

The Holly Hall Academy

Scotts Green Close, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 2DU

Inspection dates

14–15 December 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- In the last three years, pupils have made very weak progress. Pupils currently in the school continue to make weak progress compared to their peers nationally with similar starting points.
- Teaching does not effectively develop pupils' skills and knowledge. Sometimes, courses are disorganised. At other times, there is a succession of temporary teachers, causing disruption, and lost and repeated work.
- Teachers do not give pupils tasks that challenge them.
- Leaders have not developed an effective system for assessment. As a result, they cannot be sure which pupils or groups of pupils are behind.
- Leaders do not evaluate their actions well enough. Consequently, they do not know when they are being effective and when they are not.
- Pupils' behaviour is inadequate. There are too many temporary exclusions and internal isolations. Pupils' behaviour disrupts learning too often. Some pupils express concerns about the prevalence of prejudicial language and boisterous behaviour.
- Leaders have not effectively evaluated the way in which they spend extra funding for disadvantaged pupils. Therefore, these pupils underachieve considerably.
- While there are some improvements in pupils' attendance, it is still below the national average. Persistent absence is very high.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills. Many pupils take part and value this highly.
- The newly formed trust has swiftly gained an accurate view of the quality of education in the school. They have acted quickly and there are early signs of standards improving.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership in the school. Do this by ensuring that:
 - when new strategies are introduced, they are evaluated in terms of their impact on pupils
 - evaluations are used to adjust strategies when necessary
 - leaders make the most of the new training they receive so that they have a more positive impact on outcomes for pupils
 - the impact of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is effectively evaluated.
- Rapidly improve outcomes for all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils. Do this by ensuring that:
 - teachers give pupils tasks that are challenging enough to engage them
 - teachers plan courses that are logical and build pupils' skills and knowledge coherently
 - leaders introduce an effective system of assessment
 - teachers' assessments are accurate and used effectively to plan learning.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and attendance so that:
 - Fixed-term and internal exclusions are reduced considerably
 - pupils' attendance is at or above the national average
 - pupils' persistent absence is reduced
 - younger pupils' feeling of safety is improved
 - the use of prejudicial language is eradicated.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Over time, leaders have not effectively secured positive outcomes for pupils. Aspirations for pupils have been too low. The school has been negatively affected by financial problems and staffing issues. Since his appointment, the headteacher has diligently restructured the school so that it is financially viable and properly staffed. However, during this time, pupils' outcomes have remained weak and are not improving quickly enough.
- Leaders do not evaluate the impact of their actions on pupils. For example, plans to improve disadvantaged pupils' outcomes have not been properly evaluated even though this group have continued to underachieve considerably. Similarly, plans to improve punctuality have not been evaluated. Leaders do not track groups of pupils' punctuality so they do not know if they are effective in improving punctuality.
- The extra funding for pupils who join the school with weak literacy and numeracy levels is not used or evaluated effectively. Pupils continue to have weak literacy levels and work to develop numeracy has not begun. Leaders do not ensure the effective use of funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. These pupils continue to underachieve.
- Leaders have not designed an assessment system that helps them know when pupils are falling behind. They do not know when assessments are accurate and when they are not. The system is incoherent and leaders do not understand it well.
- Pupils have access to a broad range of experiences and courses. However, leaders have not effectively monitored the quality of teachers' medium- and long-term planning. Therefore, the curriculum is weakly planned. Pupils fall behind over time and do not have the skills and knowledge that they need to be successful in examinations. Some pupils do a number of courses where the content overlaps considerably. This wastes their learning time.
- Teachers offer many sessions to help pupils catch up in Year 11. However, there is a limited range of extra-curricular activities. Leaders do not track pupils' engagement in extra-curricular activities effectively.
- Some pupils are internally excluded for extended periods of time in an attempt to reduce the potential for them to be permanently excluded. While this has reduced the number of permanent exclusions, pupils are taught by non-subject-specialist teachers in mixed-age groups. This means that these pupils fall further behind.
- Teachers do not follow the school's marking policy consistently. Leaders do not monitor this. As a result, there are variations in practice and, on occasion, pupils receive no feedback for extended periods of time.
- Information for parents and carers is poor. Due to weaknesses in the assessment system, parents cannot be sure whether or not their child is making progress. In Year 7, parents get no information about their child's progress unless they have a face-to-face meeting with teachers. As leaders do not monitor these meetings, they cannot be sure that parents get the information that they are entitled to.

- Leaders accurately evaluate that there is much to do in order that pupils benefit from an acceptable standard of education. However, effective work within the new trust and several aspects of pupils' personal development demonstrate that leaders and governors have the capacity to bring about improvement.
- The personal, social, health and economic curriculum has a strong positive impact on pupils' knowledge in this area. Visiting speakers enrich pupils' experiences. As a result, pupils have knowledge of a range of issues affecting them and develop their understanding of fundamental British values effectively.
- The trust has recently introduced a nationally recognised training course for leaders. The leaders involved speak with new levels of clarity about their work and are becoming more effective. It is too early to see the impact on pupils.
- Given the improvements required in relation to pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, it is recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers at this time.

Governance of the school

- The newly formed board of trustees has taken over governance of the school. They have accurately identified key weaknesses and taken swift action to improve outcomes for pupils. These actions have been effective. These trustees are a group of highly skilled professionals who have a deep understanding of what the school needs to do to improve.
- Trustees have formed a small sub-group, which acts as an interim executive board. This small group meets a number of times weekly to hold school leaders to account and to make the decisions necessary to improve the school quickly. As a result, decisions are made swiftly and improvements happen without delay.
- The trust ensures that the school has the resource it needs when changes are required. They ensure that the sponsor reacts to the school's needs promptly. For example, they have already brokered effective, expert support for English and mathematics teaching, and provided bespoke leadership training for school leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The trust recently undertook a full review of safeguarding. As a result, trustees understand the school's safeguarding systems and have strong oversight. One trustee takes responsibility for this area. He has a deep knowledge of safeguarding.
- All records of staff vetting are complete and kept diligently. A culture of safeguarding is underpinned by detailed record-keeping and action planning for pupils who need extra support.
- The curriculum for safeguarding takes local risks into consideration. Pupils have a strong knowledge of the issues and risks relating to radicalisation and extremism, gangs and knife crime because teaching about these things is effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching is not leading to positive outcomes for pupils. Leaders agree that there is a lack of coherence in the systems around teaching and learning. Current systems are too complex and ineffective in bringing about the changes needed to secure pupils' better progress.
- Assessment is weak. The systems for assessment do not help leaders to intervene effectively when pupils fall behind. In some subjects, assessments are inaccurate. In others, no external moderation takes place so teachers do not know the standards expected of pupils. Weakness in planning the curriculum undermines assessment further. Where it is not clear how much or what pupils should have learned by a particular point, teachers cannot assess their progress confidently.
- In many lessons, teachers do not challenge pupils. Work is basic and well below the difficulty and complexity that pupils can handle. As a result, low-level disruption sometimes follows. Over time, pupils fall further and further behind. Some pupils spoke with inspectors about their concerns that they were so far behind in some subjects that it would not be possible to catch up.
- Where there are changes in staffing or a succession of supply teachers, learning is disrupted. As a result of more stable staffing, this is rarer this year. However, some groups of pupils are still behind because of disruption in the past.
- Leaders have recently introduced additional support to improve pupils' literacy levels. Leaders are rightly responding to an identified weakness but it is too early to see the impact of this.
- In some lessons, where teaching is more effective, pupils respond well and make better progress. These lessons are well planned, contain a variety of activities, and challenge pupils effectively. For example, inspectors saw teachers using a wide range of interesting strategies and teaching techniques to engage pupils and help them to make progress.
- Pupils say that their progress in English and mathematics has drastically improved recently. Inspectors saw convincing evidence that this is the case. However, this is very recent and there is a long legacy of underachievement.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Some pupils say that bullying is rare, and some say that it happens too often and is not dealt with well by staff. The school's logs of bullying show a recent reduction in incidents, but this has not improved all pupils' confidence in the school's work on bullying. Some younger pupils told inspectors that they feel unsafe on the corridors because of boisterousness. While inspectors found no other evidence to support this, leaders acknowledge the need to improve younger pupils' confidence around the

school.

- Leaders have revised their work on careers education, information, advice and guidance. Pupils have multiple opportunities to talk individually about their future plans and staff work in a targeted way to help pupils aspire to exciting and prestigious careers. However, leaders have not yet developed ways of evaluating this work to establish how effective it is.
- Leaders make regular visits to pupils in alternative provision to make sure that they are safe, happy and making progress.
- Pupils have a well-developed understanding of a range of risks that they might face. For example, they spoke with inspectors about online safety, radicalisation and extremism, crime and community safety. This reflects leaders' planning of a personal, health, social and economic curriculum, which takes into account the local context.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of leadership opportunities. This is because leaders have designed a system of 'student leaders', which makes groups of pupils responsible for school events. Pupils fill in event forms, formally plan events with staff and benefit from the skills they learn in the process. They are given files, which help them to organise their work professionally. As a result, these pupils gain valuable organisational and interpersonal skills.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Attendance overall, and for most year groups, is below the national average. Inspectors looked at attendance for the past two weeks and found that it has declined further. Persistent absence is well above the national average. Inspectors saw a substantial number of pupils who were late to lessons. It was not possible for inspectors to evaluate whether punctuality was improving because leaders do not evaluate this effectively.
- While permanent exclusions have reduced recently, fixed-term exclusions remain above the national average. There are also a high number of internal exclusions, sometimes for long periods of time. Pupils who are internally excluded for longer periods of time do not make the progress that they are capable of.
- There is too much low-level disruption in lessons. This often happens when teaching is weak. In some lessons, teachers have to focus on maintaining pupils' calm behaviour so much that they cannot focus fully on making their lesson engaging. In these lessons, pupils' progress suffers.
- Pupils say that prejudicial, homophobic language is used regularly by pupils in school. There is no evidence of this in the school's own logs of incidents.
- Pupils' behaviour around corridors is generally calm.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils' outcomes have been very weak for the last three years. Compared to other pupils nationally with similar starting points, pupils in the school have underachieved considerably. Pupils' progress is weak in English and mathematics. Too many pupils

leave school having not made strong progress in these important subjects.

- Current pupils' progress is improving in English and mathematics. This is because of stronger, more stable teaching and accurate assessment in these areas. Dudley College's support in providing the most vulnerable pupils with expert tuition is also having a positive impact. However, other improvements across the curriculum are inconsistent and fragile. Leaders cannot be sure of any signs of improvement outside of English and mathematics because assessment is not reliable.
- In subjects where pupils' progress is better, it is still below that of pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, make poor progress. Their progress is not improving quickly. In some subject areas, these pupils make progress of over a grade below other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make weak progress because teachers do not plan lessons that meet their individual needs.
- While leaders track the post-16 courses pupils apply for, they do not track their eventual destinations. As a result, inspectors could not evaluate the school's work in this area.
- Pupils in alternative provision undertake a range of courses. They begin to make better progress in alternative provision because their needs are being met.

School details

Unique reference number	137390
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10037167

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	654
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Lowell Williams
Headteacher	Rob Hatch
Telephone number	01384253722
Website	www.hollyhallacademy.co.uk/
Email address	office@holly-hall.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 April 2016

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about equality objectives and accessibility planning on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about equality objectives and accessibility planning.
- The school joined the Dudley Academies Trust on 1 September 2017. There are four local schools in the trust and Dudley College is the sponsor. There is a trust board, which undertakes all of the governance functions in the school. A chief executive officer has been appointed. At the time of the inspection she had been in post for four weeks.
- Around half of pupils in the school are disadvantaged. Around half are from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above the national average.
- The school uses six alternative providers: Nova Learning, EDS, Black Country Wheels,

Halesowen and Stourbridge Colleges, and The Cherry Tree Centre.

- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited parts of lessons across the curriculum and year groups. They looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke to pupils about what they were learning.
- The views of pupils were evaluated through discussions, both in formal meetings and around the school. There were too few responses to the pupil questionnaire to evaluate these.
- Inspectors met with the board of trustees, the chief executive officer, the senior leadership team, middle leaders and teachers. Teachers gave their views through 41 responses to the online questionnaire.
- The views of parents were evaluated through the 43 responses to Parent View and the 29 responses to the Parent View free-text service.
- The lead inspector visited a local college where some pupils are taught for a weekly mathematics or English lesson.

Inspection team

Dan Owen, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lois Kelly	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Henshaw	Ofsted Inspector
Elaine Haskins	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Griffiths	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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