

# Highfield School

Gawthorpe Lane, Ossett, West Yorkshire WF5 9BS

## Inspection dates

22–23 May 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- School leaders and those responsible for governance have absolute clarity about the most important things to do to keep their school improving rapidly. Pupils are at the heart of everything they do.
- Staff feel valued and listened to. They, too, focus on pupils' personal development, well-being and achievement in their day-to-day work with pupils. As a result, the school continues to improve rapidly.
- Pupils love coming to school. They are enthusiastic and positive. They grow into confident learners and young adults who are increasingly self-aware and caring towards others. Extremely well-planned programmes prepare them highly effectively for independent living and future study or employment. Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school.
- Pupils apply themselves to their learning enthusiastically. They take great pride in their work and the progress they make.
- Teachers plan lessons effectively because they know the needs of their pupils in detail. However, teachers occasionally miss opportunities to move pupils on quickly when they are ready to do so.
- Leaders use thorough, clear systems to check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They use information to make decisions about how best to improve both pupils' learning and staff skills, so that they improve continually step by step. As a result, pupils' progress is strong.
- Leaders are proactive in managing the curriculum and assessment arrangements. They acknowledge that these are aspects to develop further, to best meet the changing needs of pupils and to sustain and improve the good progress pupils make.
- Pupils attend very well. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Highly considerate of each other's needs, pupils illustrate their respect for others in their many acts of kindness.
- The sixth form is well led. Students are well taught, acquiring the skills and knowledge they need for their futures. They achieve very well. Students are ambitious, and effective guidance supports them well in securing places for further education, training and jobs.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management further by:
  - continuing to develop the curriculum to take greater account of the changing needs of pupils
  - ensuring that assessment arrangements to check on pupil's progress are amended in the light of the curriculum changes.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further by:
  - continuing to develop staff skills to identify consistently when pupils are ready to move on, amending activities so that pupils consolidate their skills and stretch their thinking.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders get to the heart of the matter quickly. Senior leaders and governors, with the highly-effective support of the school improvement committee, systematically address each area for development with vigour. They have secured the support of staff who live out leaders' vision for excellence in their day-to-day work with pupils. They put pupils firmly at the centre of their endeavours. Staff know that checks on teaching and learning, alongside their professional development, are improving pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders communicate absolute clarity of purpose to enable pupils to develop the personal and academic skills and knowledge they need to flourish during their time at school in a safe environment. Pupils thrive in each of these aspects and are very well prepared for the next steps in their education, training and employment, and for life as young adults in modern Britain.
- Senior leaders ensure that systems to manage pupils' well-being, progress and their safety are well thought through, effective and under constant review. As a result, they have shown the capacity for rapid improvement since the previous inspection. Leaders know their responsibilities very well and are skilled in working with others to sustain improvement and lead on new developments. They know in detail what needs to be done to extend further the school's current strengths. Pupils and staff have noted changes for the better, and most parents and carers agree. Pupils talk very positively about the individual support and help they get to achieve their best.
- Leaders check carefully on the progress pupils make. They discuss pupils' learning and development regularly with staff. The changes they make to support better progress are personalised to meet pupils' individual needs and secure their good progress.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is very effective. Leaders review teachers' work with them. They challenge teachers and classroom staff to improve their skills and provide appropriate whole-staff and personalised training to help them do so. This has led to strong improvement in the quality of teaching and assessment. Pupils enjoy their learning and make strong progress as a result. For their part, staff feel valued and know they are making a significant contribution to each pupil's development. A member of staff described working in the school as a 'real privilege'.
- Leaders keep a sharp eye on the effectiveness of the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. They know that the next steps for development are to further refine the curriculum to meet the changing needs of pupils entering the school. Leaders recognise that, as the curriculum changes, they will need to develop the systems to check on pupils' progress in greater detail, so that they take into account more discrete areas of learning.
- The leadership of pupils' personal development and well-being is highly effective. Leaders ensure that all staff are trained well to identify and report any concerns they might have about pupils' welfare. This helps keep pupils safe and well.
- The programme for personal, health, social and economic (PHSE) development is thorough and well considered. It promotes very effectively pupils' acquisition of knowledge and skills that help keep them safe, learn well and interact positively with

others, and prepares them for further study and employment.

- High-quality learning, from Year 7 onwards, about employment opportunities and skills for independent living, according to their needs, characterises the school's work. Based on the school's commitment to promote equality and diversity, staff ensure that pupils learn about others' needs. As a result, pupils recognise and appreciate differences in people's backgrounds, traditions and beliefs.

### **Governance of the school**

- The effectiveness of school governance has improved markedly since the previous inspection and especially over recent months. Its strengths lie in ensuring that the arrangements to challenge and support leaders are well considered and effective. They focus properly on pupils' safety, well-being and achievement. The governing body exercises its duties effectively.
- Governors use the detailed information provided to challenge leaders to sustain and extend continual improvement in pupils' achievement.
- Governors check that the leadership of teaching and pastoral care is effective and closely linked to staff professional development.
- The governing body keeps a close eye on how well pupils attend and behave.
- Governors ensure that structures for leadership and management are clearly thought through and fit for purpose and have the capacity to lead to further improvement. For example, by redefining the roles of lead practitioners to act as key stage leaders, there is a much sharper focus on high-quality teaching, learning and assessment than was previously the case.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff know that everyone has a part to play in keeping pupils safe. They focus on pupils' well-being and look out for any signs of neglect or abuse. They report all concerns, so that early help can be arranged when it is needed.
- Leaders ensure that all the required pre-employment checks on staff are carried out thoroughly and recorded. They make sure that staff are well trained and kept up to date.
- Trained safeguarding leaders deal with any safeguarding issues as their first priority. They take all necessary steps to keep pupils safe and arrange appropriate support and help, including working with other teams and agencies.
- Leaders ensure that the personal development programme provides a strong framework for learning, so that pupils develop the skills and knowledge needed to keep themselves safe. Pupils feel safe in school.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils learn well, because teachers know their needs and plan lessons that engage them and make learning interesting. Pupils work with enthusiasm as a result. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' conduct during lessons, and pupils respond positively.
- Teachers use knowledge of pupils' prior learning and of pupils' education, health and care plan targets, together with their own good subject knowledge, to plan different levels of challenge for pupils. Pupils' positive attitudes to their learning help them tackle their tasks well, either individually or in groups. Pupils are prepared to have a go and do their best. The climate for learning is positive throughout the school, including in the sixth form.
- Pupils are able to talk about their learning with staff and other pupils, and this helps them understand what they need to do to improve further. Pupils are positive and keen to improve their work. As a result, they are proud of their achievements.
- Teachers use frequent examples of how their learning can be reapplied in real life so that pupils' learning of skills to support their independence as young adults is built on continually. In doing so, pupils also develop their skills in collaborating and communicating increasingly well with others to achieve their tasks successfully. For example, a group of students in the sixth form worked in small groups to provide a communal picnic. Each group successfully completed their preparation tasks, taking into account each other's skill levels, as well as the sort of things they wanted to eat and drink. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson, pupils developed confidence in using the correct vocabulary to differentiate between 'guessing' and 'estimating' which container would hold more liquid.
- Teachers review pupils' progress over time with senior leaders to check what further steps can be taken to improve pupils' learning. As a consequence, teachers check frequently to identify any pupils who may begin to fall behind and help them catch up when needed. Teaching assistants are effective because they, too, know pupils' needs and are given clear tasks by teachers to support pupils' learning.
- Teachers maintain a firm focus on reading, writing, communication and numeracy skills at appropriate levels, whatever the aspect of the curriculum they are teaching. As a result, pupils are increasingly able to express their view and reflect their knowledge and skills in their work. This focus supports very ably the school's firm intention to prepare pupils well for the next steps of their education or training.
- Staff are skilled in asking questions to check that pupils have understood. They quickly note any misunderstandings and guide pupils through further explanation and example to correct them. By doing so, staff develop pupils' ability to consider their work and learn from mistakes. However, in some instances, staff do not recognise quickly enough that pupils' work and answers show they are ready to move on. In such cases, staff do not consistently amend or change tasks to broaden and/or stretch pupils' thinking.
- Homework is set when staff believe it is timely and will support learning well. It is not set as a matter of course. A small number of parents would like more homework to be set.
- The very strong and positive relationships between pupils and staff provide for a rich

and calm backdrop for learning. The need to challenge stereotypes or the use of derogatory language is very infrequent. When it does occur, staff both challenge its use and support pupils in understanding why it is unacceptable. They work with pupils to help them manage a stressful situation more calmly in the future.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are confident learners, who can work with each other and staff in a range of situations to learn well and make good progress. Their highly positive attitudes mean they keep trying to succeed and improve their work as they progress through the school. They enjoy school life and value their learning. Several pupils were determined that inspectors noted that they would recommend the school to others unreservedly.
- Pupils grow in self-awareness. They develop high levels of empathy for others and the skills to support each other by recognising each other's strengths and needs. In doing so, they develop strong interpersonal skills and contribute to each other's well-being.
- Pupils are kept safe and feel safe. The strong and positive relationships they have with staff give them confidence that, if they have worry or concern, there is always a trusted adult to talk with and that help will be given.
- Pastoral staff keep close contact with alternative providers of education so that they can be sure pupils attend, are well cared for and are making progress.
- Pupils are learners who seek to excel and look to the future with enthusiasm and positivity. They are well supported in this through the strength of the curriculum that helps develop those skills. It also provides them with important information about their future choices for further education, training and employment. Students take up a wide range of courses when they leave the sixth form in a variety of colleges. The developing success of the internship programme at Pinderfields Hospital bears witness to pupils' determination to keep learning successfully.
- Across key stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form, pupils and students show that they are ready and able to voice their opinions and listen to each other's points of view. They understand that this is an important part of their education and development. It helps them acquire the skills for adult living that they need.
- The respect, care and support pupils show for each other throughout the day reflects their well-developed sense of right and wrong. They know that bullying is wrong and hurtful and if it does occur, they are very confident that it will be dealt with. They use the same sense of justice to talk about their respect for others from different family backgrounds, beliefs, cultures and traditions. Their commitment to each other, their staff and their own futures supports them in making a very significant contribution to the life of the school and to the wider community.
- Pupils develop their understanding of how to keep well physically and emotionally appropriate to their age and needs. Pupils enjoy a wide range of physical activities and talk confidently about how to keep fit. They learn about healthy eating and the important skills of how to shop for and prepare healthy meals. They are well supported

in developing their understanding of healthy relationships as they grow older and develop. At appropriate stages, pupils learn about the importance of the personal space and appropriate types of physical contact. This helps keep pupils safe and well.

- Pupils are helped to understand the risks that are associated with the use of social networking sites and digital technologies. They have a firm grasp of the importance of using privacy settings and keeping personal information safe. As a result, they know that the internet has much that is positive for them in their current and future lives, but that appropriate caution needs to be exercised. Their confidence is well measured. It does not blind them to knowing they can get additional help if they need it now and in the future.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' behaviour through the school day, in lessons and around the school, is exemplary. It is characterised not simply by compliance with the school rules, but also by pupils leading others to behave very well through example and through their own encouragement. This generates a sense of shared responsibility for their school and the day-to-day experience they share together.
- Pupils are well supervised. Almost always, pupils manage themselves extremely well, but know that they can refer to an adult if they need extra support. When staff give instructions, pupils follow them good naturedly and help others to do so too.
- Pupils attend very well. They enjoy coming to school, socialising and learning together. A small number of pupils have lower attendance because of significant medical conditions which prevent their full attendance. On the rare occasion when attendance is low for other reasons, the school works closely with families and other agencies as needed to ensure that pupils are safe and to develop effective ways to re-engage pupils. Examples considered during the inspection confirm that such pupils sustain much improved attendance rates and make strong progress in their learning.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils make good progress, taking into account their starting points on entry to the school, across the range of their learning and across key stages.
- Progress in English and communication skills is strong. There are particular strengths in the development of pupils' written communication skills, including those supported through assistive technologies.
- Pupils' personal communication skills are well developed. Frequent opportunities for pupils to express their opinions and give reasons for choices support them well in verbalising their thoughts and interacting with others.
- The progress made by pupils in mathematics is strong. Teachers ensure that pupils have frequent opportunities to practise how to apply their learning in real-life situations. This consolidates their basic skills well. For example, pupils make, prepare and sell healthy lunches to staff. As a result, pupils develop the confidence in number work well.
- The progress made by pupils who come from disadvantaged backgrounds very closely

matches the good progress made by others. Careful planning by staff focuses on an individual's particular needs, so that they are well challenged and supported to make good progress.

- The most able pupils, including those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds, are challenged and supported as well as others to make good progress from their starting points.
- While progress is good overall, it is stronger in key stage 3 than key stage 4. The quality of work produced in key stage 3 from pupils' different starting points is particularly strong. This correlates to the slight unevenness in the quality of challenge in pupils' work seen in some key stage 4 books to stretch their thinking and consolidate their understanding.
- Integrated learning supports pupils very effectively in linking aspects of their study. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils learned about different ways to record and measure temperature change to support their scientific learning, while relating it to their food technology studies.
- Vocational learning is interwoven with preparation for adult life so that pupils develop and consolidate their communication, literacy and numeracy skills with the interpersonal skills they need to manage themselves well after they leave the school.
- Specific travel training supports pupils further in getting ready for their next steps.
- The large majority of pupils make a smooth transition into the sixth form.

### **16 to 19 study programmes**

**Good**

- The sixth form is ably led. Students flourish in the sixth form, both personally and academically, as they prepare successfully for their next steps in education and training.
- Leaders are ambitious for all students. They set high expectations of students, as do teachers, to whom students respond in full. The strong relationships between staff and students make for strong progress towards a range of accredited qualifications at different levels.
- Leaders ensure that guidance and support smooth transition into the sixth form. Students start a personalised pathway of study that best meets their needs and responds to their wishes and ambitions. Alongside their interpersonal skills, the specific pathways set them on a confident course to further education and training.
- The curriculum balances successfully the need to develop students' independent living skills with the academic aspects of their study. As a consequence, pupils develop a real sense of being valued and being able to make a contribution to their community. By becoming involved, for example in preparing and selling lunches to staff, they not only grow in self-esteem, but also put into practice their learning, which helps towards achieving their food hygiene qualification.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is effective, because staff know their students' needs very well. They make good use of transition information on entry into the sixth form and use their knowledge of more recent prior learning to plan and individualise learning challenges for students. This supports well the good progress they make.

From their own starting points, students, including those who transfer into the sixth form from other schools, make very good progress.

- Leaders ensure that the PHSE programme is suitably adapted to the age and needs of students, so that it builds on their prior learning and stage of understanding. It consolidates and embeds the key values of respect for others, both within the community of the school and across society. It prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Students are well supported in making informed choices about their next steps. They receive guidance and information about a range of opportunities, especially those offered by a number of colleges and the innovative internship programme with Pinderfields Hospital.
- Students behave impeccably throughout the sixth form. In the most pleasant of atmospheres, they focus hard on their learning and interact with each other positively at all times. They are effective role models for younger pupils. They attend school very well.

## School details

Unique reference number	108311
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10047860

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
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	174
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	41
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jayne Crosse
Headteacher	Joanne Kiernan
Telephone number	01924 264240
Website	<a href="http://www.highfield-school.co.uk">www.highfield-school.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:headteacher@highfield.wakefield.sch.uk">headteacher@highfield.wakefield.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	January 2016

## Information about this school

- Highfield School is a special school that provides day education for pupils aged 11 to 19. The vast majority of pupils come from the local area and surrounding towns.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds, with a small number of pupils coming from a range of other ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Since the previous full inspection, the school has been subject to a one-day monitoring inspection.

- An interim executive headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school. He has been working in the school with its leaders, staff and pupils since November 2017.
- The governing body retains its statutory responsibilities. It is supported currently by a school improvement committee, brokered by the local authority, in carrying out its duties. The recently appointed chair of the governing body sits on the school improvement committee.
- The school makes occasional use of three alternative providers for part of the school week. They are Elite Training, Pinderfield pupil referral unit and the UCAN centre.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors talked with pupils from each key stage informally, in meetings and during lessons to gather their views. Inspectors scrutinised a wide sample of pupils' work across the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and other leaders, teachers and a range of other staff. Meetings were held with the chair of the governing body and the school improvement committee. Inspectors spoke with the school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons in key stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. They considered the records of pupils' progress.
- Inspectors took into account the responses of parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and those of staff members in their survey.
- A wide range of school documents and records were examined, including the school's records of pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance, and information about how the school safeguards pupils. Inspectors also considered the school's plans for further improvement.

## Inspection team

Chris Campbell, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sara Roe	Ofsted Inspector
Lyndsey Brown	Ofsted Inspector

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