

Highlights of the 2017 Ofsted Report

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher provides effective leadership. She is committed and passionate about improving outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have a clear vision for the school and have overcome significant challenges in moving to the formation of a free school.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning.
- The curriculum and the wide range of extracurricular activities provide a rich range of learning opportunities.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school.
- Middle leadership is strong and supports senior leaders in driving school improvement.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Whole School

- The school has been subject to a number of significant changes in the past three years. These include a change from independent school status to that of a free school, changes in staffing and a new headteacher. The management of these changes, in addition to adjusting to the changing intake of pupils both in context and number, have taken up considerable time for leaders at all levels.
- The acting headteacher, who has been in post for four months, is passionate about ensuring improved outcomes for all pupils in the school, and bringing about sustainable and lasting improvements in all areas of school life.
- Senior leaders know the school's main strengths and areas for improvement.
- Leaders have ensured a broad and balanced curriculum from the early years to key stage 4. A wide range of subjects are taught, including Latin and classics. This adds a different dimension to the curriculum and contributes to the distinctive nature of the school.
- Leaders carefully record incidents where pupils' behaviour does not meet expectations, including racist and homophobic incidents. The information held by the school shows that incidences of racist behaviour are decreasing significantly and exclusions are much lower than those found in other schools nationally.
- Teachers new to the profession and those recently qualified generally receive good support in their first years of teaching. They are trained thoroughly in all aspects of safeguarding and appreciate the external support brokered for them by leaders.
- The systems for managing teachers' performance are linked to school improvement priorities and the progress of pupils.
- Funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively to provide training for staff and for additional adults to support pupils' individual needs.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strong. Pupils have a good understanding of different faiths and cultures. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong, equalities and discrimination. Pupils are taught well how to stay safe, both personally and online. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils of all ages say that they enjoy the wide variety of enrichment opportunities on offer. There is a comprehensive range of after-school clubs, including sports, music, creative activities and academic clubs. All pupils appreciate the high-quality sporting facilities at the school.
- The headteacher's plans for school improvement are rooted in raising pupils'

aspirations and achievements. She is relentless in her pursuit of excellence for all and is determined to improve relationships with staff and parents for the benefit of every pupil in the school.

Primary

- The leaders of the primary phase work well with their team to improve provision.
- Effective leadership in the primary phase is improving the quality of teaching and learning and securing good behaviour and personal development for pupils.
- The school spends the primary sports funding appropriately. Younger pupils take part in a wide range of relevant physical and sporting activities.

Sixth Form

- Leadership of the sixth form is pastorally strong. Students benefit from guided intervention and individual support. A renewed focus on academic guidance has the strong potential to further strengthen post-16 provision.

Governance of the school

- Governors fully support the school's ethos and know the school very well. They understand the challenges that leaders face in managing the recent changes as the school moved to become a free school.
- Governors fully support the acting headteacher in her drive to improve the progress of all pupils.
- Governors and leaders ensure that the school buildings are fit for purpose. Classrooms are clean and bright and conducive to learning. Outdoor spaces are well maintained. Sporting facilities are of a high quality and present a superb environment in which to partake of sporting activities.
- Members of the governing body frequently visit the school, undertaking visits to lessons and speaking with pupils. The chair of the governing body meets with the headteacher on a weekly basis to check on the quality of the school's provision. As a result, governors are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- The governor responsible for safeguarding works closely with leaders to check the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe are effective. All members of the governing body fully understand their responsibilities regarding keeping pupils safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that all staff are fully trained and receive regular safeguarding updates. Concerns raised about any pupil's well-being or safety are followed up quickly by leaders, who involve outside agencies, the local authority and parents as appropriate.
- The school's procedures for safely recruiting and vetting staff and governors meet the necessary requirements.
- The headteacher is determined that every pupil under her care will be safe and thrive in the school.
- Pupils are taught well how to keep themselves safe both personally and online. They are taught about a wide range of risks, from internet dangers to exploitation and extremism. Pupils who met with the inspectors and the very large majority of pupils who responded to the online questionnaire said they felt safe in school.
- Most parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were confident that their children are safe and happy at the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Whole School

- Leaders have taken steps to improve the quality of pupils' reading across the school. New resources designed to motivate and encourage pupils, particularly boys, to read more are proving successful. More guidance for pupils on which books to select would ensure that all reading materials are suitable for their ability. Most pupils who read to an inspector used their phonic skills to decode challenging words and could meaningfully discuss what they had read.
- Homework is well organised and used effectively in key stages 1 and 2 to support learning. Leaders and parents have identified this concern and plans are in place to improve the provision of homework.
- Additional adults are deployed effectively to support pupils in all key stages. They work successfully with pupils to further explain concepts and keep them fully involved in the task at hand.
- Lessons are generally very calm and purposeful. Pupils are well behaved in class and respectful of teachers' and other pupils' views. When incidences of low-level disruption occur, they are effectively dealt with.
- Many teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to draw out pupils' understanding and deepen their learning. This is most effective when teachers encourage pupils to explain their answers further and justify responses.
- Most teachers use subject-specific and target language well to model the responses required from pupils.
- Leaders and staff keep parents well informed about pupils' progress through termly reports and parents' evenings. Parents are pleased with the academic information that they receive from the school.

Primary

- In the primary phase, teachers have worked successfully to improve the accuracy of their assessment of pupils' learning. By working closely together and with other local schools, teachers are now more secure in their understanding of national curriculum expectations in reading and writing. As a result, current pupils are on track to make much better progress this year in reading, writing and mathematics, including the proportion of pupils working at greater depth.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Many pupils of all ages show resilience, self-confidence and good manners. All pupils who spoke with the inspectors were welcoming and polite. Pupils look smart and take pride in their uniform. The school's environment is free from litter, in both the secondary and primary phases.
- Pupils' mostly positive attitudes to learning show that many are keen to learn. Pupils take a pride in their work and most books are neat and tidy.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school.
- Through the curriculum, complementary studies, assemblies and extra-curricular activities, pupils receive a wide range of opportunities to help them develop into confident, articulate and well-rounded future citizens.
- Pupils have opportunities to take on extra responsibility, for example through the prefect and house systems. A range of trips, visits and charitable and fundraising events help pupils to understand the needs of others. For example, an annual school trip to Uganda involves older pupils in helping a school and the children there.
- Pupils' understanding of faiths other than their own is well developed. Pupils at the school come from diverse backgrounds and are keen to teach their peers about their

own beliefs. Year 2 pupils recently taught primary school children from another school about Islam.

- Pupils have a strong knowledge of democracy, the rule of law and respect for individuals because they have been well taught. Pupils are well equipped and prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils are taught well how to keep themselves safe, online and in the community.
- External agencies regularly deliver assemblies to pupils, highlighting current concerns and local and global issues, such as social cohesion.
- Pupils who spoke with the inspectors or responded to the online questionnaire said that bullying is rare, but that when it does occur, they feel able to talk to staff, who then take effective action. The majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire agreed that the school deals effectively with bullying, when it occurs.
- All pupils across the school value the range of sports on offer and the high-quality resources and sporting facilities available. Pupils are taught how to keep healthy and physically fit. Younger pupils are taught about 'healthy bodies, healthy minds'. Leaders are vigilant about pupils' emotional well-being and provide counsellors to support pupils when needed.
- Pupils make a smooth pastoral transition from primary to secondary school. Staff ensure that pupils are supported to settle in and find their way around the school confidently.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is an orderly environment. Pupils move around the school in an orderly fashion, demonstrating good manners. At social times, pupils conduct themselves well.
- Overall, the vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons.
- The proportion of pupils excluded from school, including those excluded more than once, is below national levels and continues to decrease.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with the national averages at each phase, which demonstrates that pupils want to be at school.

Outcomes for pupils

Secondary

- Information about the progress of current secondary pupils indicates that lower attaining pupils are making positive gains in their learning.
- The small numbers of pupils who enter the school in Year 7 and need to catch up in literacy and/or numeracy improve their reading skills during the year.
- Careers education is developing well under new leadership. There is a clear plan to provide quality careers advice and guidance. Leaders of this area are working successfully to raise pupils' aspirations. Work experience for Year 10 pupils offers the opportunity to consider different career options. Strong links with local employers are being developed.

Primary

- The attainment of current pupils in key stages 1 and 2 is more in line with age-related expectations and overall they are making good progress.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the 2016 Year 1 phonics screening check rose to above the national average. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics and most pupils are acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful readers.

Whole School

- The progress of disadvantaged pupils from their starting points is similar to the progress made by their peers in most subjects and year groups.

Early years provision

- Leaders of the early years ensure that children get off to a strong start in school. They have high expectations for children's academic and personal development. Leaders are acutely aware of the strengths and areas for development and tackle these with determination and vigour.
- Safeguarding and welfare requirements are effective in ensuring that children feel safe and are kept safe. Child protection policies and procedures are well understood by all staff. Children behave well.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Staff have a clear understanding of children's needs and plan interesting activities to meet those needs. For example, during the inspection, a range of activities linked to 'Jack and the Beanstalk' gave children many learning opportunities, particularly in writing.
- Children play well together in pairs, small groups or individually. Child-initiated activities are closely monitored by staff, who sometimes join in to develop learning further. For example, when pouring water from a container to another, a child was encouraged to count how many containers were needed.
- Children are keen to talk about their activities and what they are learning. Children are confident and articulate. They say that they enjoy their learning.
- The school's assessment information indicates that the majority of children enter the early years with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age. In 2016, more children than the national average reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year in mathematics and reading. They made good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Leaders track individual children's progress and target interventions when necessary. This contributed to the strong phonics outcomes in 2016. Information about children's current progress in phonics shows that the vast majority of individual children and groups of children are reaching expected standards. Leaders use the additional funding well to improve the progress of disadvantaged children.
- Indoor and outdoor resources and areas are well organised and stimulating. These enhance learning. Good use is made of space and children are encouraged to move freely between areas.
- Leaders have established good links with parents. This ensures that children experience a smooth transition into the early years provision.
- Staff receive professional development and training relevant to their roles. Staff reflect on how the early years provision can be further developed and take effective action to improve it, such as the continued work to create distinctive areas for learning and improving the outcomes for the most able children.

16 to 19 study programmes (Sixth Form)

- Highly effective questioning was observed.
- Students' behaviour in the sixth form is good. Students engage well with their learning and have strong relationships with their teachers and peers. Students receive close, individualised support from teachers where appropriate.
- Students receive many opportunities to develop personally, particularly through the complementary studies programme. Students learn about many issues, including fundamental British values, safety, tolerance and respect, and radicalisation.
- Students are encouraged to contribute to the wider life of the school and to act as role models for younger pupils. Students are involved as prefects and through the

house system. Students appreciate the range of opportunities for personal development, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, charity fundraising, visits abroad to Uganda and sporting opportunities.

- A small number of students begin their studies having not attained GCSEs at grades A* to C in English or mathematics. The proportion who make good progress and improve their grades during the sixth form is higher than average.
- There are regular opportunities for students to explore possible career paths, and they are well prepared for their futures. Participation in work experience is encouraged. In almost all cases, students move on to their choice in higher education, training or employment.

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