

Highcliffe School

Parkside, Highcliffe, Christchurch, Dorset BH23 4QD

Inspection dates

31 October – 1 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has made significant strategic differences to the school. There is a changed leadership structure. This has improved the well-being and confidence of pupils.
- Governance is strong. Governors understand their roles and responsibilities well. They challenge senior leaders effectively.
- The curriculum supports subject learning as well as the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the school.
- Pupils understand fundamental British values. They are given many occasions to appreciate democracy, equality of opportunities and respect for law and order.
- There is an impressive range of extra-curricular activities. These happen within and after the school day. They support sporting prowess and cultural experiences.
- The sixth form is a strength of the school. Students achieve well. The sixth form provides a good platform for future opportunities in employment, education and training.
- Provision for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is good. Pupils are making improved progress as a result.
- Middle leaders are efficient at changing curriculum provision in light of the examination landscape. However, there is not enough accountability in their roles. This has led to some inconsistency in teaching and learning.
- The better teaching in some subject areas has not been shared with colleagues who are less proficient. This is another aspect that leads to inconsistency in teaching.
- The systems for checking pupils' progress have been improved. They are helping teachers understand pupils' successes and needs more clearly. As yet, the data is not used well enough when planning teaching.
- Teachers' expectations have not been high enough consistently. This has hampered the progress of some pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that expectations are raised so that pupils achieve their potential in every subject.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - middle leaders have the capacity and skills to monitor the work of teachers so that progress is more rapid and teaching is consistent
 - teachers use data systematically so that planning meets the needs of learners
 - learning, when necessary, is adapted to meet the needs of individuals and groups of pupils to improve their outcomes
 - teachers' expertise is shared more formally so that learning continues to improve.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has dealt with many strategic issues since his arrival in 2014. The current chair of governors took up the post one year later. Together, they have made the school financially viable. They have restructured the school staffing. Now, there is a leadership team that has a realistic understanding of the pupil population.
- Current leaders have created a culture of respect that pervades the school. Low expectations are not tolerated.
- The governing body holds school leaders to account. Governors have worked with leaders to ensure that improvements in staffing and outcomes have taken place. For example, the provision for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is good now. Highly skilled staff care for pupils with complex issues with sensitivity. Pupils' attendance has improved and better learning is taking place.
- Teachers receive high-quality professional development. Most teaching is secure but there are pockets of weakness. The more skilled teachers coach those who lack expertise in certain areas, such as behaviour management or questioning.
- The systems for managing the performance of staff are stringent. Targets are ambitious and support improvements in teaching. Teachers on the higher pay scales have responsibilities that improve learning, such as developing plans for teaching in a specialist area.
- Many of the middle leaders are new. They are improving the curriculum in their subjects in line with the changing examination landscape. There is a timetable for monitoring and checking the work of team members which they follow. As yet, their accountability for halting any weaknesses is not sharp enough in some areas. A few middle leaders have not had the necessary leadership training.
- The curriculum provides a balanced offer of subjects throughout the school. The structure of the curriculum for older pupils allows them to follow pathways according to their abilities and interests. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' behaviour, including their physical, mental and personal well-being. Pupils' learning about safety, fundamental British values and spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects is a strength of the school.
- There is a very extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils. Sports and cultural opportunities, in which many pupils take part, occur within the school day and after school. There are links with schools in France, Spain, Germany and Japan; pupils have exchange visits to these countries. When the visiting pupils arrive in school, they share their cultural differences with everyone.
- In the sixth form, Italian students study successfully with their English counterparts for a year. Many return to English universities for their undergraduate years.
- The school's external adviser has a realistic view of the school. He provided meaningful advice on improvements needed following the disappointing results in some of the key stage 4 examinations in 2017. These are making a difference, especially in mathematics and science. Leaders have analysed questions and responses. Teachers

are focusing on previous areas of weakness. Pupils are gaining from this more specific subject knowledge.

Governance of the school

- Many governors are new to their roles. Current governors have a range of leadership skills that suit the needs of the school. They understand the strategic responsibilities involved. They are thorough in their monitoring of the school leadership team.
- Governors manage the extra funding for pupil premium and for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities wisely. With leaders, they have identified the main barriers to learning for these pupils; they have appointed a dedicated team to support the most vulnerable.
- Governors have regular meetings with middle leaders with whom they are linked. This extra tier of leadership has been pivotal in some of the strategically positive changes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have created a culture where assessing risk is the norm. The personal safety and well-being of pupils are secure. The designated safeguarding leads are vigilant in their oversight of any child protection issues. They are well supported by a team of staff who manage attendance and behavioural issues. Records of any safeguarding issues are of high quality and detailed. All the necessary checks on staff are done thoroughly. Staff work sensitively with parents and external agencies to monitor and support vulnerable pupils. When there has been a time lag beyond the school's control, they find suitable resolutions swiftly and deal with matters in-house.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. In the best lessons, this is used well to develop pupils' understanding. Likewise, teachers use a range of strategies to secure pupils' engagement in their learning.
- Teachers have high expectations for conduct. They have established good routines for pupils to follow. As a result, learning begins straight away. Pupils are ready to learn and pay attention to teachers.
- The majority of questioning by teachers is skilful and used to probe pupils' knowledge. When any misunderstandings occur, teachers rectify them by using effective questioning.
- Homework tasks are on the school website. Parents as well as pupils have access to this. Parents commented on the usefulness of this in the online survey, Parent View; 87% of parents agreed that their children received homework that was appropriate to their age.
- The majority of teachers use the school's marking and feedback policy, which supports pupils in making good progress. There are a few who are not using it effectively. This impedes pupils' development as their work goes unnoticed and unappreciated.

- English is taught well. The leaders in this area are having an impact on literacy across the school. Work on enhancing vocabulary in different subjects is a key focus. There is a range of reading opportunities for younger pupils. These are monitored carefully. There are no reading suggestions for older pupils yet.
- Physical education (PE), design technology, performing and visual arts are taught well. Pupils appreciate the diversity of opportunities offered in these subjects. Many continue to study these subjects in the sixth form.
- Leaders have improved the systems for checking the progress of pupils. Assessments are accurate. Not enough teachers use the data to plan teaching for pupils' different abilities.
- In some subjects, pupils are not encouraged regularly to prepare responses that extend their thinking. Longer answers and critical thinking are not developed regularly.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are self-aware. They are articulate and can explain their learning.
- There are several opportunities for pupils to be charitable. They thrive on this. At the time of the inspection, they were bringing in gifts for those less fortunate.
- Staff at the Jubilee Centre support the most vulnerable pupils. This provides alternative provision on site. Sensitive pupils value the nurture they receive. Their confidence increases as a result. Most return quickly to mainstream schooling. Pupils attend better too.
- Pupils engage well in PE. They enjoy competitive sports. Pupils understand the benefit of a team ethos.
- Pupils spoke confidently about the intolerance of bullying behaviours in school. They welcome the efficient way that staff deal with any incidents. Pupils understand the different types of bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- There is good promotion of equality of opportunity. There are proactive practices to break down stereotypical perceptions. For instance, in science, pupils learn about female, non-European inventors and practitioners.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The headteacher overhauled the system for rewards and sanctions in 2016. Staff use it consistently. As a result, behaviour in and around the school is good. Teachers discuss the rewards and sanction totals of tutor groups with the pupils during early morning sessions. Pupils are competitive to be the best with rewards. In response to the online

survey for Ofsted, 90% of pupils and staff, and 88% of parents, believe that behaviour is managed well.

- In the few classes where some pupils were lively and less settled, teachers managed behaviour effectively. Pupils calmed themselves and listened to the teacher's instructions and comments.
- Pupils work well together in practical subjects, such as music and design technology.
- Sixth-form students support vulnerable pupils in the Jubilee Centre. They mentor them, listen to them read and help them progress purposefully.
- The behaviour management team and the achievement leads have worked hard to improve attendance. Overall attendance is in line with the national average. For groups such as disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, attendance is close to the national average. Leaders are aware of the circumstances of the families involved. They are working with them to improve attendance further.
- Pupils are courteous to each other, adults and visitors.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over time, pupils have achieved in line with other pupils nationally from similar starting points. Outcomes in 2017 were not as good as previous years. Leaders are aware of this and are taking rapid action to improve the situation. There are new middle leaders in the core subjects of English and mathematics. Leaders are analysing pupils' examination papers. Following this, leaders focus on the areas that need development.
- Pupils are mainly in the middle and high ability band so attainment is high. There has not been enough focus on the progress pupils make. There was a legacy of acceptance of achievement that did not reflect the potential of pupils. Leaders and governors have changed this perception.
- Leaders have a secure system for tracking pupils' progress in key stage 3. They provide parents with a numerical and visual report of how their children are progressing. They include an evaluation of attitudes to learning and homework completion. Teachers write reports termly. Pupils know how well they are doing and can articulate this clearly.
- The differences between disadvantaged pupils and others in school are diminishing. In fact, in many year groups, disadvantaged pupils are doing better. There has been effective targeted support provided by teaching assistants. Leaders track this work well.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making good progress. In class, they are communicative. Staff provide extra support to those who have emotional health issues. Leaders manage integration into mainstream education successfully.
- Transition from key stage 2 to 3 is good. Pupils spoke of their enjoyment of the taster days. Similarly, transition from key stage 4 to the sixth form is helpful. Transition to other providers, including employment, is impartial and effective. Leaders have appointed a careers adviser to ensure that this continues to improve further.
- Pupils are ready for their next steps academically and as future citizens.

- A proportion of the most able pupils are not reaching the highest grades. Some teachers are not challenging these pupils. These teachers have not considered pupils' potential. They have accepted good work but not raised their expectations for excellence.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders of the sixth form have high expectations. There are effective systems in place to drive improvement.
- The tracking of students follows the model in the rest of the school. It highlights underperformance. There are suitable procedures for intervening when students underachieve. Subject staff and a support mentor are key to this.
- Bespoke study programmes are in place for each learner and their needs. Students are keen to attend and learn. Their conduct and support of one another, including pupils in the main school, are good.
- This is an academic sixth form. Some students take four A levels. Most take three with an enrichment programme to enhance their learning.
- The tutorial and careers programmes make students aware of citizenship. Students embrace academic opportunities, such as university visits. Equally, students are aware of the fundamental British values of law and democracy. In the student responses to Ofsted's online survey, a few commented that they would like more precise support with university applications. They would like better guidance on which courses suit certain careers. Also, they want advice on what employment apprenticeships provide.
- There is a focus on critical thinking and problem solving with sixth-form teaching. Students respond well and gain high outcomes as a result.
- Students are progressing well in the sixth form. The most able, and the most able disadvantaged students, are successful in their examinations. They take A levels and other level 3 applied qualifications. The minimum standards are exceeded.
- The school careers adviser works on future prospects as well as retention from Year 12 to 13. She is supporting an area of need, as retention was not strong before. Another area that is improving is understanding the destination data of students.
- Currently, the majority of students remain in education post-18. Of these, many go to the top third of higher education institutes and Russell Group universities. A few students each year gain admission to Oxbridge.
- Students retaking English GCSE passed the examinations at the first attempt. Only half passed mathematics. Teaching in this area of mathematics needs improvement.
- Work experience is bespoke at the moment. It is not offered to every student.

School details

Unique reference number	136763
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10037051

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1398
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	290
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Steven Midgley
Headteacher	Mr Patrick Earnshaw
Telephone number	01425 273381
Website	www.highcliffe.dorset.sch.uk
Email address	office@highcliffe.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 March 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2014. The head of the sixth form was appointed in 2016.
- Highcliffe School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.

- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is in line with the national average and is below the national average for those who have an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress at key stage 4.
- The sixth-form outcomes are above the national threshold.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons, many jointly with senior leaders.
- A sample of pupils' work in a range of subjects was scrutinised.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils from key stages 3, 4 and 5, as well as with pupils informally across the site.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and members of the trust.
- Documentary and other types of information were evaluated, including evidence relating to safeguarding, assessment and school evaluation.
- Inspectors took account of the 153 responses to and 99 comments in the online Parent View survey, the 383 responses to the pupil survey and the 63 responses to the staff online survey.

Inspection team

Kathy Maddocks, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stuart Ingram	Ofsted Inspector
John Laver	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Thompson	Ofsted Inspector
Jacqui Goodall	Ofsted Inspector
Gill Hickling	Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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