

Inspection of Hailsham Community College

Battle Road, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 1DT

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' experiences vary widely. Many pupils are eager to learn. For instance, pupils in the primary phase, and students in the sixth form, focus on their work and routinely ask for help when they need it. Children in the early years take turns and work alongside each other happily. Pupils in these parts of the school are rightly confident that any unkind behaviour will be dealt with effectively.

However, in the secondary phase, while some lessons are calm and orderly, many are disrupted by pupils' poor behaviour. At social times, the conduct of a significant minority of pupils makes others feel vulnerable. Unlike the primary phase and sixth form, some pupils in Years 7 to 11 are unhappy and do not feel safe. They are not confident that staff will deal with bullying quickly or efficiently.

An interesting range of clubs and trips contribute well to pupils' personal development. Older pupils, including those in the sixth form, receive useful and unbiased careers advice and guidance. This means they are well informed about different career pathways and future study options.

Pupils in the primary phase and sixth form achieve well. However, despite leaders' high expectations, pupils in key stages 3 and 4 do not achieve as well as they should. This is because there is too much variability in the teaching of the curriculum.

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

Trustees have acted swiftly to stabilise the school's leadership after a period of turbulence. They have an accurate view of the significant weaknesses in the quality of the provision within the secondary phase. However, it is early days and leaders are only just beginning to make the necessary improvements. They have not implemented a consistent approach to behaviour or provided sufficient training and guidance for staff.

Staff do not manage pupils' behaviour well enough. For a significant minority of pupils, a lack of courtesy and mutual respect is too often the norm in Years 7 to 11. Too many pupils behave poorly or remain in corridors when they should be in their lessons learning. Many pupils who receive consequences for disruptive behaviour often repeat the same behaviours. As a result, suspensions are exceptionally high.

In stark contrast, pupils in the primary phase and students in the sixth form behave well. Classrooms here are calm and purposeful. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. Children in the early years get off to a flying start. Staff model kindness and support children to develop bonds with each other. They ensure that children quickly learn the routines, and staff help them to develop their confidence and independence.

The curriculum is well sequenced, broad and balanced. Across subjects, leaders have carefully identified the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn and when they should learn it. This should allow pupils to build their knowledge from the early years to the sixth form. However, the number of pupils opting for a modern foreign language (MFL) at key stage 4 is very low. As a result, too few pupils study the range of subjects known as the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) that keep their future options open.

In the secondary phase, some teachers lack expertise in implementing the school's curriculum. Not all staff have strong enough subject knowledge. Too often, they do not provide pupils with activities that help them build their knowledge securely. At times, teachers do not check pupils' understanding carefully enough and so do not identify any gaps in pupils' learning. Where this happens, pupils do not develop their knowledge as well as they should. Across the early years and primary phases and in the sixth form, teachers deliver the curriculum much more effectively. As a result, pupils achieve well at these stages.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accurately. They ensure that pupils in the specially resourced provision receive expert care and support. In the primary phase, teachers make suitable adaptations to the curriculum. This means that younger pupils with SEND get the tailored support they need to learn in line with their peers. However, in the secondary phase, this is less effective.

Leaders place great importance on reading. This starts in Nursery. Children develop a love of reading through regular opportunities to listen to and retell stories, songs and rhymes. Staff are well trained, and phonics is taught effectively. Pupils read books that are closely matched to the sounds they learn in lessons. Staff are quick to identify any pupils who are at risk of falling behind, including those in the secondary phase. These pupils are provided with daily effective support that helps them to catch up quickly.

In key stages 3 and 4, some pupils' attendance is not high enough. Too many arrive late to school and to their lessons. This is having a significantly negative effect on these pupils' achievement as they miss too much learning. While the strategies that leaders have introduced have led to some improvements, they have not had the necessary impact yet overall.

Leaders ensure that younger children learn about healthy relationships and what makes a good friend. Pupils in the primary phase are considerate towards others. They talk about mutual respect, democracy and tolerance in a mature and thoughtful manner. In the secondary phase, some pupils do not conduct themselves as responsible citizens. While there is a well-thought-through personal, social health and economic education curriculum, this is not implemented consistently well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training. As a result, staff know the signs that indicate that a pupil may need extra help. Systems for reporting concerns are effective. Leaders respond promptly and make sound decisions about what to do next. However, there are some aspects of record-keeping that could be strengthened further.

Appropriate checks are made on all adults who work with pupils. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum supports pupils to identify risks themselves, so they are able to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A significant minority of secondary-age pupils display poor behaviour in lessons and at social times. This has a detrimental impact on pupils' learning and sense of well-being. Leaders must establish a clear behaviour system that is understood by all and implemented consistently and fairly.
- In the secondary phase, many pupils have little confidence that incidents of bullying will be tackled successfully. They do not feel safe. Leaders need to make sure that they have strong systems in place for reporting and resolving bullying.
- In some subjects at key stages 3 and 4, teachers' implementation of the curriculum is variable. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should continue to develop staff's knowledge and skills so that the delivery of the curriculum is as effective as it is in the primary phase.
- In Years 7 to 11, some pupils' attendance is poor. This means that these pupils regularly miss out on essential learning. Leaders should redouble their efforts to improve attendance to ensure that all pupils, particularly those with SEND or who are disadvantaged, attend school regularly.
- Very few pupils study a MFL at GCSE. The proportion of key stage 4 pupils who are entered for EBacc subjects is much lower than the national average. Leaders need to ensure that pupils study a broader range of subjects so that the EBacc is at the heart of the curriculum.

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	138472
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10279159
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,633
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	183
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Brian Hughes
Headteacher	Thomas Redman (head of primary phase) Natalie Chamberlain (interim head of secondary phase)
Website	www.hccat.net
Date of previous inspection	1 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school's primary phase opened in September 2019. It currently has pupils in Reception up to Year 3. The pre-school opened in September 2020 and offers provision for two- to four-year-old children.
- The school is located across two sites. The pre-school and primary site are in Bulrush Lane. The secondary and sixth-form site are in Battle Road.
- There have been significant changes to the senior leadership team in the secondary phase. A new assistant principal took up their role in January 2023. Currently, there is an interim head of school and an interim vice principal. Both leaders took up their posts in February 2023.

- The school has a specially resourced SEND provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. Eleven secondary pupils currently attend this provision.
- The school is currently using one registered alternative provider.
- 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

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His 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.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, staff and pupils. They spoke with a representative from East Sussex local authority. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the board of trustees, including the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art, history, MFL and physical education. 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.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils informally.
- The inspection team considered the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the additional free-text responses.
- The inspection team met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally during social times and in lessons.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation including the school development plan and pupil premium funding plan.

Inspection team

Louise Walker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jo Brinkley

His Majesty's Inspector

Daniel Botting

His Majesty's Inspector

Mrs Fisher-Pink

Ofsted Inspector

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