

# Huxlow Science College

Finedon Road, Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire NN9 5TY

<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 June 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The new leadership team has swiftly addressed underperformance. Leaders have put in place effective support for weaker teaching. As a result, teaching is now good.
- Leaders and teachers are determined that only the best is good enough for pupils at the school. They have introduced an aspirational culture which pupils have embraced. Staff say, 'Barriers for pupils have been broken. The glass ceiling has been removed'. Pupils now believe that they can achieve well.
- Leadership of special educational needs is a strength of the school. Leaders support and nurture pupils who have special educational needs or disability, so that they can access learning and make good progress.
- Everyone in the school puts pupils' well-being at the centre of everything that they do. Pupils trust and respect teachers to help them do the best that they can.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils have benefited from a wide range of extra-curricular activities which have broadened their horizons.
- Governors have reviewed and sharpened their skills and knowledge in order to support the school better. They believe in school leaders, but are unafraid to challenge them to ensure that all pupils receive the highest standard of education at all times.
- The science team has created an exciting and inspirational curriculum, and progress in science has been consistently strong. Pupils enjoy science lessons and therefore many choose to continue with science in the sixth form.
- Leaders and teachers have successfully helped disadvantaged pupils to make faster progress, particularly in English.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough pupils, particularly students in the sixth form, make progress above what is expected of them from their starting points.
- Information available on the website is not always easy to find, or as clear as it could be for parents.
- Pupils' attendance is below average and some pupils miss school too often.
- Not all staff are consistent in the way that they use targets to report on pupils' current achievement.

## Full report

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

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - the school's approach to setting achievement targets for pupils is made clearer to all
  - the work of the school is better communicated to parents.
- Increase the proportion of pupils making more than the progress expected of them, particularly students in the sixth form.
- Reduce the level of persistent absence, so that it is no greater than that seen nationally.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since the last inspection, there have been considerable changes to the senior leadership team, including the appointment of two new deputy headteachers and an additional assistant headteacher. These appointments have strengthened leadership capacity. Senior leaders' uncompromising commitment to raising standards and their high expectations for pupils have led to an impressive improvement in pupils' outcomes for current year groups.
- Despite a challenging year, with lots of staff absence through illness, leaders have been relentless in their high expectations for pupils and have not let anything get in the way of pupils' learning.
- Senior leaders have sought appropriate support and advice from a local teaching school and specialist leaders in education to improve the quality of teaching. Teaching is now good, and as a result, the standard of work seen in pupils' books has greatly improved.
- Leaders have introduced a personalised programme for staff training which has been universally appreciated by staff. In addition, staff can attend a rolling weekly training programme. Staff feel that leaders value their development, and they say that teaching has improved as a result.
- Leaders make pupils' well-being a high priority. Teachers recognise vulnerable pupils or any pupils who are experiencing difficulties and provide additional support for them. There are excellent relationships between pupils and staff and this has created a calm, positive and purposeful climate for learning around the school.
- Leaders, governors and staff are ambitious for pupils and united in their vision to achieve the best for them. Pupils have responded positively to the challenge, and as a result, outcomes have improved. Pupils are now more confident about what they can achieve and aspirational for their future.
- Leadership of special educational needs is a strength of the school. Staff know pupils' needs well. They are skilled in tailoring appropriate intervention and support to ensure that vulnerable pupils are fully included in the school and make good progress. They use a range of creative and innovative strategies to enable pupils to access learning. Staff go to considerable lengths to make sure that pupils are in school and safe. An education support centre provides a safe haven, not only for pupils who have special educational needs or disability, but also for any pupil struggling to meet the demands of the normal school curriculum. Staff provide a nurturing and caring environment where pupils are helped to overcome their anxieties.
- The headteacher has given middle leaders more responsibility and accountability, which they have welcomed. Middle leaders have appreciated more regular opportunities to meet together. They say, 'sharing of ideas has grown and learning has improved'. They feel well supported by senior leaders whom they describe as 'open and supportive'.
- Leaders manage teachers' performance well. Pay awards are given careful consideration by leaders and governors and weaker practice is challenged if it affects pupils' learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well promoted across the school. Pupils are given a rich and plentiful diet of extra-curricular activities which includes European trips, theatre visits, a variety of sports, and events to learn about other faiths and cultures. Leaders have ensured that pupils have a wide experience outside their local community to broaden their horizons, raise their aspirations and prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum. All pupils study French and the vast majority study triple science at key stage 4.
- The school's use of the alternative curriculum is carefully chosen, monitored and evaluated, and as a result, pupils make good progress.
- Leaders have ensured that additional funding for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds has been used appropriately to provide them with effective support and guidance to improve their attendance and outcomes. As a result, gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers have narrowed, particularly in English. Disadvantaged pupils often do even better in English than other pupils in the school.
- The additional funding intended to help Year 7 pupils who did not achieve a Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of key stage 2 has been spent well to provide them with effective extra support. This has enabled these pupils to make very good progress, particularly in English where all pupils are now making the progress expected for their age.

- Leaders have introduced a new system to track and monitor pupils' progress and to make sure that pupils get more timely support when they are not making as much progress as they should. As a result, there are now more pupils who are benefiting from additional support. However, teachers are not all clear or consistent in their use of targets to report on pupils' current achievement.
- There were 65 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire and parents were mostly positive about the school. However, some expressed concerns about bullying. Leaders acknowledge that they have more work to do to communicate to parents the positive steps which they have taken to address bullying. Most pupils spoken to said that if bullying did happen, teachers dealt with it quickly.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors understand their role well. They provide strong strategic support for school leaders, as well as checking and challenging that they are doing everything possible to ensure that outcomes for pupils continue to improve.
  - Governors are confident in senior leaders and share their vision to ensure the best education possible for pupils.
  - Governors bring a wide range of skills and expertise to support senior leaders. They are fully committed to their own training. They have recently completed additional training on safeguarding, safer recruitment and finance to further strengthen the support they offer the school.
  - They make sure that they carry out all their statutory duties, including those related to safeguarding and financial management. For example, they are fully aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism and use this to advise the school about keeping pupils safe.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make safeguarding a high priority. Teachers notify pastoral leaders immediately if a child is missing from a lesson.
- Leaders ensure that sound and effective practice is in place to minimise risk and protect pupils. For example, they insist that all staff complete detailed risk assessments before they allow any trip to take place.
- All statutory safeguarding checks meet requirements.
- Leaders have introduced a range of assemblies, personal, social, health and economic education lessons, and enrichment days to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe. All pupils spoken to say that they feel safe at school and are confident that there are lots of staff they can go to if they have any concerns.
- Staff have all received up-to-date safeguarding training, including on female genital mutilation, radicalisation and extremism. As a result, they are knowledgeable about potential risks to pupils and are vigilant in keeping pupils safe. They work closely with a range of external agencies and are persistent about following up referrals to ensure that pupils are protected.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment have moved on and improved considerably since the last inspection. They are now consistently good.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to prepare pupils well for examinations. They adapt questions effectively to assess pupils' knowledge and ensure that they know what to do to succeed. Pupils respond to the challenge and are confident in articulating their ideas. They can explain clearly where they have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve. As a result pupils, make good progress across a range of subjects.
- Pupils learn in a supportive atmosphere. They say, 'Teachers really help us with our work and encourage us to come up with ideas for ourselves'. Pupils respond by settling quickly to work. They are keen to do their best and to support each other with their learning.
- Teachers know classes well and the vast majority of teaching is pitched at the right level to ensure that pupils make good progress. Pupils not only take responsibility for their learning, but they also often lead on teaching. For example, they coach other pupils in physical education or lead demonstrations in science. Leaders take pupils' views into account and involve them in school improvement. A group of pupils work with school leaders to develop teaching and learning across the school and are involved in teacher interviews.

- All staff now consistently use the school's marking policy. Pupils' books show that they are responding to mistakes and misconceptions and that they understand for themselves how to improve. Pupils spoke positively about this and take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Staff are passionate about the subjects they teach and have high expectations for pupils. They value their own professional development and the sharing of good practice with each other. Teachers also work closely with a local teaching school, the Pilgrim Learning Trust, to develop ideas on teaching. As a result, learning has improved for pupils.
- Teachers make sure that pupils develop their literacy skills. They encourage pupils to develop their spoken communication skills in lessons and use more challenging vocabulary linked to the subject which they are studying. Teachers give pupils plenty of opportunities to read in class and pupils enjoy reading. Most Year 7 pupils carry reading books in their bags and regularly borrow books from the school library. As a result, reading levels have improved for all Year 7 pupils in English who needed to catch up to age-related expectations.
- Teachers provide well for the most able pupils. The leader for most-able pupils runs an extra-curricular programme which helps prepare them for top universities. Pupils are involved in the planning and content of the programme and take charge of completing their passports to success, which are shared with parents. Activities include using Roman numerals, learning to read music and debating. In addition, all of the most able pupils are mentored and as a result pupils are excited about their learning and have made good progress.
- Teachers promote equality of opportunity in lessons. Derogatory language is not tolerated.
- Not all pupils are clear about how much homework they should be doing. Some Year 10 pupils said that homework was regularly set, but pupils in key stage 3 gave more of a mixed picture and said that it depended on the teacher. The school has an online homework programme for all year groups, but leaders acknowledge that more work is needed to ensure that it is used consistently well.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through lessons and tutor time. Teachers encourage pupils to debate and consider the viewpoints of others. Pupils listen respectfully to each other and show tolerance of different views. They support each other's learning in lessons and help each other to achieve well. Pupils learn about faiths and other social differences. For example, they have opportunities to try food and appreciate cinema from different cultures.
- The school provides excellent support to pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Leaders are determined to develop the 'whole child' and to ensure that pupils feel safe and happy. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress.
- Post-16 students run assemblies for younger pupils. For example, an assembly on the European referendum delivered by sixth-form students to Years 9 and 10 held pupils' attention and explained key political issues in ways they could easily understand.
- Leaders prioritise pupils' safety. They have included assemblies and tutor-time activities on helping pupils to keep safe online. Pupils say that 'internet safety is a high priority' and they were all clear about how to protect themselves from potential threats.
- Pupils said that bullying is rare, but that if it does happen, it is always dealt with swiftly. Pupils say, 'There is always someone you can talk to'. They were adamant that homophobic bullying does not happen. They said, 'it would not be tolerated in this school'. Pupils take responsibility as anti-bullying ambassadors and help to plan and run an anti-bullying week.
- The majority of pupils take pride in their work; most books seen were well presented and pupils demonstrate a commitment to improve their work. There are positive relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers say, 'Positive relationships between pupils and staff is the best thing about the school'.

- Leaders provide pupils with good careers advice and guidance. They employ an external careers adviser to interview every pupil in Year 11 and give clear, appropriate and impartial advice. Leaders ensure that pupils in key stage 3 have regular access to independent advice to help them make informed choices about the next stages in their education, employment or training. All pupils who spoke with inspectors valued this advice and felt that it prepared them well for when they had to make important decisions about their future.
- Leaders successfully support pupils' transition from primary schools. They maintain close links with local primary schools, and older pupils regularly help out in primary schools. By the time that pupils move to Huxlow, they already know people at the school and this helps them to feel more confident about starting in Year 7.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. These include sports, trips to France and 'Excellence Week', where all pupils have a week of enrichment activities. Staff talk with pride about taking pupils on trips 'out of their comfort zone' and 'their confidence and engagement'.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils move between lessons and around the school in a calm and orderly manner. They are punctual to lessons and follow instructions quickly. One parent commented on the 'controlled, calm atmosphere' whenever they visit the school.
- Leaders ensure that all staff apply the school's behaviour policy clearly and consistently. Pupils know the high standards of behaviour expected of them. As a result, they behave well in lessons and are prompt to start their work. Fixed-term exclusions have significantly reduced and are below average.
- Attendance is not yet good enough. This is mainly because of a small cohort of Year 11 pupils whose attendance has been poor, despite leaders using a range of strategies to support them. Leaders have been quick to tighten up the school's procedures to encourage regular attendance and to use external support to help pupils back into school. However, attendance is not yet where it needs to be.

### Outcomes for pupils

### are good

- Pupils enter the school with levels of prior attainment that are below national averages. They make progress broadly in line with national averages in most subjects. The proportion of pupils who achieve five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics has been below the national average in recent years. Leaders have taken effective action to address the dip in English in 2015. Current assessment information shows that pupils' attainment in Years 10 and 11 will rise significantly this year.
- Pupils have consistently achieved very well in science. Pupils enjoy learning about science, and as a result, many of them choose to continue with a science subject in the sixth form.
- Leaders have worked with external examiners to make sure that their predictions are accurate. This has meant that they have identified underperformance earlier. As a result, attainment and progress across a range of subjects at both key stage 3 and key stage 4 for current years are improving.
- In 2015, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics.
- In 2015, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils was similar to the rates of progress for other pupils nationally. More disadvantaged pupils made progress above their targets than other pupils in English. Leaders are determined that gaps in the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils compared with those of others will continue to close rapidly. They have employed learning mentors who provide effective support for disadvantaged pupils to make sure that they make good progress.
- The most able pupils achieve well because provision has strengthened for this group. All of the most able pupils in key stage 4 are on target to reach or exceed their expected targets. Pupils' books show that they are coping well with more challenge. The proportion of sixth-form students going on to top universities has increased this year.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress from their starting points, particularly in English.
- The school makes good use of alternative provision for a very small group of pupils. Leaders keep in regular contact with providers to ensure that pupils attend well and make good progress.

- Leaders have used specialist funding effectively to support Year 7 pupils who need to catch up with their peers in reading and mathematics. This year, pupils received additional lessons to improve their skills and understanding. As a result, all pupils who received additional support with their reading caught up to age-related expected progress, and two thirds caught up in mathematics.
- The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education, training or employment. Many pupils stay on to the school's sixth form. Leaders provide those who do not join the sixth form with support to gain appropriate apprenticeships or places at other institutions.
- Attainment and progress in humanities subjects have not been good enough. However, leaders have used external subject specialists to support teaching and learning and there is now a new subject leader for humanities. As a result, there have been significant improvements and pupils this year are on track to make expected progress.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## are good

- Leaders admit that results in 2015 were not as good as they should have been. They have taken effective steps to ensure that students do well this year. They have revised the 16–19 curriculum and removed courses which were underperforming. They have raised the entry requirements for some subjects to ensure that students follow appropriate courses for their starting points. This has improved retention rates.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good and this is demonstrated by the improvements that have taken place. Leaders have worked with two other schools in their consortium to improve the accuracy of their assessments. As a result, students now have more timely intervention to ensure that they make at least the progress expected of them.
- Learning is good. Teachers provide appropriate challenge in lessons and students' work shows that they have successfully made the transition to key stage 5 and can confidently explore subjects in more depth.
- Students who are retaking mathematics and English have made good progress. Pass rates are very good. The vast majority of students will pass both English and mathematics by the end of the year.
- The school employs an independent careers adviser who gives impartial advice to students. In addition, a 'Futures Week' provides all Year 12 students with opportunities to visit a range of universities, hear guest speakers from local businesses and learn about apprenticeships. As a result, the numbers of students who go on to education, employment or training are above national expectations.
- Behaviour is good, as is students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders have ensured that all students benefit from work experience to develop their wider skills and prepare them for the future. They encourage all 16–19-year-old students to take an active part in the wider community to develop their citizenship. Students provide support in a wide range of places in the local community, such as primary schools, the library, care homes and sports clubs.
- All students take responsibility for mentoring pupils in the years below and act as positive role models.
- The most able students achieve well. The percentage of students who attain top grades is above the national figure in most subjects. The percentage of students who are going on to a prestigious Russell Group university is increasing.
- Students' attainment in vocational subjects is broadly in line with national averages. Academic attainment is improving and leaders predict that the current Year 13 students will make expected progress.
- Leaders have provided extra-curricular talks for students on safe driving, drug and alcohol misuse, sexual health, healthy eating and mental health awareness. Students spoken to said that they 'felt safe' and believed that 'the school prioritised their well-being'.
- Students' attendance is good. Those who spoke with inspectors were extremely positive about the school and the support that they get. They all said that they would recommend the school to others.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138030
<b>Local authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10011726

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	808
<b>Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	94
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Kelby
<b>Headteacher</b>	Steve Gordon
<b>Telephone number</b>	01933 650496
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.huxlow.northants.sch.uk">www.huxlow.northants.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:enquiries@huxlow.northants.sch.uk">enquiries@huxlow.northants.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	25–26 March 2014

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The sixth form is part of a shared consortium with two other schools, The Ferrers School and Rushden Community College.
- Huxlow Science College converted to become an academy in April 2012.
- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has restructured the senior leadership team with the appointment of two new deputy headteachers and the promotion of two further teachers to assistant headteachers.
- The large majority of pupils are White British, with a lower than average proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for children looked after by the local authority, is slightly below average.
- A very small number of pupils are enrolled on alternative courses at The William Knibb Centre in Kettering.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 39 lessons, 16 of which were seen jointly with senior leaders. During lesson observations, inspectors sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils in order to evaluate the quality of their learning. Inspectors made short visits to tutor-time and enrichment activities.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils at break- and lunchtime and as pupils moved around the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised, in detail, a range of pupils' books in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors held a number of meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. A telephone call was made to a centre which provides alternative education for a small number of Huxlow pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with a wide range of pupils from all year groups in meetings, in lessons and around the school at break- and lunchtimes.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of the school's documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school action plan, data on pupils' attainment and progress, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding procedures, evaluations of the quality of teaching, and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors took account of 65 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire. There were no responses to the online staff questionnaire or online pupil questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Sally Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Edwards	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Hunt	Ofsted Inspector
Denise Newsome	Ofsted Inspector

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