

Inspection of Heathfield Community School

School Road, Monkton Heathfield, Taunton, Somerset TA2 8PD

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders' expectations of pupils are not high enough. Often, the conduct of a sizeable number of pupils is disorderly and intimidating. Many do not show respect to others and do not follow staff instructions. Staff do not manage pupils' behaviour well. Leaders do not support staff effectively to improve pupils' poor behaviour, so it continues.

Behaviour during some lessons is more settled. Some teachers have created an atmosphere where pupils can learn. However, many classes are chaotic. Disruption to lessons is frequent, and this has a detrimental effect on pupils' learning.

Pupils make little progress through the curriculum. They do not remember enough of what they have been taught and do not achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not receive the support they need to make the best possible progress.

Bullying is widespread. Even when it is reported to staff, it is rarely stopped. Discriminatory language is commonplace, and many pupils accept it as normal.

Many pupils do not attend school or lessons regularly. The attendance of pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged is particularly low.

Students in the sixth form have a much more positive experience. They feel safe. Students enjoy their learning.

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

The curriculum is not ambitious enough, nor is it well sequenced. Teachers cannot deliver the intended curriculum because of the disruptive behaviour of a sizeable number of pupils, as well as the frequent absence of pupils. Pupils who do not attend lessons frequently disrupt the learning of others. As a result, teachers cannot focus on teaching, and pupils' learning is disturbed. Teaching does not regularly check what pupils know, so it does not identify or fill gaps in pupils' knowledge. Pupils remember little of what they have learned and achieve poorly. Staff do not have the expertise they need to support pupils with SEND in mainstream lessons.

Pupils are often supervised together in large groups to complete work because of staff shortages and high levels of staff absence. When this occurs, pupils often complete work that does not develop their subject knowledge or understanding.

Some pupils with SEND do not follow the same curriculum as their peers because they only attend school on a part-time basis and do not attend lessons with their peers when they are at school. This is not always in pupils' best interests and does not follow government guidance.

Pupils who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND learn in a calm environment. Here, staff have high expectations of pupils, but they lack the subject expertise needed to help pupils learn subject content effectively. Pupils from the specially resourced provision attend few lessons in the main school, as they do not feel safe.

Leaders have not prioritised reading. Pupils who are at an early stage of reading do not get the help they need to catch up and to read fluently. When pupils read in school, the texts are often not appropriate for their reading ability.

Leaders know that the behaviour and attitudes of too many pupils are poor. Their response has been too slow and has not made enough impact. Staff do not use a consistent approach to the management of behaviour. They do not feel well supported by leaders when they intervene with pupils' poor behaviour. Some staff are concerned about their own safety.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well sequenced. However, pupils have little knowledge of important aspects, such as positive mental health. They do not understand the relevance of PSHE to their lives. For example, pupils learn about the importance of tolerance and mutual respect. External groups have worked with pupils to reduce racism. However, some pupils continue to use misogynistic, homophobic and racist language and express intolerant views.

Most pupils do not gain a wide and rich set of experiences through their time at the school. Few pupils take part in the limited extra-curricular clubs that are available. Some have taken part in trips, which they enjoyed. Pupils lack knowledge of future careers, apprenticeships and further education.

Leaders, including the interim executive board, have identified the significant weaknesses of the school. However, staff shortages have hampered efforts to improve the quality of education that pupils receive or develop consistency in managing pupils' behaviour. Leaders are dependent on external support from the multi-academy trust (MAT) that is now working with the school.

Students in the sixth form are taught by expert staff who know and meet their needs. Students are well supported, including in making decisions about further education or employment. They have many opportunities for personal development, such as trips and community projects. They remember what they learn, including in PSHE. Most students attend well. Sixth-form leaders have worked successfully with some students to improve their attendance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

For many pupils, school is not a safe place. Behaviour is disruptive, and bullying is frequent. Parents and pupils alike have little confidence that the school will address their concerns. Leaders have not adequately assured themselves of the safety of

pupils in alternative provision. Pupils do not attend lessons, and leaders do not know where they are.

Statutory guidance is not always followed. Inaccurate recording in registers puts pupils at risk of harm because their whereabouts are unclear.

Staff know how to identify and report signs that a child may be at risk. When referrals are made to other agencies, leaders work collaboratively in the best interests of the child.

Leaders make relevant checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children. They refer any allegations regarding staff conduct to the local authority, as appropriate.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The behaviour of many pupils is poor and sometimes intimidating, both in lessons and around the school site. Consequently, learning is often disrupted, and pupils do not always feel safe at school. Leaders must make sure that pupils' behaviour improves so that all pupils can learn and feel safe.
- The curriculum is not ambitious enough, nor is it well sequenced. As a result, pupils do not learn enough to achieve well. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum is logically sequenced, builds on prior learning and meets all pupils' needs. A significant number of pupils do not attend school regularly or fail to attend lessons once in school. As a result, they miss learning, and leaders cannot be assured of their safety. Leaders need to make sure that pupils attend school, and their lessons, so that they learn well.
- The needs of many pupils with SEND are either not identified or are unmet. Staff do not have the knowledge and skills they need to provide the support required. Leaders must ensure that pupils' needs are identified and that staff have the knowledge and skills they need to support them.
- A significant minority of pupils use misogynistic, homophobic and racist language and express intolerant views. This makes their peers feel intimidated. Leaders need to ensure that pupils show tolerance and mutual respect to their peers so that all pupils feel safe and welcome in school.
- Leaders do not have sufficient oversight of the work of the school. Consequently, their actions do not ensure that the school meets its statutory duties. Leaders must ensure that attendance policies and processes, use of part-time timetables and oversight of pupils at alternative provisions comply with statutory guidance so that pupils are adequately safeguarded.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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	123883
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10281343
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Maintained
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	1,326
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	58
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Claire Emery
Headteacher	Hannah Jones
Website	www.heathfieldcommunityschool.com
Date of previous inspection	30 November and 1 December 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school receives external support from a MAT, the Cabot Learning Federation. The trust employs the headteacher, who took up post in September 2022.
- The school does not meet 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.
- The school uses 12 alternative providers. Eleven of these are unregistered alternative providers.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. There are 30 pupils on roll, all of whom have education, health and care plans.

- The sixth form is accommodated in a separate building from the main school.

Information about this inspection

The inspection was carried out following a number of complaints made to Ofsted that raised serious concerns. His Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether pupils were safe at the school and whether bullying was handled effectively.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the interim executive board and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: art, mathematics, English, science, modern foreign languages 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 met with the designated safeguarding leader, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives from a sample of the alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the multi-academy trust, which is providing the school with external support.

Inspection team

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