

Longhill High School

Falmer Road, Rottingdean, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 7FR

Inspection dates

18–19 September 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The local community has renewed its confidence in the school since the last inspection. Pupils, parents and carers, leaders of other schools and the local authority all agree that the school has improved significantly.
- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher has resulted in the staff working together to transform their school. The school now provides a good level of education.
- Pupils' behaviour has been transformed since the last inspection and they are now proud of their school. They are smart, polite and tolerant of the views and differences of others. They recognise the many improvements and are appreciative of their teachers and the leaders of the school.
- Since the last inspection, teaching has become more effective in most subjects. The majority of teaching meets pupils' needs well.
- There is a small amount of inconsistent teaching across the school that does not challenge pupils enough.
- Strong support from leaders and staff for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has resulted in good progress. The pupils supported by the in-house dyslexia unit are served well.
- Pupils' progress, while much improved, is not yet consistently strong enough across all subjects and years to make up for the inconsistencies in the past.
- Because of decisive action by leaders and staff, the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those that are the most able is stronger than that of their peers.
- The curriculum and enrichment activities promote pupils' development well.
- Pupils are happy and safe. The school's safeguarding procedures are highly effective.
- Governors are fully committed to the school. They provide effective support and challenge to school leaders.
- Overall attendance is below national averages. Leaders are working to reduce pupils' absence and there are signs of attendance improving this year.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas to improve. However, leaders have not monitored the success of some of their improvement plans sharply enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve pupils' learning and outcomes by ensuring that all teachers consistently meet leaders' expectations of effective teaching.
- Improve pupils' levels of attendance, especially for those who are disadvantaged.
- Strengthen leadership by ensuring that all leaders monitor sharply the success of their actions, and alter plans accordingly to promote improvement further.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher joined the school shortly after the last inspection. Together with governors, she took immediate and deliberate action to improve the school, despite the school being in a period of turbulence in staffing. The school is now fully staffed and morale is high. Leaders have successfully stemmed the decline in the standard of education apparent at the last inspection and the school has made great gains. All stakeholders recognise the transformation that has occurred in this school.
- The headteacher and her deputies create a desire and belief that everyone can improve the quality of their work. They demonstrate a refreshingly honest approach to seek out areas to improve. Senior leaders' 'can-do' attitude to tackling areas of relative weakness has encouraged all staff to do the same. As a result, senior leaders have addressed the areas requiring improvement identified at the last inspection with rigour and the school is improving rapidly.
- Leaders have enhanced the school's reputation in the community. Parents have a much more positive view of the school, and the Year 7 intake is increasing. One parent said, 'I have already witnessed some of the changes that the school has implemented and I feel confident that further positive changes will continue to make Longhill into a school that the local community can be very proud of.'
- Teachers and other members of staff feel valued. Staff benefit considerably by sharing expertise across other schools. Work with primary schools is exemplary. Teachers have renewed enthusiasm for teaching and a group of staff actively research new ways to inspire pupils. Consequently, teachers are motivated and form part of the ambitious learning culture permeating throughout the school.
- Leaders have put in place performance management for staff that focuses on pupils' progress. Where standards do not meet leaders' high expectations, they challenge colleagues to improve, putting appropriate support in place. Governors ensure that any pay award is closely linked to successful staff appraisal.
- The local authority has provided effective support to leaders and governors to help them improve the school.
- Leaders adjust the secondary curriculum to meet the needs of pupils and prepare them for the next stage of their education. Leaders have introduced the study of two languages at key stage 3 so that it provides a greater experience of languages for pupils on which to base their choice for their GCSE options. Leaders provide a broad range of courses to suit pupils' interests and aptitudes.
- The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, including those for art, table tennis and dance. A large number of trips and visits are arranged, and school leaders use the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils in being able to attend them. Pupils spoke positively about the trips and clubs that the school makes available. Leaders develop a culture, underpinned by a well-planned curriculum, that promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- Additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used well to support their learning and progress. A skilled team of teaching assistants is part of the

provision carefully tailored to meet the needs of these pupils. Teachers receive good support and guidance to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities with their difficulties in learning.

- Leaders use the Year 7 catch-up funding well to support pupils who enter the school with below-average attainment in English and/or mathematics.
- While leaders' self-evaluation is accurate, there is variability in the extent to which leaders' actions to improve the school are evaluated. For example, leaders have fully reviewed the success of their plans to improve behaviour, yet they have not evaluated sharply enough the results of their actions to improve attendance.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has been strengthened since the last inspection. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively. Frequent visits to the school, together with regular briefings by senior staff and heads of faculties, mean that they know the school well.
- Governors have a wide range of skills. They undertake training to help them support and challenge school leaders well. Governors hold leaders to account for the quality of provision and the progress of pupils.
- Governors review the spending of the school's budget thoroughly, especially the pupil premium funding, to support disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have developed a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Staff are well trained and are kept up to date with current advice, such as keeping pupils safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Governors also attend regular safeguarding training.
- The school's safeguarding administration is fit for purpose. Leaders' insistence on accurate record keeping enables effective and timely support for vulnerable pupils. Robust checks are carried out to ensure that staff appointed to the school do not pose a threat to pupils.
- Pupils report that they feel safe. They are particularly appreciative of the new fence that helps them feel secure in school. They are able to explain how to keep themselves safe, for example when they are using the internet. Pupils also report that adults take prompt action should they have a concern.
- Parents agree that their children are safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- All stakeholders agree that teaching has improved significantly. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good because teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Most teachers use similar teaching and behaviour management

methods across the school. Pupils respond positively to a consistent approach and say that lessons are more challenging compared with two years ago. In lessons, well-established routines mean that little learning time is lost. The majority of parents say that their children are taught well.

- Strong teaching exists throughout the school. In science, pupils are challenged to think deeply and write accurate explanations. In physical education, pupils show a mature focus and demonstrate their skills well. English teaching deepens pupils' understanding of effective writing techniques. There are numerous other examples of effective teaching.
- In most lessons, teachers use questioning well to find out about pupils' learning. In the most effective instances, such as in mathematics and science, teachers help pupils to focus on why and how they have solved a problem. Pupils are keen to talk about their understanding and to ask for help should they need clarification.
- Leaders have developed a feedback policy which most teachers follow consistently. Pupils respond positively to their teachers' advice and are keen to improve their work. Pupils talk about their learning confidently, and discuss the improved progress they have made over recent times.
- Leaders have successfully raised the profile of homework. Pupils receive homework regularly and say that it complements their learning. Older pupils approaching their examinations understand the importance of homework in reinforcing their understanding.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers across the curriculum support pupils' literacy skills. Teachers help pupils to expand their vocabulary by focusing on key words, including subject-specific terminology, and through reading appropriate texts. The drive to improve writing skills is demonstrated through extended writing opportunities in English, and also across the curriculum generally.
- Leaders ensure that parents are kept informed about their children's learning and progress. Teachers provide a detailed commentary appropriate to individual pupils. The commentaries convey how well pupils are performing in relation to the standards expected and what pupils need to do to improve. Parents confirm that they receive valuable information about their children's progress.
- Despite strengthened teaching overall, there is variation in the quality of teaching in small pockets across the curriculum. Leaders are taking action to improve teaching in areas such as computer science and technology where recruitment has been difficult or where there is a legacy of weaker teaching. In these areas, teaching does not closely follow the teaching and learning strategies that are typically found across the school. Furthermore, teaching activities do not always match pupils' needs, and consequently they may have work that does not challenge them enough or capture their interest.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are looked after well. Staff care for pupils' well-being, and recognise promptly

any concerns, especially about vulnerable pupils. Links with outside experts, including mental health professionals, are helpful in supporting pupils' needs. The Focus Centre, located on the school site, provides timely support for pupils who are not able to attend lessons. Parents agree that their children are cared for well. One parent said, 'The support that my child has received at Longhill has been nothing short of amazing.'

- Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning. They are proud of their school and are keen to do well. They are smart and look after the school site. They are given the opportunity to lead, such as with an active school council and, among other initiatives, the sports leadership schemes. Staff listen to pupils' views and seek their opinions.
- Pupils benefit from an effective programme of personal, social, health and economic education. They feel that their school is a place where everyone is accepted. They develop empathy and understand what it is like to live in modern Britain. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe from the risk of radicalisation, especially when using the internet.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and secure. Pupils explain that bullying happens rarely. Pupils also say that should they have a concern, teachers resolve issues quickly and successfully.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- At the time of the last inspection, behaviour required improvement. Leaders and teachers have transformed pupils' behaviour through developing a clear behaviour management policy that is understood well by staff and pupils. Staff apply the behaviour strategy consistently. Pupils are well behaved, courteous, respectful and polite.
- The school is calm and purposeful. Pupils move quickly between lessons. They behave well in lessons and during break- and lunchtime. The few pupils who have difficulty in adhering to the school's high expectations are decreasing in number, and exclusion figures are reducing.
- Pupils report that disruption in lessons is rare. Occasionally, when teaching is weaker, pupils lose interest and drift off task.
- Leaders ensure that those pupils attending alternative education placements attend regularly. This is because there is close liaison between school leaders and these providers.
- While pupils' attendance has improved very recently, levels of attendance remain below the national average. Disadvantaged pupils, in particular, do not attend school regularly enough. The school is rightly focusing on improving attendance as a matter of priority.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Overall, pupils join the school with key stage 2 outcomes below those typically expected.
- Leaders are unwavering in their determination to improve academic outcomes. Recent rapid improvement in progress across the school has not yet made up for shortcomings in the past. At the time of the last inspection, pupils' GCSE outcomes were in a period of steep decline. Provisional results from examinations taken by Year 11 pupils in 2018 show slight improvement in progress compared with 2017. Leaders have successfully stemmed the sharp decline in standards, but pupils' progress is not yet consistently strong enough to be good.
- Inspection evidence, supported by the school's own assessment information, shows that pupils in the lower years are making stronger progress since joining the school, compared with that at key stage 4.
- Ofsted's recent monitoring visit highlighted that the most able pupils, in particular, did not make enough progress. Leaders and teachers have worked hard to prioritise their efforts to meet the most able pupils' needs. Consequently, most-able pupils across the school are beginning to make stronger progress across a range of subjects.
- Boys' progress is lagging behind that of girls. School leaders have focused on improving boys' outcomes, and their analysis of data indicates that boys are beginning to catch up with girls.
- Pupils' literacy skills are developing well. Pupils' writing in English shows maturity appropriate to their age. Pupils' writing is also developing well in most subject areas, with opportunities to write at length and for a variety of purposes. Pupils have easy access to varied reading material in the school library. Pupils practise their speaking skills regularly and express themselves well.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged are now making better progress than at the time of the previous inspection, although there is a lag between their rates of progress and those of other pupils nationally. Leaders' strategies are beginning to have more impact on the rate of progress of disadvantaged pupils across the school.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress because they receive effective support for their learning. Pupils who are supported by the on-site support centre for pupils who have dyslexia make good progress. Pupils who attend alternative provision achieve well.
- Effective careers information and guidance prepare pupils well for their next stage of education and training. Pupils receive effective impartial advice and guidance about future career pathways.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 114581 |
| Local authority | Brighton and Hove |
| Inspection number | 10046475 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Comprehensive |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 892 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Linda Newman |
| Headteacher | Kate Williams |
| Telephone number | 01273 304086 |
| Website | www.longhill.org.uk |
| Email address | admin@longhill.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 15–16 March 2016 |

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in June 2016, three months after the last inspection.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for SEN and/or disabilities is above average. The school has a special facility for pupils who have dyslexia. The Focus Centre, a separate building on the school site, provides support for pupils who struggle to participate in school life.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative learning providers, such as Greater Brighton Metropolitan College and Albion in the Community.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, the designated safeguarding lead and two further groups of staff. Inspectors received 64 responses from staff to Ofsted’s questionnaire.
- The lead inspector had a discussion with governors, two members of the local authority and a local headteacher.
- Pupils and staff were observed working in 40 lessons and around the school. Pupils’ work from a range of subjects was scrutinised. Inspectors spoke with two groups of pupils.
- An inspector visited both the specialist provision for dyslexia and the Focus Centre.
- Inspectors took account of 100 responses from parents to Ofsted’s questionnaire.
- Several documents and policies were scrutinised, including the school self-evaluation and improvement plan, analysis of the school’s performance information, safeguarding documents, and minutes from meetings.
- The inspectors reviewed the school’s website.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
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| Peter Swan | Ofsted Inspector |
| Alan Powell | Ofsted Inspector |
| Colin Lankester | Ofsted Inspector |

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