

# Inspection of Hertswood Academy

Cowley Hill, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire WD6 5LG

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Inspection dates: 22 and 23 June 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Sixth-form provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils have mixed experiences of their time at Hertswood Academy. While most pupils are well looked after, some are not.

New behaviour routines with higher expectations have led to improvements. Pupils are increasingly being respectful towards their peers and teachers, particularly when in lessons. Outside lessons, many pupils get on well with each other. However, a small number do not. Some pupils use hurtful language towards others. Some teachers deal with problems less well than others and sometimes bullying takes longer to sort out than it should. While many pupils can see positive changes in behaviour, some pupils are not convinced the school is better and would not recommend the school.

Sixth form students' experience of school life is different. The sixth form is a harmonious community where students support and care for one another. They are excellent role models for younger pupils. Students in sixth form experience a better quality curriculum than the pupils in the rest of the school.

There is a growing number of clubs, trips and experiences. Sixth form students, for example, enjoy their trips abroad to places such as Italy. Pupils that attend clubs, such as 'robotics', take part in national competitions.

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

Leaders, supported by trustees and the local authority, have begun to make positive changes to the school. The pandemic, however, has slowed a lot of their work. Some of the changes are not making the difference leaders intend.

Leaders' review of the curriculum showed that it needed to improve. Leaders have rethought their curriculum plans across different subjects. Many subject plans clearly lay out the knowledge leaders want pupils to learn from Year 7 to Year 13. Some subject plans, though, are not complete. They do not have the same level of detail to help teachers decide what to teach.

Many teachers have good subject knowledge, but some teachers choose activities that do not help pupils to learn well. Some activities are too easy. Others are based around examination-style language too soon, before pupils are ready for this aspect of their learning. Aspects of assessment are not appropriate as they do not check carefully enough what pupils know. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

The sixth form is different. The sixth form curriculum is clearly designed and implemented well by teachers. Assessment is appropriate and linked clearly to the key knowledge taught. Students progress well.

Leaders have raised the bar with regard to what type of behaviour is expected in the school. There is a clear set of rewards and sanctions. Behaviour generally is better than in the past. However, some pupils do not always have positive attitudes to school life or learning. This is because some staff do not deal with inappropriate behaviour or harsh language in a consistent and fair way. This impedes the development of a positive school culture and stops some pupils from enjoying their time at school.

Leaders have improved aspects of school provision for some of the most vulnerable pupils. There is a clear process to support pupils who find reading tricky. Staff know, and use well, appropriate phonics programmes to teach pupils to read. These pupils quickly catch up with their peers. Across the school, reading is a key feature of school life. Pupils read widely in class, experiencing a range of interesting and engaging texts from different genres and cultures.

The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. Information about pupils with SEND is shared with teachers. Teachers are using this information with increasing effectiveness to improve the support that pupils with SEND receive. When pupils with SEND experience high quality teaching and support, they achieve well.

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, access a well-planned personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. Pupils learn about topics such as finance and relationships. They benefit from clear independent careers advice and guidance. Students in the sixth form are well prepared for their next step in life. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause.

The school is on a journey of change. The changes are broadly welcomed by staff but have impacted negatively on some staff workload. Staff professional development has been helpful but has not achieved all that it should. Some staff and leaders are not aware of the weaker areas of provision, such as aspects of assessment, and so have not done enough to improve them. Despite positive changes, leaders do not have the full support of some pupils and their parents.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a clear process, known and used by all staff, for reporting concerns to the safeguarding team. Training makes staff acutely aware of the risks and dangers, including in the local area, to pupils.

Safeguarding records are detailed and well kept. They show timely responses to safeguarding concerns. Leaders work with a range of agencies to give pupils and their families the help they need.

Pupils are taught well about risks in their community. As a result, they have good awareness of local dangers, such as county lines and substance abuse.

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

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

- The work to improve the curriculum is incomplete. Knowledge is not set out in a clear and logical way for some subjects. This means there are still inconsistencies in how the curriculum is taught. Leaders need to ensure that all subjects have detailed plans that support teachers to implement the curriculum well.
- Some assessment is not helpful as it relies too much on examination criteria and is not linked to the key knowledge pupils should have learned. This means that some assessment does not identify what pupils know, understand or can do. Leaders need to ensure that all assessment is purposeful, linked to the knowledge taught and helpful to teachers and pupils.
- While leaders' actions to tackle bullying, unkind remarks and derogatory language have been partially successful, some poor behaviour and attitudes still persist. Some pupils lack confidence that their concerns will be dealt with in such a way as to secure a long-term resolution. This reduces the enjoyment those pupils have of school. Leaders should establish an accurate understanding of the various patterns and causes of inappropriate behaviour and ensure that all staff apply the behaviour policies consistently and fairly.
- Some leaders have not evaluated well their areas of responsibility, nor accessed training or development that will help them. This means some leaders are not clear about what works well and less well. Leaders need to ensure that staff access high quality professional development and expertise that will support them to evaluate the impact of their work and make improvements where needed.

## **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>	138747
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10227857
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1238
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	133
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Martin Doe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Gillett
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hertswoodacademy.org">www.hertswoodacademy.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 July 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school moved to its present site in September 2019.
- The school uses one registered and two non-registered alternative provisions.
- A number of new pupils join the school's roll each year at times other than the normal admission date for Year 7 pupils.

## 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 and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: art and design, English, history, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils about learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors viewed a range of curriculum plans and lessons in other subjects, for instance, design technology.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the school's safeguarding leaders. He looked closely at safeguarding systems, processes and records.
- Across the entire inspection, inspectors spoke to a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding and behaviour.
- Inspectors met with a range of school leaders over both days of inspection, including the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the local authority designated officer for safeguarding.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the chair of the trust and representatives of the trust body.
- Inspectors considered the 49 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 48 free text responses. Additionally, inspectors considered e-mail and telephone correspondence from parents.
- Inspectors also considered the 79 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 236 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ruth Brock	Ofsted Inspector
Diana Osagie	Ofsted Inspector
John Constable	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Kueh	Her Majesty's Inspector

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