

# Inspection of Montpelier High School

Cheltenham Road, Bristol BS6 5RD

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Inspection dates: 23 and 24 March, and 5 May 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Inadequate**

The quality of education	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Inadequate</b>
Personal development	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 12 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?**

For a significant proportion of pupils, the school does not feel like a safe place. Some pupils say they experience bullying by their peers that goes unresolved and therefore persists. Many cannot identify an adult in the school they trust enough to share their worries with. They do not have enough confidence that staff will protect them from bullying, including physical and verbal abuse.

Leaders have been too slow to act on pupils' concerns. This has prolonged some pupils' unhappy experiences of school. Furthermore, pupils consider that some staff apply the behaviour policy unfairly. This creates mistrust. Leaders have begun to review their approach to behaviour in response. However, it is too soon to see the impact of any changes.

Leaders want pupils to become 'compelling individuals' who are able to articulate complex views persuasively. Pupils come from highly diverse backgrounds. Leaders celebrate this and make sure that different cultures and faiths are represented in the curriculum. They enjoy enrichment sessions linked to their interests. Older pupils, including those in the sixth form, follow their course specifications but they do not yet learn the breadth of knowledge that they could.

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

Leaders have identified a need to clarify their expectations and systems in relation to the management of pupils' behaviour with pupils and staff. However, pupils believe that some staff are inconsistent when managing behaviour. At times, this can lead to strained relationships between pupils and staff or between pupils. In addition, there are sometimes tensions between pupils which lead to unruly behaviour around the school site. Although pupils are usually able to concentrate in lessons, they experience some low-level disruption.

Leaders do not have a precise enough oversight of patterns of behaviour and bullying to evaluate whether pupils' perception is, in fact, a wide-scale problem that goes beyond individual examples. Therefore, leaders are not strategic enough in their approach to tackling pupils' concerns. They routinely gather the views of pupils, but they have not done enough to respond. Where leaders have acted, they have not checked that this has made enough of a difference.

Subject leaders have begun to identify the most important subject knowledge for pupils to learn. Although this process is underway, the curriculum is not well developed in some areas. In the absence of a well-designed and ambitious curriculum, teachers rely on exam specifications to inform their teaching. This limits the range of knowledge that pupils, including students in the sixth form, can learn.

The curriculum does not prioritise early reading sufficiently. Some pupils are not able to read accurately when they arrive at the school. Leaders do not use assessment

precisely enough to identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge. They do not provide a phonics curriculum where needed.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have mixed experiences. In some subjects, they receive the support they need to learn the curriculum successfully. Where pupils with SEND are less well supported, it is because staff do not understand their needs well enough. Leaders recognise this and are improving the information and training that staff receive.

Pupils' attendance has been negatively affected this year by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders have adapted the curriculum to make sure pupils still learn important content. They are working with pupils who still do not attend school regularly to understand the reasons why.

Following a democratic process, pupils played a leading role in changing the name of the school. Leaders invite community groups into school to talk to pupils and staff about ideas of prejudice. Staff and pupil working parties have been appointed to work with leaders to review school policies and liaise with the school community to promote the importance of equal opportunities. While there has been some progress, there remains work to do.

Leaders have developed a new curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE). Leaders have identified a growth in the number of pupils experiencing social, emotional difficulties and mental ill health linked to the pandemic. As a result, pupils are learning relevant topics, such as how to keep themselves mentally healthy. However, older pupils, who have not learned the new curriculum content, have gaps in their knowledge which make them more vulnerable. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, would like more support with and opportunities to discuss mental health.

As a result of the pandemic, leaders have not been able to deliver their plans for careers education in full. 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.

Trust leaders have a good understanding of some of the challenges facing the school and are considerate of staff well-being. They have helped the school's senior team to navigate the pandemic.

Leaders have received support from the local authority to improve safeguarding practice. Despite this, trust leaders and governors do not have a strong enough understanding of the ongoing weaknesses in safeguarding. They have been unable to respond to the key concerns of pupils successfully, which contributes to pupils' lack of confidence in aspects of the school's work.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. There is not a strong enough oversight of safeguarding issues, compounded by weaknesses in systems and record keeping. In addition, there are inconsistencies in the way that leaders follow statutory guidance when handling allegations about staff. Leaders do not ensure that every member of staff has essential safeguarding training.

Pupils describe not feeling safe in school. They feel threatened by unruly behaviour. A significant number of pupils and parents do not have the confidence that staff will tackle bullying effectively. As a result, some pupils feel vulnerable to the potential of physical and verbal abuse.

Leaders are developing a whole-school approach to sexual harassment and abuse, but some staff and governors do not understand these issues well enough.

However, leaders work well with safeguarding partners to support individual pupils with complex challenges.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders gather a wide range of evidence on the school's performance but their analysis of this is not incisive. Consequently, leaders do not take effective action quickly enough. They do not monitor or evaluate the impact of their actions with sufficient rigour. Leaders must take a more-systematic approach to tackling the identified weaknesses.
- A significant proportion of pupils have little confidence in the school's ability to tackle bullying. They do not feel listened to or believed when they report what is happening to them. Many pupils cannot identify a trusted adult they would report a concern to. Leaders must ensure that bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively. This will help pupils feel reassured and safe.
- Relationships between staff and pupils do not always reflect the positive and respectful culture that leaders intend. There is a perception among pupils that the behaviour policy is applied unfairly. Leaders must ensure that expectations of behaviour and ways of managing it are clear to all.
- There are inconsistencies in the way in which leaders follow statutory safeguarding guidance. Consequently, allegations against staff are not always handled appropriately. When an allegation is made, leaders must ensure that they share information with, and seek advice from, the designated officer at the local authority as appropriate.
- Leaders have not ensured that each member of staff has the training they need to safeguard pupils. This makes it possible for staff to work with pupils for extended periods without understanding the systems within the school that

support safeguarding. Leaders must ensure that all staff know how to identify and report any concerns they have about pupils' welfare.

- In some subjects, leaders have not given sufficient thought to what pupils will learn. Where this is the case, the curriculum is not coherently planned and sequenced so that pupils, including students in the sixth form, learn an ambitious body of knowledge. Leaders should provide a well-constructed curriculum in all subjects and all key stages so that pupils and students acquire a breadth of detailed knowledge.
- Pupils in the early stages of reading do not receive the support they need to become accurate readers. Leaders do not use assessment to identify where pupils have gaps in their knowledge of phonics. Leaders should provide a phonics curriculum for these pupils.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135581
<b>Local authority</b>	Bristol City of
<b>Inspection number</b>	10212532
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	925
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	175
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Gail Bragg
<b>Principal</b>	Kerry McCullagh
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.montpschool.org/">http://www.montpschool.org/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24 and 25 November 2010, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new principal and chair of governors have been appointed.
- The school changed its name in November 2020. Its previous name was Colston's Girls' School.
- The school uses three registered and one unregistered alternative provider.

## Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement,

because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- 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.
- Very occasionally, Ofsted's quality assurance process may suggest gaps in the inspection evidence base, which will cause Ofsted to conclude that the inspection is incomplete. This happened at Montpelier High school. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors returned to the school on 5 May 2022 to gather additional information to secure the evidence base. In such cases, the inspection report is not published until Ofsted is satisfied that the inspection is secure.
- Inspectors held discussions with the principal, members of the senior team, the chief executive officer and other leaders from the trust, two governors, including the chair of governors, and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo).
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, languages and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, 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 about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and other staff and governors with responsibility for safeguarding in the school and the trust. Inspectors considered a range of documentary evidence, including policies, the school's records of allegations and concerns and written communications from parents. Inspectors spoke with a range of staff and pupils about safeguarding and carried out observations of pupils around the school site.
- Inspectors considered 135 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Parent View, including 117 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered 301 responses to the survey for pupils and 34 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Teresa Hill	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Watson	Ofsted Inspector
Tracey Reynolds	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sarah McGinnis	Her Majesty's Inspector

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