

Inspection of a good school: Holmfirth High School

Heys Road, Thongsbridge, Holmfirth, West Yorkshire HD9 7SE

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 February 2022

Outcome

Holmfirth High School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if the inspectors were to carry out a section 5 inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Teachers plan lessons that are highly interesting and engaging. Pupils really enjoy learning at this school. Leaders have made sure the curriculum goes beyond the scope of the national curriculum. Pupils have confidence when talking to visitors and adults about their learning. Their attitudes to learning are exceptional. Pupils also help and support each other with their learning. They feel safe and well looked after in the school.

Staff have very high expectations of pupils. Pupils routinely meet and exceed these expectations. Pupils behave very well around the school. The vast majority of pupils are respectful towards each other. There are rare occasions where a few pupils are not, and this disappoints their peers.

The school has always offered pupils lots of opportunities for learning beyond lessons. Leaders are making sure these opportunities are in place again as soon as possible. Many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, take part in a wide range of clubs and activities. Examples are house competitions, residential visits and community fundraising and charity events. Leaders also make sure any support pupils need is available to them, for example mental health and well-being support.

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

Leaders have planned the curriculum so it is highly ambitious for all pupils. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Lessons follow a sequence that makes sense to pupils. Pupils build up knowledge and skills and remember important concepts. Teachers make sure pupils get the chance to revisit prior learning. Pupils respond to feedback by reflecting on what they need to improve on. In every subject, teachers check pupils' understanding throughout each

lesson. This makes sure they can identify things pupils might struggle with. Pupils get the extra help they need. Because of this, pupils keep up with their learning.

Pupils enjoy their learning in English, mathematics and geography. They can see how teachers help them to understand and remember the content. They are confident to talk about their work. Pupils are also confident to work on their own or with others in groups. The work in pupils' books is very well presented and of a very high standard. Pupils are extremely proud of their work.

The curriculum in modern foreign languages is very high quality. Leaders plan the way pupils learn carefully. They use phonics learning which is language-specific. They also use sentence builders. This allows pupils to think in the language rather than to always translate it back to English. This helps pupils to achieve. Because of this, leaders are keen to encourage more pupils to study a language at key stage 4.

During the inspection, inspectors also saw some high-quality work from pupils in science, design and technology, history and art.

Pupils behave very well at this school. There are a small minority of pupils who do not always meet the exceptional standards demonstrated by others. Leaders are aware of this. They know that listening to the views of pupils more often will help encourage all pupils to meet these standards.

Pupils say that bullying is rare. When it does occur, leaders deal with it effectively. Leaders encourage pupils to report if other pupils make inappropriate comments to them. This includes any behaviour which makes pupils feel uncomfortable. School records show that leaders take swift and decisive action if such incidents occur.

Leaders have put in place a strong programme of careers advice and guidance for pupils. This meets the Baker Clause. However, the pandemic has had an impact on this. Pupils say they are happy with the advice and support they receive. Inspectors agree that the support is high quality.

Leaders have made significant improvements since the last inspection. They have done so while taking into consideration the well-being and workload of staff. Staff report they are proud of the school and are very happy to work in it.

In discussion with the headteacher, inspectors agreed that encouraging exceptional behaviour in all pupils and encouraging more pupils to study a language may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that the procedures for checking, recruiting and training staff are robust. All staff have regular safeguarding training. As a result, staff take swift

action to ensure that pupils receive the help they need. All staff and pupils know who to talk to when they have a concern.

Leaders have worked hard to make sure pupils are supported if they have concerns or worries. Leaders have invested in pastoral support for pupils. For example, they have introduced anxiety workshops. The school also employs a school counsellor.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils know the names of the designated safeguarding leads in the school. They understand what leaders can do to help them.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The views of a few pupils have not come to the attention of leaders. Because of this, some pupils remain unconvinced that all pupils are always respectful of others. Leaders should take into consideration the views of all pupils. They should also ensure that the behaviour management policy is applied consistently by all staff.
- The number of pupils choosing a language to study in key stage 4 is not as high as it was previously. So, the number of pupils accessing the English Baccalaureate pathway is not as high either. Leaders should continue to implement their plans to encourage more pupils to continue to study a foreign language at key stage 4 if it best fits their individual needs.

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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2016.

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	107769
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10200484
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,313
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dianne Frost
Headteacher	Ben Stitchman
Website	www.holmfirthhigh.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	13 to 14 December 2016

Information about this school

- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average.
- A very small number of pupils attend off-site alternative provision at Kirklees College, Ethos College and Brian Jackson College.
- 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.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and other members of staff. The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of governors. He took account of 61 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They gathered pupils' views about the school through

formal and informal discussions. They took account of 98 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding documents. Information relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance was evaluated.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 134 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, along with 132 responses submitted as free text.
- Inspectors looked in depth at the following subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and geography. In doing so, inspectors visited classes across year groups and reviewed pupils' work. Inspectors also visited other subjects across the school.

Inspection team

Barry Found, lead inspector

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