

Ecclesfield School

Chapelton Road, Ecclesfield, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S35 9WD

Inspection dates

10–11 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Over the last three years, the school's effectiveness has declined considerably. Senior leaders and governors have been complacent and inaccurate in their assessment of school performance and have not taken effective action to tackle pupils' underachievement and weak teaching.
- Pupils' achievement is inadequate. In 2016, pupils' performance in English, mathematics, science and humanities was weak. The most able pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils significantly underperform.
- The school's use of pupil premium funding is ineffective in accelerating the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Their achievement has been consistently low over time.
- Leaders do not ensure that pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are developed well. Consequently, pupils are not well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- The quality of provision in science for all pupils is extremely poor and has resulted in consistently low achievement in this key subject.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low, particularly for pupils who arrive at the school with high levels of attainment. The planning of teaching to match pupils' needs is inconsistent.
- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Some low-level disruptive behaviour, in lessons where pupils are insufficiently challenged, spoils the learning of others. Around the school site a small minority of pupils are disrespectful in their behaviour.

The school has the following strengths

- New leadership of English, mathematics and humanities is beginning to improve the quality of teaching and learning in these curriculum areas.
- Pupils feel safe in school and the school's procedures for safeguarding are secure. Pupils speak positively about the school's good work to prevent bullying and the development of internet safety.
- Attendance has improved significantly during the course of this academic year for all groups of pupils and is now in line with the national average.
- Pupils enjoy very good support regarding careers education, information, advice and guidance, and a high proportion of pupils remain in education, employment or training after leaving school.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Significantly improve the effectiveness of senior leadership and governance so that the achievement of pupils is at least good by:
 - ensuring that all leaders establish an accurate view of the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and pupils' attitudes to learning and use this to plan precisely for rapid improvement
 - using the pupil premium funding much more effectively to improve the performance of disadvantaged pupils
 - developing the skills of governors so that they hold senior leaders rigorously to account for the performance of all pupils at the school.
- Act urgently to improve the quality of teaching in all subjects, but particularly in science, so that it is at least good and ensures that all pupils make good or better progress in their time at the school, by:
 - continuing to develop the effectiveness of subject leaders in overcoming the impact on pupils' achievement of a legacy of weak teaching over time
 - raising teachers' expectations of all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the most able pupils, so that teachers consistently provide challenging and engaging activities in lessons and homework
 - consistently developing pupils' numeracy skills and the quality of their extended writing across all subjects.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning by:
 - ensuring that all staff deal consistently and robustly with poor behaviour, both within and outside the classroom
 - making sure, through the strengthening of teaching, that all pupils are engaged in their learning and are motivated to succeed.

An external review of pupil premium spending should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

An external review of the school governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The school's performance has declined significantly over the last three years and is now inadequate overall. Senior leaders and governors have failed to ensure that key weaknesses in teaching, pupils' attitudes to learning and the underachievement of significant groups of pupils have been effectively addressed. Senior leaders do not have robust plans in place to secure the rapid improvement which is necessary so that pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Leaders are inaccurate in their assessment of the school's performance and have not made a rigorous analysis of its areas of strength and of the weaknesses that need to be tackled robustly. As a consequence, leaders have consistently failed to address the significant areas of underperformance seen in pupils' achievement in examinations in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- Governors and senior leaders have failed to use funding to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. Strategies to accelerate pupils' progress have not been carefully evaluated to judge the difference they have made. As a result, the performance of disadvantaged pupils has not improved quickly enough.
- Leaders do not ensure that pupils enjoy equality of opportunity in their learning because there are too many inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. For example, disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able pupils achieve significantly less well than other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- Although new subject leadership in mathematics, English and humanities is beginning to show early signs of impact, senior leaders and governors have been too slow to ensure that all subjects are well led. Science teaching remains inadequate and pupils spoke to inspectors about their concerns regarding the impact of poor science provision on their future employment and training prospects.
- Effective systems to assess what pupils can do are at an early point in their development. The assessment system in key stage 3 remains inaccurate. Leaders have not taken steps to ensure accurate assessment information for pupils in science at key stage 3. Some pupils in key stage 4 remain confused about what their grades mean and the importance of targets that have been set for them.
- Leaders have not been effective in ensuring that pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The large majority of pupils are courteous and keen to do well, but a small minority of pupils are disrespectful, disruptive and silly in their conduct around school. Largely as a consequence of weak teaching, behaviour in science is in need of significant improvement.
- While arrangements to manage the performance of staff are taken seriously, including by the governing body, the inaccurate view of the effectiveness of leadership and teaching in the school has resulted in these processes having little impact on improving overall school performance.

- Recently, subject leaders in English, mathematics and humanities have begun to work more closely to monitor the quality of teaching. This includes increasing the regularity with which they visit lessons and check on pupils' work. However, it is too early to measure the impact of this work on raising pupils' achievement.
- External support commissioned by the school has had little positive impact on pupils' achievement, including examination outcomes in 2016. The support provided has not challenged school leaders or governors to improve sufficiently rapidly.
- Funding used to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has not been used effectively over time. It is too soon to see the impact of changes to the way in which that funding is now used.
- Although the curriculum has a number of areas of strength, it is ineffective because too many pupils fail to develop the literacy and numeracy skills that they need for the future. In particular, pupils' mathematical skills are not developed across the curriculum. The consequences of this are clearly seen in mathematics examination outcomes in 2016 which place the school within the bottom 15% of schools nationally in almost all measures of progress.
- The school's work to support weaker readers as they enter Year 7 is now much more effective and there is clear evidence of those pupils making better progress in their learning across the curriculum.
- The school's specialist provision for pupils who have a hearing impairment is well led and provides effective support for the pupils in its care.
- Other areas of the curriculum, such as the school's work to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain and the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are effective. Pupils speak very positively and knowledgeably about the school's work on tackling discrimination and prejudice, as well as the importance of Britain in a global society. The school also places great emphasis on careers education, information, advice and guidance. This is viewed by pupils as an area of strength in the school's work and has a positive impact on the number of pupils who are engaged in education, employment or training when they leave the school.
- Pupils speak very positively about the range of extra-curricular activities that are on offer to them, particularly in sport and performing arts. These programmes make an important contribution to pupils' wider development outside the classroom.

Governance

- Governance is ineffective. A detailed examination of the records of governing body meetings shows a lack of challenge and a lack of understanding of the significant difficulties facing the school. Governors recognise, for example, that they have not given any consideration to the very poor outcomes achieved by the most able pupils at the school and have not established, with senior leaders, any strategies to improve the performance of these pupils.
- Governors have failed to ensure that school leaders are using the pupil premium funding effectively. Additionally, they have not ensured that leaders fulfil their responsibility for adequately developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

- Although governors ensure that performance management systems are in place, the procedures have not led to improvements in the achievement of pupils at the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders who have responsibility for safeguarding work hard to support pupils who are experiencing a range of difficulties. They take timely and appropriate action where they have a concern related to a pupil's welfare. Leaders work closely and tenaciously with other agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support they require. They also engage well with parents and carers to ensure that pupils are well supported and safe.
- All staff are aware of their responsibility to ensure that pupils are safe. Staff receive regular safeguarding updates, including training related to extremism and radicalisation. They are aware of the different types of abuse and the signs to look for, and they understand the action they must take where they have a concern about a pupil's welfare, including where they are concerned about another adult's conduct towards a pupil.
- The designated safeguarding lead is aware of issues in the local community that may affect the welfare of pupils at the school. He has ensured that staff have received training in relation to these issues so that they are well prepared to support pupils.
- Pupils are given wide-ranging opportunities to learn how to be safe, both through the curriculum and through assemblies. For example, during the inspection, the South Yorkshire Fire Service presented very effective lessons on road safety. Pupils also regularly learn about how to stay safe online.
- Pupils know whom they can go to if they have any concerns. Pupils are confident that adults listen to their concerns and take the appropriate action.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate as there is too much variability in their quality across the school. Because of this, pupils have not achieved as well as they should over time across a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science and humanities. Although there are early signs of improving teaching in English, mathematics and humanities, some weaknesses prevail and the quality of teaching in science remains wholly inadequate.
- Teachers do not plan effectively enough to provide activities that meet pupils' needs. Often, teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of are too low and the work they set pupils is too easy. On these occasions, pupils do not engage well with their learning and they do not make the progress that they should.
- Teachers do not ensure that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, complete activities that are suitably challenging. Consequently, too few make the progress they should to achieve the higher grades of which they are capable by the end of key stage 4.
- Low-level disruption prevents pupils from making the progress they should in some lessons and particularly in science. When observing lessons, inspectors saw a minority of pupils who were disruptive and disrespectful in their conduct.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not always receive effective support from adults in the classroom to ensure that they are secure in their understanding. Consequently, too few of these pupils make the progress they should, particularly by the end of key stage 4.
- Pupils who have fallen behind in their reading skills now receive effective support to catch up. Furthermore, all pupils receive opportunities to read, including, for Year 7, regular visits to the school library. However, when pupils do engage in reading activities, teachers do not ensure that they read books that extend their skills and understanding further.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers have good relationships with pupils and provide pupils with support to ensure that they make progress. Teachers ask pertinent questions to check that pupils understand their learning. Furthermore, pupils pay careful attention when others are speaking. In a Year 11 history lesson, for example, pupils showed an incisive understanding of the Nazi's rise to power in Germany in the 1930s and listened with great respect to the ideas and contributions of others.
- Pupils in the school's specialist unit for pupils who have a hearing impairment make good progress overall as a consequence of well-planned teaching and high-quality personalised support.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning vary and, where teaching lacks pace and challenge, some pupils quickly lose interest in their learning. This is particularly the case in science lessons.
- In discussions with inspectors, pupils spoke about the extent to which they feel safe within the school community. Pupils are confident about the action to take should they feel unhappy or unsafe. The majority of pupils are clear that bullying is rare and that, when it does occur, it is dealt with by staff at the school.
- The school's personal, social, health and economic education programme is at an early stage in its development. Although well organised and including a programme of external speakers in its preparation of pupils for the challenges of education, training and employment beyond the school, it is too early to assess its overall effectiveness and impact on all pupils.
- Pupils appreciate the range of extra-curricular opportunities that are available to them, particularly in physical education and the performing arts. Additionally, developments in reading and the manner in which pupils run the school library and develop their leadership and responsibility skills are viewed very positively by pupils and parents.

- Leaders have worked hard to ensure that the number of pupils educated away from the main school site is reduced. A small number of pupils now attend the school's own alternative provision which is called Aspects. Their welfare and progress are closely monitored and there is evidence that pupils attending the provision are now achieving well.
- Pupils educated in the school's specialist provision for those who have a hearing impairment enjoy integrating with others and building friendships across the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils confirmed through a range of formal and informal discussions that the low-level disruptive behaviour seen by inspectors in some lessons, and particularly in science, was consistent with their own experience.
- Around the school most pupils conduct themselves well, moving sensibly around the premises and arriving punctually to lessons. A small minority of pupils show disrespectful attitudes. This was reflected in a small number of unacceptable comments that were made to the inspection team.
- In the previous academic year, 13 pupils were permanently excluded from the school. This reflected the school's failure to deal effectively with the small number of pupils across a range of year groups who presented significantly challenging behaviour. Too little time has been spent by leaders in analysing the reasons why pupils conducted themselves in this way. The school is now dealing more effectively with pupils who exhibit the most challenging behaviour, including through use of its own alternative provision.
- The proportion of pupils who are absent from school, including those who are persistently absent, has begun to decline and is now near to the levels found nationally. This is because of the increased support of a specialist team which is focused on improving attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils enter the school at Year 7 with achievement which is broadly in line with other pupils nationally. When they leave at the end of Year 11, standards are significantly below average in many subjects, including English, mathematics, science and humanities. From their individual starting points, too few make the rate of progress of which they are capable because teaching is weak.
- The school's predictions of high levels of achievement in 2014, 2015 and 2016 did not materialise. Leaders do not have a secure grasp of the quality of teaching and its impact over time on pupils' achievement. Additionally, assessment systems are inaccurate and this has resulted in intervention taking place which has had little impact on pupils' outcomes.

- In 2016, the performance of disadvantaged pupils was particularly weak, placing the school in the bottom 10% of schools nationally for the progress of this group. This was because leaders had failed to precisely analyse the achievement of this group and had not made effective use of pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils to achieve well.
- The most able pupils do not achieve well. In 2016, the overall performance of the most able pupils was significantly below their peers with similar starting points nationally. Leaders' work to improve this situation remains weak and unconvincing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have underachieved over time, making significantly less progress than other pupils with similar starting points nationally. Their achievement has been undermined by the weaknesses in the school's work to develop literacy and numeracy skills.
- The work scrutinised by inspectors across all year groups indicates weak progress and low levels of attainment in a range of subjects and particularly in science. Leaders have only recently begun to eradicate weaker teaching and this has resulted in many pupils in key stage 4 having significant gaps in their skills and knowledge across a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils who are educated in the school's alternative provision and those in the school's specialist provision for pupils who have a hearing impairment are now on target to perform at a higher level than was the case over the past three years. The school now monitors more carefully the progress being made by those pupils and ensures that they benefit from much more effective preparation for the next stage in their learning or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	140809
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10023842

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,738
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Rob Walker
Headteacher	Joel Wirth
Telephone number	0114 2461 156
Website	www.ecclesfield-school.com
Email address	enquiries@eccoschool.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school became an academy shortly after the previous inspection of its predecessor school.
- The school is a much larger than average-sized secondary school.
- The school has specialist provision for pupils who have a hearing impairment. The pupils are on the roll of Ecclesfield School.
- The majority of pupils attending this school are White British.

- The number of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is broadly in line with the national average.
- The number of pupils who receive any form of special educational needs support is higher than the national average. The number of pupils who have statements of special educational needs and/or disabilities or education, health and care plans is in line with the national average.
- The school has established its own alternative provision which is called Aspects. This is attended by a small number of pupils in key stage 4.
- The school met the government's current floor standards for pupils' achievement at key stage 4 in 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a wide range of lessons across the curriculum. This activity included joint observations with senior members of staff.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, including pupils who have been given support with their reading since starting at the school.
- Inspectors looked carefully at pupils' books from across all year groups, both within lessons and as a separate activity.
- A range of meetings were held, including with the headteacher and senior leaders, the designated safeguarding lead, pastoral leaders, subject leaders, members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority. Other meetings were held with the behaviour and achievement lead, the special educational needs coordinator, and with members of staff with responsibility for careers education, advice and guidance, the curriculum and the school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision.
- A member of the inspection team visited the school's alternative provision.
- Inspectors considered the 139 parental responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered 93 staff questionnaire responses and 133 pupil questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors reviewed and analysed a range of documentation including the school development plan and self-evaluation plan, minutes and records of governing body meetings, performance information for all year groups and records of behaviour, attendance and exclusions, as well as records of pupils' safety and welfare.

Inspection team

John Townsley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Hayter	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stuart Cleary	Ofsted Inspector
Lynn Kenworthy	Ofsted Inspector
Barbara O'Brien	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Cook	Ofsted Inspector
Gabrielle Reddington	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Ward	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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