

Gosford Hill School

Oxford Road, Kidlington, Oxfordshire OX5 2NT

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' actions have not secured rapid improvement since the last inspection. They do not use the information they gain through careful and structured monitoring to evaluate the impact of their actions closely or to focus improvement activities sufficiently. As a result, standards have not risen quickly enough.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently effective across the school. Activities in lessons do not challenge pupils sufficiently, particularly those with low or middle prior attainment. As a result, pupils do not routinely achieve as well as they should by the end of Year 11.
- Disadvantaged pupils underachieve compared with other pupils in school and nationally. Leaders' actions have not been rapid or effective enough to ensure that disadvantaged pupils catch up rapidly with their peers.
- Although pupils typically reach standards in line with national figures by the end of Year 11, they do not make consistently good progress throughout their time at the school. Pupils do not achieve as well as they should across key stage 4, especially in science.
- Pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve their learning. Consequently, their over-reliance on structured support from their teachers restricts their independence and the pace of their learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Since the headteacher arrived, shortly after the last inspection, he has united staff in their commitment to raising standards. Under his leadership, there is evidence that the school is starting to improve.
- Staff ensure that pupils feel safe and are well looked after. Their support for potentially vulnerable pupils who join the school mid-year after being less successful in other settings is particularly valued and effective.
- Sixth-form provision is good. Standards are high, particularly for academic courses. Students value the care, advice and guidance that help them to develop as mature and respectful members of the school community.
- Over time, leaders' effective actions have raised school standards. Most pupils attend school regularly and behave well. They benefit from the range of clubs and activities which complement the suitably broad curriculum well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Identify which of leaders' actions have been most effective in raising standards quickly, so that their future work focuses more successfully on accelerating the pace of improvement.
- Improve teaching so that it becomes consistently effective across year groups and subjects, by ensuring that:
 - teachers' high expectations routinely challenge all pupils well, especially those who are not the most able
 - pupils know what to do to improve their learning, and use this information routinely to maximise their own progress.
- Ensure that pupils, particularly the disadvantaged and those with low prior attainment, make consistently good progress from their starting points, particularly in science.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be carried out in order to assess how this aspect of leaders' work can be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders' actions since the last inspection have not led to sufficiently secure and rapid improvements to the school. Although pupils typically reach expected standards by the end of Year 11, they do not make consistently good progress across their subjects throughout their time at the school. This means that they do not routinely achieve the standards of which they are capable by the end of Year 11.
- The headteacher joined the school shortly after the last inspection. He has gained the trust and confidence of the majority of staff, who share his high aspirations for the school. He has identified appropriate priorities for development, and taken useful steps to address them. However, in building sustainable improvement, and tackling staff underperformance, the slow pace of change has resulted in pupils' progress by the end of Year 11 remaining lower than it should be.
- Leaders and staff are committed to raising standards across the school. They are focused clearly on the priority of accelerating pupils' progress by ensuring that teaching is consistently effective. Useful systems help them to check what difference their work is making. Nevertheless, leaders do not make best use of the information they glean to evaluate the impact of their actions. This prevents them from focusing their efforts sharply on what will make the quickest difference to pupils' achievements.
- Staff are supported well by helpful training and support. They receive prompt and regular feedback about their work, which identifies clear development priorities for them to act on. Leaders' records show how this feedback is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning for individual teachers over time. Leaders recognise that their next step is to identify common themes for development that will enable them to improve consistency across the school.
- Leaders use additional funding appropriately to support pupils who arrive at the school needing to catch up in literacy and numeracy. They invest in developing pupils' basic skills, so that all pupils can access the curriculum successfully. Leaders' work in this area shows measurable impact. For example, a group of Year 7 pupils improved their reading ages twice as quickly as would be expected, due to the specific literacy support they received. Similar improvements are evident in Year 7 mathematics.
- Leaders know that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils did not yield the desired improvements in their outcomes in the past. Leaders' thoughtful reflections have enabled them to refine their plans for this academic year, which are based on clear and appropriate actions. At this half-way point in the academic year, leaders have not yet reviewed the difference this work is making.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported well. Leaders understand their needs and plan carefully to meet them. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities achieve at least as well at key stage 3 as their peers in school. However, at key stage 4, the gap between them and their peers persists.
- The curriculum is clearly intended to support raising standards and aspirations, including for the disadvantaged. Leaders aspire to ensuring that it is suitably broad and balanced, and check regularly to ensure that it meets the evolving needs of the pupils

in the school. They work flexibly to create appropriate opportunities for pupils who need intensive literacy support or who benefit from pursuing alternative qualifications supported by local providers. They recognise that the relatively small proportion of pupils who choose to study languages at GCSE may be influenced by their limited exposure to these subjects at key stage 3.

- Pupils are prepared well for their future life as citizens in Britain. Leaders check carefully to ensure that opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are routinely threaded through the curriculum. Pupils describe how adults promote values such as equality, tolerance and democracy. The atmosphere around the school is one of respect and harmony.
- Leaders' aspirations to offer a broad and inspiring curriculum are evident in the range of activities and trips that complement learning in the classroom. These include visits to museums and opportunities to develop links with local primary school pupils via the Year 10 sports leaders programme. Older pupils describe positively how they are able to explore industry links, such as with local businesses in Oxford, and that they find these experiences useful. Pupils enjoy attending the wide range of extra-curricular clubs that take place, which cover a range of interests.

Governance of the school

- Since the previous inspection, the composition of the governing body has changed notably. There is a new chair of the governing body in post and several governors have joined the governing body relatively recently.
- Governors use helpful training and guidance to ensure that they understand their leadership role. They check to make sure that they collectively have the skills they need, and consider any gaps carefully when recruiting new people to the governing body. This approach supports them in improving their effectiveness.
- The governing body demonstrates an appropriate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors use support from beyond the school to ensure that the headteacher is held rigorously account for the difference his work is making to pupils' outcomes. However, they recognise that their challenge to school leaders about standards in the school and the pace of change has not been urgent enough to lead to the rapid improvement needed since the last inspection.
- Minutes of governing body meetings indicate that governors' challenge to school leaders has increased notably in recent times. Governors are rightly focused on ensuring that the school has the ongoing capacity to ensure that standards rise quickly but in a sustainable way. In prioritising this, they have not ensured that all the required or recommended information is published on the school's website.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders demonstrate a vigilant approach to keeping pupils safe. Supported well by governors, they make sure that the school's policies and systems promote safeguarding successfully. They make appropriate checks on adults working in the school, and

ensure that staff and governors receive regular and helpful training to keep their knowledge up to date.

- Staff understand their responsibilities towards pupils' safety and well-being. They are vigilant with respect to pupils who may be vulnerable or at risk of harm. They act promptly when a concern arises, working closely with experts from beyond the school to provide appropriate additional support to pupils and their families. This helps to keep pupils safe.
- The school's work with children looked after is recognised as a strength by the local authority. Leaders work closely with the local authority virtual headteacher to ensure that these pupils' needs are supported well. They check regularly to ensure that pupils are achieving as well as they can. Their work has led to notable improvements, for example in pupils' attendance.
- Leaders check carefully to make sure that their safeguarding work is effective, and take prompt action when it is needed to strengthen practice. For example, when a pupil survey identified concerns around pupils missing lessons, leaders swiftly restructured the school day to reduce the risk of this happening, and attendance to lessons improved as a result.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable across the school. This is partly due to fluctuations in staffing since the last inspection. Parents and carers and pupils rightly reflect their concerns about the impact this has had on the continuity of teaching. Leaders recognise that this has also impeded how effectively staff training has developed the quality of teaching over time.
- Teachers generally use their secure subject knowledge to plan lessons that build on pupils' learning over time. However, where teaching is less effective, this planning does not closely meet the starting points of different groups of learners, particularly those who are not the most able. Teachers' expectations of what less able pupils are capable of achieving are too low. Consequently, those who most need to catch up from a legacy of weaker progress in the past, such as in science, do not do so quickly enough.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are generally secure, with appropriate additional help and alternative curriculum pathways put in place for those who need them. As a result, low literacy levels do not prevent pupils from accessing deeper learning in other subjects. For example, in a key stage 4 lesson, carefully structured learning activities were enabling pupils to think carefully about the industrial revolution as part of their humanities work. Reading is promoted well across the school, with most pupils reading fluently, and demonstrating the skills and perseverance to tackle challenging texts.
- Pupils typically conduct themselves well in lessons and want to do well. They follow their teacher's instructions, and apply themselves to the tasks set. This enables them to work without distraction, and to benefit from their teacher's advice and support.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve the usefulness of how pupils' achievement is assessed across key stage 3. A new system introduced in September 2017 helps staff to check regularly from the start of Year 7 whether pupils are on track to reach their suitably aspirational targets for the end of key stage 4. This means that

staff can act quickly where pupils are underperforming, to help them to 'keep up' or 'catch up'. Departments work together, with external support, to ensure that their judgements about pupils' achievement are consistently accurate as the new system takes effect.

- The quality of teaching is typically stronger in the sixth form than across the rest of the school. Here, staff have suitably high expectations and provide students with useful opportunities to think deeply about their learning. Students act on clear information that helps them to improve their work and develop their learning. Consequently, they make good progress over time and achieve well.
- Leaders recognise that pupils do not routinely receive or act on feedback to improve their learning, as prescribed by the school's policy. Where the policy is used well, such as in geography and art, pupils know precisely what they need to do to improve their work, and take appropriate steps to do so. However, this is not consistently the case across or between subjects at key stages 3 and 4.
- Where teaching is most effective, such as in English and mathematics, work is well matched to pupils' prior learning. Teachers use questioning skilfully to check pupils' understanding and to challenge their thinking. They use modelling successfully to ensure that pupils understand what they are aiming to achieve. They ensure that work is sufficiently challenging for all, such as by introducing challenging texts into the English curriculum in Year 9, which pupils find challenging and stimulating.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils typically feel safe and encouraged to respect each other, regardless of any differences they may have. This promotes a harmonious atmosphere around the school.
- Leaders work effectively with pupils who join the school mid-year, often following a less positive or successful experience at other schools. These pupils describe how they feel well looked after and cared for. As one pupil said, 'The school never gives up on me. It is really good.' Leaders were able to point to improved rates of attendance and higher standards of behaviour for these pupils than at their previous schools.
- Pupils value the information they receive to support their preparation for life after Year 11. They appreciate the impartial careers information and guidance that help them make appropriate choices to pursue their ambitions. A small proportion who responded to the pupil survey said that they would have appreciated more information about options other than university at the end of Year 13, although others felt that they received a useful variety of information about a range of options, including apprenticeships.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have useful opportunities to develop skills and characteristics beyond the taught curriculum. Academic mentoring encourages pupils to take responsibility for their academic progress, encouraging them to reflect on how they can influence their future success through their own learning behaviour. Pupils

across a range of year groups demonstrate a suitably developed understanding of how to protect themselves from risks, such as those relating to internet safety.

- A small number of pupils are supported well through their attendance at an alternative provider, either on a part-time or short-term basis. Leaders are clear that this is intended to help them develop academically as well as emotionally and/or behaviourally. Pupils respond really well to this investment, and are successful in their learning, gaining useful qualifications.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils typically conduct themselves well during lessons and around the school. Their courteous interactions with each other and the adults around them contribute to the positive atmosphere around the site.
- Pupils come to school regularly, and are increasingly punctual. Attendance officers act swiftly when pupils, particularly those considered to be vulnerable, do not come to school. Their effective work with other professionals has led to absence rates reducing over time, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Fewer pupils are persistently absent from school than is the case nationally.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision engage positively with the experiences that leaders organise for them. They attend regularly and make the most of the opportunities to learn in different ways that suit them better than those in mainstream school.
- Although the majority of pupils behave routinely well, a small proportion of pupils and parents feel that behaviour is not good enough. Behaviour records show that the number of instances of poor behaviour is declining over time, but leaders recognise that there is further work to do, particularly to reduce instances of aggressive behaviour involving a small number of pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Although pupils broadly attain in line with national averages by the end of Year 11, they do not make sufficient progress from their Year 7 starting points. Consequently, pupils do not achieve as well as they should by the end of key stage 4. There are signs that rates of progress are improving over time, but the pace of this change is slow, particularly in the upper part of the school. Leaders indicate that they expect pupils' progress by the end of Year 11 to continue to be below expectations in the immediate term.
- Leaders monitor pupils' attainment and progress carefully, in order to identify readily where standards need to rise quickly. Their judgements about how well pupils are achieving broadly represent the standards evident in pupils' work during the work scrutiny inspectors carried out with school leaders. Work scrutinised during the inspection supports leaders' performance information, which shows that standards are rising, including for key groups and especially at key stage 3.
- Pupils' levels of achievement vary from subject to subject. In some areas, such as drama, mathematics and English, pupils make strong progress and achieve well. Their

outcomes are typically less secure in science, partly due to a legacy of underperformance that limits pupils' confidence and understanding of prior learning. Books reviewed during the inspection showed that pupils do not transfer their skills from subject to subject consistently well.

- Pupils with different starting points do not achieve consistently well across their subjects. The most able respond well to high levels of challenge, making good progress over time. For example, their writing in English shows them using a range of genres with increasingly sophisticated and accurate grammar and vocabulary. Conversely, those with lower starting points make less rapid progress because they are not challenged appropriately to meet high expectations for the quality of their work.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not currently achieve as well as they should. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils completing Year 11 achieved well below other pupils nationally with respect to both attainment and progress measures. Leaders have reflected on their strategy for improving the performance of this group of pupils, through a combination of high-quality teaching and additional support for literacy and numeracy. The difference in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in school is starting to reduce. However, there is further work to do, so that they can achieve as well as other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are showing clear signs of catching up with their peers. This is particularly the case across key stage 3, where they typically achieve better than other pupils in school. However, underperformance persists at key stage 4. Leaders recognise the need to sharpen the effectiveness of strategies being used to help older pupils to catch up with their peers in school and nationally.
- Outcomes in the sixth form are strong. Students make increasingly secure progress, particularly in their academic subjects. In applied subjects, where there has been underperformance in the past, progress is now secure and improving over time.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders understand the strengths and relative weaknesses of the sixth form clearly. Consequently, they have taken effective action to strengthen the quality of provision over time. As a result, students benefit from a consistently positive experience over the course of key stage 5 that equips them well for their next steps.
- Leaders have made sensible decisions that ensure that study programmes not only meet requirements, but also meet the needs of learners appropriately. During Year 11, the helpful guidance pupils receive ensures that they are recruited onto relevant courses, either at the school or at other local providers that may suit their needs better. Consequently, the proportion of students who remain engaged in their learning and therefore stay in the sixth form until the end of Year 13 has improved notably over time.
- Students learn well throughout their time in the sixth form, because the quality of teaching is more consistently effective than in the rest of the school. Staff use their secure subject knowledge to plan learning that challenges students to think hard. Students work well independently, and use the helpful and precise feedback they receive to improve the quality of their work and develop their understanding over time.

- A very small proportion of students join the sixth form needing to improve their GCSE outcomes in English or mathematics. They are supported well, and make good progress as a result, achieving better outcomes in re-sit examinations.
- In 2017, students following A-level courses made progress by the end of Year 13 that was well above the national average. This represented a three-year improving trend. Outcomes in applied subjects were not as strong by comparison. Work seen from students currently in the school shows that standards are being maintained for A-level subjects and are improving in applied subjects, most notably in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Students receive impartial careers information and guidance that support them in considering their next steps. A high proportion of students move on to higher education at the end of Year 13. As well as assisting students with their university applications, leaders signpost students towards apprenticeship opportunities. A small number of students indicated that they would find further information about alternatives to university helpful in planning for their future once they leave school.
- Students' conduct around the school is impressive. They demonstrate mature relationships with staff, younger pupils and each other. They value greatly the support they receive from pastoral leaders, which contributes to their well-being. They also support younger pupils' mental health, by training to become peer listeners, with expert help from the school counsellor. This enables sixth-form students to contribute positively to the culture of safeguarding across the school.
- Leaders ensure that students have a variety of opportunities to learn beyond their academic work. As well as contributions to school life such as peer listening, students participate in Young Enterprise or the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, which enrich their learning experience. All students have the opportunity to participate in further work experience at the end of Year 12, to support their decisions about what path to pursue at the end of their Year 13 study. Students also participate in community service and learn about healthy living.

School details

Unique reference number	138897
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10040937

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	906
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Gauld
Headteacher	Mr Nigel Sellars
Telephone number	01865 374971
Website	www.gosford-hill.oxon.sch.uk
Email address	office.4060@gosford-hill.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 February 2016

Information about this school

- Gosford Hill is a broadly average-sized school for pupils aged 11 to 18. The predecessor school converted to become an academy in November 2012.
- The school includes pupils from a wide number of minority ethnic groups. Three quarters of the pupils are of White British origin. The proportion who are believed to speak English as an additional language is just below the national average.
- Just under a fifth of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is a lower proportion than is typical nationally.

- The percentage of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards for what pupils are expected to achieve by the end of Year 11.
- The current headteacher joined the school shortly after the last inspection. There is also a new chair of the governing body in place, and several new governors and staff, including some who have leadership roles.
- The school works with Activate Learning, ACE Training and Meadowbrook College to support some pupils in accessing relevant alternative learning provision beyond the school.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the most recent key stage 4 results and post-16 outcomes on its website. Similarly, it does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish on their website about exclusion arrangements, special educational needs provision, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding and equality objectives.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 48 lessons to observe learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. Some of these visits were carried out alongside school leaders. In addition, one assembly and 12 registration sessions were also visited.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and groups of middle leaders, staff, pupils and governors, to discuss a range of issues. The lead inspector also spoke to the school improvement adviser on the telephone.
- The inspection team took into account a broad range of documentary evidence. This included the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies and other documents available on the school's website, and information provided by school leaders about pupils' behaviour, attendance and academic performance. Inspectors also considered leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning over time and, with school leaders, scrutinised samples of work from pupils in Years 8 and 10, and students in Year 12.
- Inspectors considered 109 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 89 free-text comments from parents. They also took survey responses from 21 pupils and 72 staff into account.

Inspection team

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Peter Rodin	Ofsted Inspector
Patrick Harty	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Barnes	Ofsted Inspector

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