

# Inspection of Holmfirth High School

Heys Road, Thongsbridge, Holmfirth, West Yorkshire HD9 7SE

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Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Previous inspection grade

Good

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

Pupils significantly benefit from both the academic and wider opportunities available to them at Holmfirth High School. Pupils overwhelmingly meet adults' high ambitions for them. Pupils' detailed knowledge of the curriculum prepares them well for when they leave school. The wider skills that they learn support them to become rounded young people who are well prepared to make a positive contribution.

Pupils are considerate of their peers. The relationships between adults and pupils are warm and grounded in respect. In lessons, pupils are focused and supportive of each other. They understand the importance of learning opportunities. Disruption in lessons is extremely rare. At social times, pupils make good use of extra-curricular opportunities available to them. Bullying rarely happens. When it does, adults address it effectively.

The school has a well-structured and diverse personal development offer. Teachers look for ways to expose pupils to different cultures and experiences. In personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, pupils discuss important issues such as democracy. Leaders reinforce what they want pupils to know with a detailed programme of extra-curricular visits and visiting speakers.

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

Leaders have extremely high aspirations for all pupils. Leaders have created a well-structured, ambitious curriculum. In many areas, the curriculum exceeds the demands of the national curriculum. For example, pupils learn three languages and many pupils' knowledge in mathematics extends beyond the GCSE curriculum. This substantially enhances pupils' learning. This contributes to pupils being extremely well prepared for the next stages in their education.

Teachers are experts in their subjects. They use their expertise to ensure that when pupils encounter new knowledge, it is clearly explained. Teachers anticipate the misconceptions that pupils are likely to encounter in their subject and support pupils to avoid these. Teachers routinely and skilfully check what pupils know. They use the information they gather from these checks to adjust their teaching to meet the needs of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, have an extremely strong understanding of the curriculum.

Pupils who do not read at the expected standard for their age receive support that is precisely matched to their needs. Leaders prioritise these pupils to meet with visiting authors. Pupils are articulate when discussing their ideas. They use subject-specific vocabulary with precision. Some pupils develop their oracy skills further, for example by participating in the bar mock trial or the classics society.

Pupils' behaviour is consistently excellent. They interact respectfully with their peers and adults. Teachers are skilled at ensuring pupils remain focused on learning. The

small number of pupils who do not meet teachers' high expectations receive effective support to improve their behaviour. Pupils attend school regularly. Leaders have strong systems which help individual pupils to improve their attendance further.

Pupils have a secure understanding of knowledge from their PSHE lessons. What pupils learn in these lessons is effectively reinforced in other subjects. For example, some of the key texts that pupils learn about in English lessons deepen their understanding of the protected characteristics. Pupils learn about the wider cultural context of what they are studying in subjects such as languages or when learning about artists and designers in technology.

Pupils are highly engaged with the rich and diverse enrichment offer available to them. Subject leaders enhance their curriculum with well-considered educational visits. For example, in science, pupils visited the theatre to learn about Tim Peake's experiences. Many pupils benefit from opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, sports leadership roles or support their peers as mathematics ambassadors. Leaders use these opportunities to help pupils develop leadership experiences. Leaders carefully plan how they develop pupils' character. Leaders reinforce this through the 'Holmfirth code' which highlights the behaviours and values they want pupils to acquire.

Leaders engage with stakeholders in the school. They use this feedback to inform their decisions. Pupil leaders describe themselves as 'a bridge' between pupils and leaders. These partnerships have strengthened the school's relationship with the community. Leaders and governors have a very clear understanding of the school. They use this to continually inform their actions to improve the school further.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding leaders have a detailed understanding of the pupils who attend the school and the risks that pupils could encounter. Leaders ensure that staff understand their roles through well-structured induction processes and ongoing training. The expertise that leaders have created within the staff team has enriched the support for pupils. For example, there is now strong support for pupils with anxiety or who need additional help to improve their mental health.

Leaders ensure that there are regular safeguarding updates for pupils and staff. For example, pupils have a clear understanding of the risks associated with county lines from their work in the PSHE 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	107769
<b>Local authority</b>	Kirklees
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255624
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,315
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Dianne Frost
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ben Stitchman
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.holmfirthhigh.co.uk">www.holmfirthhigh.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 and 9 February 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- 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.
- The school uses two Ofsted-registered alternative provisions.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through pupil premium funding is below the national average.

## 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.

- The lead inspector met with members of the local governing body.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher. They also met with other senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, personal development, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, geography, modern foreign languages and design technology. Inspectors also spoke with leaders responsible for engineering and computer science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Members of the inspection team looked at a range of documentation regarding the support pupils with SEND receive. Inspectors looked at the quality of the provision for pupils with SEND in lessons.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead. They checked records of actions taken by leaders to keep pupils safe. Inspectors scrutinised the single central record of recruitment checks.
- Members of the inspection team spoke with leaders at the alternative provisions.
- A wide range of pupils and staff talked with inspectors, formally and informally, over the course of the inspection about the safeguarding culture in school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors looked at a range of information regarding behaviour. Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils at social times.
- The views of pupils and staff who responded to Ofsted's surveys were considered.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View.

## **Inspection team**

Thomas Wraith, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Hannah Millett	His Majesty's Inspector
Peter Cole	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Cresswell	Ofsted Inspector
Gillian Hemming	Ofsted Inspector

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