

Inspection of Gosford Hill School

Oxford Road, Kidlington, Oxfordshire OX5 2NT

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 February 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

New leadership and the guidance of the River Learning Trust (RLT) have significantly improved the quality of education at Gosford Hill. Most parents and carers, pupils and staff recognise the many improvements. Pupils and sixth-form students value their typically strong relationships with their teachers and the high expectations that they have for them.

Leaders and teachers know their pupils well and work together to raise aspirations and support them to achieve their goals. Pupils develop their talents beyond their chosen subjects. Learning is enriched through a range of clubs, trips and visits. Pupils and parents enthuse about the opportunities on offer for sports, drama and music.

Meeting individual needs and promoting pupils' well-being have top priority. As one parent described it, 'Teachers are extremely professional and respond in a way that has made me feel like mine are the only children they are responsible for.'

Positive relationships ensure typically calm, courteous behaviour across the school. Pupils follow the school's behaviour system of consequences and rewards. Any form of deliberate unkindness or bullying is rare. Pupils know which adults they can turn to should they have any concerns. Sixth-form students are rightly proud of the active roles they take to support younger pupils.

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

Leaders have significantly improved the quality of education. Working with advisers from RLT, leaders and governors have developed a shared vision for the ambitious curriculum, and introduced a shared framework of teaching resources and approaches across the school. Staff and pupils have embraced these raised aspirations, which now underpin lessons across the subjects at Gosford Hill.

Support from RLT has enabled senior leaders and subject leaders to enhance planning across all subjects. English, science and languages have improved significantly. Here, leaders know what they want pupils to learn and in what order, and most teachers explain subject matter and check pupils' understanding well. There is similarly strong practice in most other subjects too. However, this planning is less advanced in a few subject areas, such as design technology, where new leaders are working hard to make rapid improvements. In a minority of subjects, there is more work to do to ensure that lessons promote deeper and more independent thinking.

In the past, the proportion of pupils taking the suite of subjects known as the English Baccalaureate has been low. Innovative leadership in languages has reinvigorated the curriculum and work is well under way to increase the proportion of pupils opting to take French or German at GCSE. Similarly, leaders also have plans to increase the breadth of courses available to students in the sixth form.

Pupils at an earlier stage of learning to read are supported well to make improvements. Additionally, a new programme of tutor-led reading sessions is seeking to promote a

love of reading to all pupils. However, more work is required to ensure that there is a greater consistency and a clearer focus to these sessions.

Most teachers use similar methods to regularly check what pupils can remember, and use this to inform their teaching. However, further refinement is needed by some teachers to provide pupils with more opportunities to think deeply, and to apply their learning independently to new contexts. Occasionally, some pupils are insufficiently stretched, while others find work too hard.

The trust has supported leaders to improve provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders know these pupils and understand their needs well. They provide teachers with useful information to support pupils' learning. However, more robust monitoring by leaders is needed to ensure that all teachers can use this information to appropriately adapt their teaching to meet the needs of these pupils in their subjects.

Behaviour is typically good throughout the school; most pupils are respectful and polite. Staff have access to useful information and training to help them set clear expectations and manage pupils' behaviour well. In classrooms, pupils are keen to learn and engage with the tasks set.

Pupils' personal development is promoted well, including in the sixth form. Impartial careers advice and guidance help them plan and prepare for their next steps when they leave the school. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is thoughtfully planned and supplemented well by visiting speakers and through assemblies. However, inconsistencies in teachers' implementation of this curriculum in lessons mean that its impact is variable.

Staff promote pupils' mental health and well-being well. Students in the sixth form are proud to train as 'peer active listeners' to support younger pupils. Most parents are grateful for the support pupils received during COVID-19 restrictions. As one enthused, 'Staff have worked tirelessly to compensate for COVID disruption and it's clear that they are passionate about supporting children's learning beyond the classroom as well as within it.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safer recruitment practices are in place and all staff receive regular and appropriate training on safeguarding. This promotes a culture of vigilance at Gosford Hill and ensures that adults are alert to the warning signs that a pupil might be being harmed or in danger. Well-managed systems are in place to record and share any concerns that staff may have about pupils. Safeguarding leaders swiftly seek support from external agencies when necessary to make sure that pupils get the help they need. Pupils say that they feel safe here and know whom to turn to if they need help.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned and sequenced in a minority of subjects. However, leaders are ensuring that they are in the process of bringing this about, and are making the necessary amendments in response to the pandemic. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- Across the school, teachers are following the whole-school pedagogical approaches. However, in some subjects, teachers' approaches to checking what pupils already know and can do require refinement. This limits opportunities for the promotion of deeper independent thinking and the application of their knowledge. Building on good practice in the school, leaders need to support staff to improve pupils' oracy and extended writing skills to ensure that all pupils, particularly the most able, are challenged effectively.
- Occasionally, including during PSHE lessons, there is some inconsistency in teachers' implementation of the curriculum. Consequently, some pupils are insufficiently challenged, while others, including those with SEND, do not have their needs met and so struggle to engage. Leaders need to ensure that enhanced monitoring promotes teaching that better meets the needs of all pupils across the curriculum.
- A new tutor-led reading programme has been introduced, seeking to promote reading across the school. This is in its early stages and not all staff and pupils are clear about its key priorities and how to achieve them. A clearer shared rationale, staff training and more focused monitoring are needed to ensure that the programme meets senior leaders' intended aims.

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	138897
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10200875
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
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	794
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	121
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kirsten Robinson
Headteacher	Nigel Sellars
Website	www.gosford-hill.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 July 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Recent changes to leadership have continued since the previous inspection in July 2021. The new deputy headteacher started in September 2021 and a new model of subject leadership has been introduced.
- The school currently uses two alternative providers for a very small number of pupils.
- 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 educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Deep dives were conducted in English, science, modern foreign languages and art. As part of these, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils about their work and met with teaching staff to talk about their approach to designing and delivering the curriculum. In addition, meetings were held with leaders of geography and design technology to discuss curriculum planning and provision in these areas.
- Meetings were held with two leaders of RLT who have been working with the school, the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the SENCo and other members of teaching and support staff.
- A meeting was held with a member of the board of trustees and three members of the local governing body.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils and sixth-form students to discuss their views about many different aspects of their school and to talk about their work. Inspectors also held informal conversations with pupils at break- and lunchtime.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff represented in meetings and the responses to Ofsted surveys were considered.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's policies and practices and met with safeguarding leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding. Records of safeguarding incidents were scrutinised and discussed. Inspectors also reviewed the school records of the recruitment checks made on adults working in the school.

Inspection team

Matthew Newberry, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Taj Bhambra	Ofsted Inspector
Mary Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Yvonne Garvey	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022