

Inspection of Heathfield Community School

School Road, Monkton Heathfield, Taunton, Somerset TA2 8PD

Inspection dates: 30 November and 1 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected six years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most of the time, pupils can learn without interruption. Pupils said there have been positive changes to the behaviour policy recently, but they would like their relationships with staff to improve further.

However, expectations of how pupils should behave as they move around the school site are not high enough. Too often, pupils' behaviour is poor. A minority of pupils make inappropriate comments which make others feel uncomfortable.

Pupils have opportunities through the curriculum to learn and think about important values, such as mutual respect. Despite this, a small proportion of pupils hold intolerant views. While most pupils feel able to report bullying and have confidence that leaders will deal with this, some pupils experience discrimination from their peers.

The school includes a special centre for pupils with autism spectrum disorder: The Cedar Centre. Pupils attending The Cedar Centre achieve well. They are supported to make their ambitions a reality. However, other pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not have such a positive experience. In some subjects, their needs are not understood well enough.

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

Leaders value the arts and have designed a curriculum which reflects this. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, benefit from access to a purpose-built performing arts centre and on-site theatre. All pupils study for a qualification in the creative or performing arts. They are well supported in these subjects, and develop confidence.

In other subjects, curriculum planning does not build well enough on what pupils learn at primary school. Most subject leaders broadly know the topics they want pupils to learn, and in what order. However, their plans do not identify precisely enough the essential content that is needed to prepare pupils for future learning. As a result, teachers emphasise different content. Their expectations of what pupils can learn are also sometimes too low.

Curriculum leaders have not thought enough about how to adapt the curriculum to support pupils with SEND to understand the big ideas in each subject. Some pupils with SEND do not remember the key points. Consequently, they find it difficult to access the learning that follows. By contrast, pupils with SEND attending The Cedar Centre and students in the sixth form are well supported by their teachers.

Leaders have begun to address the weaknesses in provision for pupils with SEND. The local authority is supporting leaders to improve the experiences of pupils with SEND and their families. Although this work is in its infancy, it is starting to have an

impact. Leaders now identify and assess pupils' needs more effectively. They are developing their use of assessment for those at the early stages of reading so that they know to provide a phonics curriculum when appropriate.

Most pupils behave well and many show good manners, especially during lessons. However, a minority of pupils display behaviours that run against school values. When this happens, leaders use assemblies to make their expectations clear. However, these messages are undermined by inconsistencies in the use of the school's behaviour policy. For example, lateness and pupils' use of inappropriate language sometimes go unchallenged by staff. Some pupils are in the habit of missing lessons.

Pupils get involved in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. They engage in purposeful activities, such as selling vegetables grown on the school plot. There is a successful debating club which participates in prestigious competitions. Leaders ensure that everyone benefits from an enriched curriculum through experiences in the 'Heathfield Passport'.

Activities across the school year combine to provide pupils with personal, social and health education. This includes learning about sex and relationships. Pupils remember isolated discussions about issues, such as consent. However, they do not revisit concepts such as this enough. Consequently, they do not deepen their understanding year on year.

Leaders have not ensured that older pupils, including those in the sixth form, continue to learn about different religions. Although pupils continue to discuss values such as tolerance, they are not well informed. This limits the extent to which pupils leave school confident to work and live alongside others.

The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. In the sixth form, the information and advice pupils receive are limited to the performing arts industry.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff readily report any concerns in the school's secure system. They have confidence that leaders will take appropriate action.

Leaders work with a range of external services. Their connections with external professionals have deepened because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders are strengthening the capacity of the internal safeguarding team. Increasingly, pupils and staff refer to the SafeHub if something is worrying them. A wide range of staff are involved in getting help to pupils and their families.

In the light of the recent review of sexual abuse and harassment in schools, leaders have asked pupils and staff to reflect and give feedback on the impact of peer-on-peer abuse.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Expectations of how pupils can and should behave are too low. Although most pupils behave well in lessons, there is poor behaviour displayed by some pupils around the school site. Leaders must raise their own expectations, and those of staff, ensuring that all adults in the school work together to take an effective and consistent approach to discipline.
- The curriculum in some subjects does not build on what pupils already know. Leaders have not set out with enough clarity what they expect pupils to know and remember as they progress through the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not build up detailed knowledge in each subject. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is planned and sequenced to enable pupils to add to and deepen their knowledge over time.
- Leaders have not adapted the curriculum to enable pupils with SEND to learn the essential concepts as well as their peers. In some subjects, teaching is not effective or supportive for these pupils. Consequently, some pupils with SEND do not develop a secure understanding, and so they become discouraged. Leaders must ensure that teachers know how to support pupils with SEND to learn the key concepts of their subject.
- There is a rich and varied programme to support pupils' personal development. However, this is not organised or delivered well enough to provide pupils, including students in the sixth form, with the range of benefits that leaders intend. Leaders should ensure that their work to promote the personal development of pupils provides regular opportunities for pupils to think deeply about who they want to be and how they relate to others.

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	123883
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10207242
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
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	1360
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	76
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	James Stone
Headteacher	Peter Hoare
Website	http://www.heathfieldcommunityschool.com/
Date of previous inspection	22 and 23 January 2015

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average secondary school.
- The school includes a sixth-form centre called The SPACE. All students in the sixth form study for a single qualification in the performing arts.
- In addition, the school runs a specially resourced provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder: The Cedar Centre.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well above the national average.
- At the time of the inspection, the local authority was supporting the school to improve the provision for pupils with SEND.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider and three unregistered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 held meetings with the headteacher; a range of senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and the designated safeguarding leader; a group of governors; and the head of school improvement from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in: English, science, French, art and drama. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders and visited lessons in other subjects.
- To gather evidence on the safeguarding of pupils, inspectors scrutinised the single central record of adults working within the school. Inspectors met with leaders and staff in the safeguarding team, scrutinised records and held discussions with pupils, including pupils in single-sex groups. Inspectors observed pupils moving around the site and during break and lunchtime, held discussions with staff and considered communications from parents.
- Inspectors visited the centre for sixth-form provision and held discussions with leaders there.
- Inspectors visited the specially resourced provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, and held discussions with leaders.
- Inspectors considered 249 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, including 167 free-text comments. Inspectors took into account 73 responses to the staff survey, and other written communications from staff. Inspectors also considered a small number of responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Will Morgan	Ofsted Inspector
Iain Freeland	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah McGinnis	Her Majesty's Inspector

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