

Inspection of Hylands School

Chelmsford Road, Writtle, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 3ET

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils know and understand leaders' high expectations for them. Over the last year, these expectations have been strengthened and reinforced as new leaders have been appointed. Most pupils recognise that the school has improved in recent years. Many enjoy school. However, some pupils have valid concerns about the quality of education they receive and how behaviour in some lessons disrupts their learning.

Most pupils feel safe at school. Recent changes have raised the profile of safeguarding. Pupils know there is always a member of staff available to listen to their concerns. Bullying is rare. Typically, issues are resolved quickly. Some pupils and parents do not feel that problems are always dealt with effectively.

Pupils and students benefit from a range of leadership opportunities. They are proud to be Hylands Helpers, ambassadors or part of the Senior Sixth. A group of peer mentors have recently been trained to support pupils who might need help or who have worries or concerns.

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

Leaders and teachers are strengthening the curriculum in some subjects. Where this work has been more successful, pupils study a well-planned and challenging curriculum. In other subjects, this improvement work is at the early stages, and it is too soon to see its impact. Leaders have made adjustments to the subjects that pupils can choose in key stage 4 to help increase the uptake of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate.

Leaders have introduced the 'Hylands Way' approach to improve teaching across the school. However, this is not fully in place. The quality of teaching that pupils experience is inconsistent. Where teaching is weaker, teachers do not routinely check if pupils have learned the knowledge they need before moving on to more complex subject content. This means that some pupils develop gaps in what they know or are unable to complete tasks successfully.

In the sixth form, students receive a better quality of education. They benefit from a more consistent approach to teaching. Teachers work closely with students to check their understanding and to address misconceptions as they arise. Students enjoy their study programmes and the wider opportunities that are available to them. They receive the information they need for their next steps beyond the sixth form.

Leaders ensure that staff know how to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They work closely with local primary schools and identify pupils' needs effectively. This ensures that they have an accurate picture of pupils' additional needs. However, pupils with SEND experience the same variability in teaching as other pupils.

Reading is given a high priority. Pupils have regular opportunities to read across the curriculum and in form time. Pupils who struggle to read are identified early. They are given the help they need through targeted interventions. This helps them to become more fluent readers and to enjoy reading more.

Students in the sixth form demonstrate positive behaviour and are focused on their studies. Pupils' behaviour is more variable in the rest of the school. Leaders and teachers now have higher expectations of pupils' conduct than they had previously. While this is having a positive impact on behaviour, too many pupils still experience disruption to their learning during lessons.

The number of suspensions and permanent exclusions is reducing, although it remains too high. Leaders have introduced more strategies to intervene at the earlier stages of poor behaviour. They work closely with local partners to identify alternatives to permanent exclusion, ensuring this is used as a last resort.

Leaders have introduced a range of approaches to improve attendance. This includes developing pupils' understanding of their own attendance and the impact that this has. This is helping some pupils to attend more. However, there are still too many pupils who do not attend school regularly enough or are persistently absent.

There is a strong and well-developed programme for pupils' personal development. Pupils are positive about what they learn through this programme and can easily relate what they learn to their own lives. They learn how to eat healthily or to know the range of ways in which people can be different from each other. Pupils receive appropriate and timely career information and guidance.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This understanding has brought about significant changes to staffing, expectations and systems. While some of this work is new, leaders are making measurable progress in addressing the school's weaknesses.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding. They know how to identify and report any concerns. Leaders have ensured that the staff responsible for safeguarding are available for pupils to report concerns to throughout the school day. This helps to keep pupils safe.

Leaders manage safeguarding incidents effectively. They have a good understanding of how to action safeguarding cases. Leaders ensure that pupils get the help that they need. They make appropriate referrals to external agencies and are tenacious in following up concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, curriculum development is at the early stages or teaching plans are being redesigned. This means they have not had the positive impact, at this stage, that they should. Leaders, including newly appointed subject leaders, should ensure their improved curriculum is implemented swiftly and consistently across the school.
- There is inconsistency in the quality of teaching within and between subjects. This affects how well pupils remember what they are taught. Teachers do not always check how well knowledge has been remembered before moving on to new subject content. Leaders should help teachers teach the planned curriculum well throughout the school.
- While behaviour is improving, this is not consistent across the school. Too many lessons are disrupted, which interrupts pupils' learning. Leaders should continue to help all teachers demonstrate higher expectations of pupils' behaviour and implement the school behaviour policy consistently.
- Too many pupils do not attend regularly enough. This means that pupils miss out on their lessons or on wider opportunities at school. Leaders should continue to refine their strategies for improving pupils' attendance.

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	137072
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10279535
Type of school	Secondary
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	672
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	93
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gaenor Bagley
Headteacher	Maggie Callaghan (Executive Headteacher), Andrew Parry (Headteacher)
Website	www.hylands-tkat.org
Date of previous inspection	29 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been substantial changes to staffing and leadership at the school. The executive headteacher and most members of the senior leadership team have joined within the last year.
- The school is part of The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT).
- The school uses five 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

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

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, art and design, mathematics, science, design and technology and music.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans for history and plans for the personal development programme.
- Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and other members of staff. The lead inspector also spoke with members of the local governing body, a director from TKAT and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed documentation related to safeguarding. They also spoke to staff about how they keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered the 98 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 95 written responses from parents. They considered the responses from 68 pupils and 43 members of staff to Ofsted's online pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Marc White, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Aimee Bray	Ofsted Inspector
Polly Lankester	Ofsted Inspector
Debbie Lebrecht	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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