

Inspection of a good school: Hedingham School and Sixth Form

Yeldham Road, Sible Hedingham, Halstead, Essex CO9 3QH

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 March 2023

Outcome

Hedingham School and Sixth Form continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Hedingham School, pupils are polite and respectful. They demonstrate the school values of being 'ready, respectful and safe' in their everyday school life. Pupils have positive relationships with staff who know them well. A typical pupils' view is that 'the school values shape us into adults.'

Pupils generally behave well around school. Bullying rarely occurs. If it happens, pupils know that leaders take it seriously and will address it promptly. Pupils are confident to share concerns regarding this with school staff. Pupils celebrate inclusivity and individuality through a range of events across the year.

Pupils receive a broad range of experiences beyond the taught curriculum. Pupils receive meaningful advice from employers and training providers. For example, the regular 'guess who' event where pupils meet people from different jobs in the local community and learn more about their industry. Pupils praise the information they get on careers education.

There are a wide range of clubs, teams, and leadership opportunities for pupils. For example, student council which enables pupils to share their ideas with the schools' leaders on matters, such as uniform and ecology projects. Pupils state that they value these opportunities.

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

Following disappointing exam results in several subjects in 2022, leaders have worked promptly to adapt how the curriculum is delivered. Leaders have put in place a well-designed curriculum. The curriculum breaks down information, so that it enables pupils to build on prior learning and develop knowledge over time.

Teachers teach well. They use their checks effectively to identify any misconceptions pupils have. The feedback strategies routinely used are helpful in helping pupils to know what they need to do to improve.

Leaders have created a culture of raising ambition. Leaders plan for all pupils to complete their education having studied a broad range of subjects. Typically, pupils do not choose languages at GCSE. While the uptake has increased and the learning expectations have improved in languages, there remains low uptake, which impacts the overall English Baccalaureate entry level.

Leaders recognise the importance of reading to ensure that pupils are able to access all aspects of the curriculum. Staff have been trained to identify when a pupil is struggling to read. Pupils with gaps in their reading knowledge have precise interventions that help them to catch up.

Leaders identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) promptly. This supports staff to ensure pupils with SEND are well supported in lessons. Staff know the needs of pupils very well. To help pupils with SEND access the curriculum, teachers make appropriate adaptations. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve successfully alongside their peers. Furthermore, the support that pupils with SEND receive regarding careers and further education is well tailored to help them make informed decisions about their next steps. Most pupils with SEND use this information to continue their studies into the sixth form.

Leaders have set clearly understood, high expectations for pupils' behaviour. A positive approach to behaviour management has resulted in suspensions reducing and the number of pupils receiving rewards increasing. The school is typically calm with pupils focused on their learning. However, occasionally a minority of pupils do not make the right behaviour choices. When this happens, it does impact upon pupils' focus in lessons.

Leaders consider personal development an important part of their curriculum offer. There is an appropriate curriculum in place which in the main matches the ambition of all other subject areas. However, staff delivering personal development lessons do not have the same rigorous approach to delivery and checking pupils' knowledge as they do in other lessons. As a result, teachers do not know if pupils fully understand key concepts being taught.

The curriculum for personal development in the sixth form is not as well planned as throughout the rest of the school. The personal development lessons do not consistently progress their understanding of topics beyond what they had covered lower down the school. This means staff are not sure how well pupils are learning what they need to develop their knowledge and awareness to be successful living in modern Britain.

Staff speak positively about working at the school. They feel members of the leadership team consider the impact decisions made will have on their workload. They value well-being sessions that the school provides.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have put in place thorough safeguarding systems. Staff are welltrained to identify concerns and how to report them. Leaders follow these up promptly. Leaders are relentless in ensuring vulnerable pupils receive support from appropriate agencies.

Teachers regularly teach pupils how to stay safe. Pupils are clear on what they should do if they have concerns on safety, particularly online.

Leaders ensure training covers known risks within the local context. For example, how to identify concerns regarding county lines and child on child abuse. Those responsible for recruitment checks on staff manage this securely.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The personal development curriculum does not have the same expectations for learning and assessment as other curriculum areas across the school. As a result, leaders cannot be certain that pupils, including in the sixth form, are retaining and understanding what they are being taught. Leaders need to ensure teachers are clear about the expectations to develop pupils' personal development well. Leaders need to ensure staff know how to check pupils' understanding in these lessons and assure themselves this is happening, so pupils are better prepared for their future in modern Britain.

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 an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2013.

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.

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	139153
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10211544
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	1151
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Martin Lee
Headteacher	Andrew Harvison
Website	http://www.hedingham.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Hedingham School and Sixth Form is above average size.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider and two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement 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.

- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, leaders of alternate provisions the school uses, members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, and history. 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 looked at a range of documents, including the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, a sample of safeguarding records, and documents relating to behaviour, attendance and provision for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors considered 124 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 29 written responses from parents. The lead inspector also looked at 78 responses to the staff survey and 183 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Chris Stainsby, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jason Carey

Ofsted Inspector

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