowledge. Outside of lessons, there is a wide range of extra-curricular activities available. For example, pupils can take part in music, dance, art, drama, computing and many other activities, including a range of sports.

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

Lessons throughout the school are calm and purposeful. Pupils are motivated to learn. They regularly ask and answer questions and enjoy learning new things. Pupils' positive behaviour continues beyond the classroom during breaktimes and when pupils move between lessons. If pupils need it, there is a range of well-being support available. For example, leaders have established a 'mentoring hub' since the last inspection. This provides pupils with one-to-one support that draws on the expertise of external agencies.

Leaders have planned the curriculum so that pupils build knowledge and skills from Year 7 to Year 13 in a logical way. Most pupils study the English Baccalaureate qualification at key stage 4. Students in the sixth form can select from a wide range of subjects. Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They teach new subject content clearly, building on what pupils already know. As a result, pupils understand what they are

learning and achieve well across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 9 were able to connect knowledge they were learning in physics to previous learning in biology and chemistry. However, sometimes curriculum plans do not identify the specific subject content that pupils need to learn. For example, in a few cases, curriculum plans identify skills for pupils to learn without also identifying the subject content to be taught.

Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities follow a bespoke curriculum in Year 7 and Year 8. They still study the full range of subjects but have additional time for learning English and life skills. Some of this additional time in English is used to help pupils build a rich vocabulary and develop their reading fluency.

Assessment is used appropriately across the school. For example, there is a focus on identifying any gaps in pupils' knowledge to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers check regularly what pupils know and remember and provide clear feedback. Assessment also helps pupils to remember what they have learned. Whole-school assessment systems are not overly burdensome on teachers' time.

Pupils told inspectors that they find personal, social, citizenship and health education (PSCHE) lessons useful. However, they also said that some content is unnecessarily repeated year after year. Some pupils said that they want to learn more about how to look after their physical, emotional and mental health. Leaders have identified these aspects as an area for development. For example, the leadership of PSCHE has been increased to support the improvement of the curriculum. There are also plans to further update the content that pupils learn, the order in which they learn it and by when.

The school provides sixth-form students with a range of support to help them with the university application process. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 take part in various careers-related activities. For example, all pupils in Year 11 have one-to-one sessions with an independent careers adviser. However, leaders have not made sure that the school's approach to careers information, education advice and guidance sets out specifically what pupils need to learn in each year group. This means that some pupils felt that they do not have enough knowledge to guide their next steps.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take swift action when safeguarding concerns arise. Staff work together, often alongside external agencies, to provide specific support for pupils. Importantly, this includes helping both the victim and any perpetrators.

Leaders are proactive in identifying pupils at risk. They recognise the link between pastoral and safeguarding concerns. This allows leaders to identify pupils in need of early help. The school is aware that some pupils feel reluctant to tell teachers about concerns. They have put steps in place to address this. For example, leaders have introduced an anonymous reporting system.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The content of the PSHE curriculum is sometimes repetitive and involves pupils learning things that they already know. Leaders should ensure that the PSHE curriculum is planned so that new content builds on, and does not simply repeat, previous learning.
- Sometimes, the school's approach to careers information, education advice and guidance is overly focused on activities. As a result, it does not provide pupils with comprehensive knowledge to guide their next steps. Leaders should ensure that there is a coherent programme in place that outlines exactly what pupils are learning about the full range of education and training options.
- On occasions, curriculum plans identify skills without also identifying specifically the underpinning subject content pupils are learning. This means that there is not always a clearly developed plan for how pupils will develop expertise in these skills over time. Leaders should refine the curriculum so that it identifies explicitly what content pupils need to learn to develop subject-specific skills.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2012.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	137386
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10200042
Type of school	Secondary
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	1697
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	455
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jill Hamilton
Headteacher	Andy Stainton
Website	www.mhchs.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 September 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.
- The school currently uses one alternative off-site provider, The Pavilion.
- The school provides specially resourced provision for pupils with visual impairment.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, trustees, subject leaders and groups of staff.
- Inspectors undertook deep dives in English, science, music, geography and modern foreign languages. These deep dives involved reviewing curriculum plans with subject

leaders, lesson visits, reviewing pupils' work and speaking with pupils and teachers from the lessons they visited.

- Inspectors held meetings with pupils and leaders to discuss the school's safeguarding arrangements. They also looked at records relating to safeguarding, including pre-employment checks.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about their workload and well-being. They considered the 81 responses to the Ofsted survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils from different year groups. They considered the 142 responses to the online pupils' survey.
- Inspectors considered 97 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and 66 free-text comments.

Inspection team

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