

Inspection of Hertswood Academy

Cowley Hill, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire WD6 5LG

Inspection dates: 11–12 September 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Hertswood Academy is a calm and pleasant place for pupils to learn. It is an improving school, but there is still more to do to ensure that all pupils do well. Inspectors found pupils studying hard, whether in lessons or in the many study spaces available for pupils to use throughout the day. Pupils told us that they enjoy going to the school and appreciate the remarkable new buildings. They behave sensibly while moving between lessons and during breaktimes. Sixth-form students told us that they chose Hertswood because staff and pupils care for each other well. Many parents reported to inspectors that staff 'go the extra mile' for pupils to ensure that they are happy and safe.

Pupils also told us that bullying is uncommon. When it does happen, staff deal with it well so that it doesn't continue. Staff have also put effective measures in place to make sure they have a peaceful community. For example, pupils said that the complete ban on mobile phones in school is a good thing. It has removed the stress and squabbling that could happen when pupils use social media at school.

School leaders and staff have what one parent called 'great belief' in their pupils' abilities to do great things in school and their adult lives. Many pupils told inspectors that staff encourage pupils to aim for extraordinary goals in life. As a result, many pupils take impressive next steps in their education and careers.

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

Many pupils do well at the end of Year 11. This is because teachers focus on helping pupils succeed in the Year 11 examinations. However, teaching in Year 7 and Year 8 does not prepare pupils well enough for the challenges of key stage 4. Pupils do not develop the secure knowledge they need because teaching is too superficial.

Although teachers spend a lot of time reviewing pupils' practice examination answers, they do not make best use of this effort. Assessment information does not inform teaching well enough to spot the gaps in pupils' knowledge and then revisit weaker learning. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Leaders are currently reviewing the way they organise learning and the subjects they provide. Since the previous inspection, the school's leaders have introduced subjects for pupils that better meet their needs. However, some teaching does not build on pupils' prior knowledge. Consequently, pupils do not always learn as well as they should.

In lessons, pupils generally work hard. They have positive attitudes to learning. Some pupils are absent from school too often and miss out on their learning. However, this is improving because leaders have made it clear how important it is to attend school regularly. Since the previous inspection, leaders have introduced effective ways of improving the attendance of pupils.

School leaders help pupils to understand and value each other's differences and to respect the different lifestyles found in modern Britain.

Staff help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to build self-esteem and to manage whatever difficulties they might face. However, some teachers are less successful at supporting pupils who find it difficult to learn well and achieve their goals. While teachers have high expectations for these pupils, they do not always know exactly what pupils with SEND find difficult or do not understand. Some teaching does not help pupils with SEND overcome their difficulties. This means that these pupils do not learn as well as they could.

In the sixth form, students are very determined to achieve well. They work hard and value their lessons. However, students do not learn their course material well enough because teaching does not meet their needs. In some subjects, teachers do not know what students know and understand. This means that teachers do not help students increase their knowledge and understanding. Students say that the sixth form has some extra-curricular activities, but they would appreciate more.

Governors are determined to help improve the school. They check that leaders are doing the right things to make the necessary improvements. However, governors have not checked that leaders have planned learning well enough. They have not made sure that pupils with SEND have the help they need to do well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know the pupils well and act quickly when concerns arise. Leaders work closely with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils and ensure that these pupils receive the support they need. Leaders also work well with other agencies to improve pupils' safety in the community. For example, leaders have led an award-winning awareness campaign in partnership with local primary schools and other external agencies about county-lines criminal activity.

Leaders carry out the required checks to ensure that all adults working at the school are suitable. Governors and local authority representatives scrutinise these records carefully to ensure that leaders and staff carry out their duties effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils are not achieving as well as they could because learning is not planned well enough. Leaders should ensure that new learning builds on what pupils already know.
- Leaders should ensure that teaching in key stage 3 is ambitious for all pupils.

- Leaders need to ensure that assessment gives teachers an understanding of what pupils know and can do. From this information, teachers should plan learning that addresses pupils' gaps in knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders need to ensure that teaching meets the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders should ensure that assessments accurately identify the needs of all pupils with SEND and identify the gaps in their knowledge and skills.
- Governors must keep leaders focused on planning learning more effectively. Governors must also check more carefully that the school's provision for pupils with SEND is effective and take action when it is not.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	138747
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10088689
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
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	1,241
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	205
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Doe
Headteacher	Peter Gillett
Website	www.hertswoodacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	16 May 2018

Information about this school

- This academic year, leaders completed a substantial building project for the entire school. Staff and pupils started moving into the new accommodation on Wednesday 4 September 2019.
- The school uses Oaklands College, St Albans and School of Hard Knocks as alternative providers for parts of the curriculum.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, SENCo and subject leaders. They also met with members of the board of trustees and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed 169 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, 163 text responses from parents, 66 responses to Ofsted’s staff questionnaire and 151 responses to Ofsted’s pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors took account of a wide range of information, including the school’s website, results of national examinations and leaders’ monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment. Inspectors reviewed documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors visited lessons across the school and carried out scrutiny of pupils’ books with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors started the inspection by focusing on English, mathematics, science, history and creative studies in all year groups, including the sixth form. To answer questions raised on the first day of the inspection, inspectors visited lessons in other subjects on the second day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Jason Howard	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Sue Cox	Ofsted Inspector
Lynn Ayling	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Lawrence	Ofsted Inspector

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