

Inspection of Homewood College

Queensdown School Road, Off Lewes Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 7LA

Inspection dates: 2 and 7 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Only a small number of pupils come into school daily. When they do attend, pupils do not understand what is expected of them or what they will learn. This is because the adults themselves are unsure. Changes in leadership have meant that staff do not have the skills they need to support the very complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of pupils.

The lack of appropriate systems to support behaviour means that lessons are usually disrupted by poor and, at times, unsafe behaviour. Pupils often use offensive language and show a consistent lack of respect for each other and staff.

Many pupils do not attend school regularly. This means their experience of learning is disjointed. While some support is offered through tutoring and alternative provision, leaders are unclear if this provision is meeting the needs of pupils. This is because staff do not monitor whether the learning is effective.

Pupils do not achieve well because the curriculum is not carefully planned. Pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan) are not sufficiently taken into account. The ineffective curriculum and high levels of absence means that pupils do not achieve the appropriate qualifications they need to move into future education or employment.

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

Frequent changes in leadership have led to a significant decline in the quality of education. For far too long, the complex needs of pupils have not been met. In school, daily learning is characterised by unsafe behaviour and disrupted learning. Nearly two thirds of pupils only attend school on a part-time basis or do not attend regularly. Leaders have not taken swift enough action to address both the school's poor curriculum and the very high rates of absence. Consequently, pupils' education and well-being have suffered.

The curriculum is not ambitious. While some teachers plan and create learning experiences for pupils, these are not part of a school-wide, sequenced curriculum. Leaders have not been clear about the qualifications they want pupils to achieve. Therefore, staff, pupils and parents do not understand what success will look like or how to realise this. Staff do take time to get to know pupils. This includes attempts to understand the very specific needs related to pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH). However, staff have not been provided with appropriate training or support for curriculum planning that ensures each pupil can learn.

Every day, behaviour incidents disrupt learning. Pupils report that the regularly locked doors, used to limit the impact of this disruption, only make them feel more anxious. There is not a clear behaviour policy in place. Staff do not know what

actions they should take when managing the challenging behaviour of pupils. Staff and pupils, therefore, feel unsafe.

High rates of absence are further exacerbated by very high levels of exclusions. Pupils are, therefore, disengaged with their learning. This means that they have considerable gaps in their knowledge and understanding, which staff do not consistently assess or act on. Furthermore, the situation is made worse by an inconsistent approach to help re-engage pupils after significant periods of absence.

Staff are well intentioned and do care for the pupils. They work hard to foster positive relationships with those that attend and with the pupils they support through the school's outreach provision. Some of this supports the personal development of pupils. However, there is no coherent plan in place for pupils' personal, social and health education. Staff have also not had the appropriate training to explore issues around relationships and sex education (RSE). This means that pupils do not have the education they need in readiness for life in modern Britain.

Governors have very recently appointed a new interim executive headteacher to address the significant weaknesses in the school. However, over time, not enough has been done to ensure that staff can meet the growing complexity of pupils' needs. This includes delivering an acceptable quality of education that all pupils who attend the school deserve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Regular incidents of unsafe behaviour and infrequent attendance means that pupils are constantly at risk of harm. Leaders cannot be sure of the safety or whereabouts of some pupils. The processes to ensure that pupils are regularly 'seen and heard' have only very recently been put in place. Staff, as well as pupils, are also subject to physical and verbal abuse because leaders have failed to provide adequate support to address some pupils' very challenging behaviours.

Staff have received training that helps them identify risks to pupils' safety and well-being. However, despite some recent improvements, safeguarding records have not always shown if actions were taken to keep pupils safe. In addition, leaders have not ensured that all appropriate checks have been made and recorded for the adults who work in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Over time, there has been significant turbulence in leadership. Staff and parents do not have a clear understanding of the vision of the school and how the pupils will get the support they need to learn. Leaders, governors and the local authority

need to look carefully at the roles and responsibilities of leaders and staff and ensure they have the training, knowledge and capacity they need to do their work effectively. Improvements are urgently needed in checking the impact of the school's work more closely, ensuring that follow-up actions on weaknesses in practice are taken quickly and evaluated carefully.

- Pupils, whether attending school regularly or not, are not safe. Immediate action must be taken to ensure that pupils and staff are safe in school and that all pupils are seen or heard regularly. This includes actions to improve the safety of the school accommodation and environment, all record-keeping systems and the processes followed when pupils are not in school.
- The curriculum does not meet the needs of the vast majority of pupils. This means that pupils choose not to attend school or make limited progress if they do. Leaders need to plan and implement a curriculum that is fit for purpose, inspires pupils to attend, as well as meeting their needs as outlined in EHC plans to prepare them better for future life.
- The absence of a behaviour policy and associated systems means that nobody is clear about the school rules. Pupils' behaviour is often chaotic and sometimes violent. Leaders need to create and implement a new process that all stakeholders understand and can apply consistently. They must also look carefully at the support for pupils with complex SEND to help them manage their behaviour, so that they are able to access the full curriculum offer.
- Pupils do not attend school regularly. Too many pupils are on a part-time timetable. Rates of exclusion are too high. In order to lessen the disruption to pupils' learning and reduce the risks to them, urgent action is required to reduce the level of absence and to increase the amount of time pupils attend school.
- Planning for pupils' personal development is not in place. This means that opportunities for pupils to explore the personal, social and health aspects of their education are not regular and consistent, and they are not well prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders must carefully monitor the implementation of planning, ensuring that staff have the knowledge they need to support pupils. This includes training in delivering RSE.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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	114678
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10184424
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chairs	Luke Burstow and Linda Newman (co-chairs)
Headteacher	Pam Ridgwell (interim executive headteacher)
Website	http://www.chb.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 March 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been several changes in senior leadership since the last inspection. This includes the very recent appointment of a new interim executive headteacher.
- The school's specialism is to provide an education for pupils with SEMH. However, over time, pupils with different SEND have joined the school. Therefore, some of the pupils on roll have very complex needs.
- All pupils on roll have an EHC plan.
- While the school has a designation for pupils from 5 to 19 years, it currently only has pupils in Years 7 to 11.
- The school uses two registered and two unregistered alternative providers to offer additional education for some pupils.
- Due to the non-attendance of some pupils and the lack of coherence around the careers provision, the school does not meet the requirements of the Baker Clause. This requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- 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 and staff, and spoke to pupils during lessons and social times. They also spoke with the co-chairs of the governing board. Inspectors also spoke with different representatives from the local authority.
- The inspection team discussed the curriculum with subject leaders and teachers. When visiting lessons, they spoke to pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the seven responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including five free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys, as well as gathering additional views throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors viewed the school's website and policies, met with designated safeguarding leads, spoke with pupils and staff, checked school records of safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school and spoke with governors.

Inspection team

Aimee Floyd, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lee Selby

Her Majesty's Inspector

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