

Longhill High School

Falmer Road, Rottingdean, Brighton BN2 7FR

Inspection dates

15–16 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- School leaders have not improved the quality of teaching and outcomes consistently since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because pupils make less progress than they should in some subjects, particularly mathematics.
- The gap between outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and nationally is still too wide.
- A small number of pupils, mostly in Years 7 and 8, do not concentrate properly or behave well in lessons.
- The quality of teaching and learning varies within and between subjects. Learning is occasionally too easy for some, too difficult for others.
- A few teachers do not apply the school's behaviour policy consistently.
- Teaching in some subjects does not focus enough on improving pupils' reading and writing.
- The quality of middle leadership is not securely good in all subjects to achieve the best possible outcomes in all GCSE examinations.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher is steering the school forward very well and concentrating on the key areas that need improvement.
- The governing body has become sharper in its understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses since the previous inspection. Governors are determined to improve outcomes.
- Pupils achieve well in several work-related courses and in subjects such as science, sports and art.
- There is much expertise within the teaching staff which generates enthusiasm for learning in many pupils.
- Many pupils enjoy school life and appreciate all the opportunities on offer. They feel safe and secure. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 work hard and behave sensibly in lessons.
- The care provided for pupils who have special educational needs or disability, or personal problems, is well organised and effective.
- Provision for pupils' personal and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school's work. Pupils discuss sensitive issues thoughtfully.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement by:
 - focusing on pupils identified as making less than the expected progress in lessons and over time and planning interventions accordingly
 - making sure that work is challenging enough for the most-able pupils and not too difficult for lower attainers to tackle confidently
 - reviewing whether the recent changes to how pupils are grouped in Years 7 and 8 lessons are generating better progress for lower-, middle- and higher-attaining pupils
 - ensuring subject leaders with strong practice share their expertise, particularly about the most effective ways to prepare pupils for the new style examinations
 - intensifying the actions taken to strengthen disadvantaged pupils' learning and progress, particularly in mathematics
 - concentrating on improving pupils' reading and writing in all subjects.

- Improve some pupils' attitudes to learning by all staff:
 - establishing a classroom ethos where pupils know that low-level disruption is unacceptable
 - applying the school's behaviour policy consistently
 - planning lessons that encourage and help all pupils to work hard and enjoy learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because, since the previous inspection, school leaders have not raised the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in all subjects to ensure consistently good provision and outcomes.
- The acting headteacher is providing firm leadership and was described by a member of staff as 'a particularly strong guiding force'. She is keeping teachers and non-teaching staff focused on the school's headline statement, 'Determined to be the best that we can', during her interim headship. She is ably supported by a part-time executive headteacher and the senior leadership team.
- In the past, the very detailed and complex information on pupils' progress and attainment was not analysed carefully to identify areas of strength and weakness in provision and outcomes. This has improved recently so that leaders know exactly where action is needed. For example, the most-able pupils' progress is tracked meticulously and school data show that this is generating higher standards.
- Senior leaders are aware of where there are strengths in middle leadership and management, for example in English and in the special educational needs department. Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning accurately and provide constructive and supportive training for all staff. For example, 'Mind the Gap' was a recent successful training session on improving disadvantaged pupils' progress. All teachers know that their performance management reviews are linked to the teachers' standards.
- Senior leaders have carried out a thorough evaluation of the impact of pupil premium funding. They weighed up the actions taken in 2014/15 to establish what worked well and to make any necessary adjustments. As a result, for example, rather than learning mentors taking pupils out of English and mathematics lessons for small-group work, they now work with pupils in class. Evidence suggests that this is a more effective use of the funds, with more disadvantaged pupils now making expected progress.
- The curriculum and pupil groupings are kept under review to raise achievement. In the current year, the number of English and mathematics lessons in Years 9 to 11 has been increased. In Years 7 and 8, the curriculum is now taught in all-ability groupings; the impact of this is being monitored carefully. The integrated humanities curriculum in Key Stage 3 explores topics in terms of moral questions such as human and animal rights when discussing scientific experimentation on animals. Pupils observed that they enjoy learning 'in a connected way'.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school. A strong contribution to this arises from the work of a small committee of staff, including the middle leaders of religious education and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. They discuss themes to be explored in form time, assemblies and relevant subjects; the theme during the inspection was 'sanctuary and refugees'. Leaders are keen for pupils to know about the world around them and this aspect of their education is effective. This year, pupils are being encouraged to extend themselves by participating in debates which stimulate discussion and reflection on topical and controversial issues.
- Lessons in PSHE and citizenship, as well as 'drop down' days, contribute well to pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain. For example, Year 7 pupils debated 'Should we abolish the monarchy?', and Key Stage 4 pupils considered mental health and learned about democracy. The school's focus on restorative justice is another way in which pupils explore British values. Pupils are generous in raising funds for charities, most of which are within the local community, for example the Clock Tower Sanctuary which delivers water bottles for the homeless.
- In Key Stage 4, pupils choose from a good range of option subjects including work-related courses such as horticulture, construction and childcare. In 2015, almost all pupils proceeded into education, employment or training – a higher proportion than seen nationally. This reflects a curriculum, combined with good careers guidance, which meets pupils' aspirations and needs for the future.
- Pupils greatly appreciate the rich and varied extra-curricular activities. Whenever it can be arranged, leaders organise transport home for pupils living in areas where bus services are limited.
- Much work has gone into the school's new assessment system, including research into other schools' approaches and consultation with relevant organisations. Leaders are confident that their 'flight path' is straightforward for teachers to use and that pupils understand how it shows their progress towards their predicted GCSE results.
- Leaders make sure that parents can be involved in their children's education. For example, an outreach programme has focused on the parents of disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils who do not attend regularly. As a consequence, more parents now attend parents' meetings, for example.

- The local authority has given regular and helpful support to the school, especially in the last few months. Following the 2015 GCSE results, when a few middle leaders overpredicted outcomes in their subjects, senior leaders have employed external consultants to review their accuracy and improve assessment practice.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors found the external review, recommended in the previous report, helpful and useful. They continue to seek training to improve their effectiveness. The Chair and members of the Governing Body are astute, knowledgeable and fully aware of the school's performance in recent years.
 - Governors are well informed about the school's finances and are working with the executive headteacher to ensure financial stability.
 - Knowing that disadvantaged pupils did not do well enough in 2015, governors are fully involved in monitoring the use of extra funds to support them.
 - Governors, along with parents, have concerns that behaviour still requires improvement and are keen to work with leaders to tackle this firmly.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Policies are up to date and reviewed regularly. Detailed information about which staff to contact with concerns is clearly displayed in the safeguarding and child protection policy. Staff have received training in the government's 'Prevent' strategy along with other regular training sessions, for example on child safety. Parents appreciate the safe culture that the school offers and its focus on supporting pupils and families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- When teachers fail to apply the school's behaviour policy firmly, a small number of pupils disrupt the learning of others, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Occasionally, teachers resort to sending pupils out of lessons to stand in the corridor. Learning requires improvement, particularly in Years 7 and 8, until all teachers ensure that pupils concentrate well and learn without interruption.
- Teaching does not consistently provide work that is well matched to the range of attainment of pupils in the class. For example, in some mixed-ability teaching groups in the lower school, the same work is given to all pupils without exploring with them the depth of answers they should try to achieve. As a result, some pupils finish quickly while others struggle to get going. Better teaching involves work that is well planned and explained so that low, middle and high attainers make equally good progress.
- In particular, teaching is inconsistent in providing for the most-able pupils at the right level of challenge. For example, where tasks or explanations do not set high expectations, the most-able pupils miss opportunities to probe ideas in greater depth or demonstrate understanding of higher-level concepts. The focus on challenging the most-able pupils is clear in some subjects but not in others.
- In Key Stage 4, particularly in Year 11, the large majority of pupils work keenly and behave sensibly. They learn well because they have positive and respectful relationships with teachers and enthusiastically discuss and explain work together.
- Most pupils met during the inspection felt confident that they know what to do to improve their work because many teachers, especially in English, tell them clearly how to do this. A lack of clear guidance on how to improve work was an issue raised in the previous inspection.
- In order to raise achievement, some subject leaders have developed good practice in helping pupils to master, assimilate and revise knowledge. For example, the science department has developed very effective ways to prepare pupils for tests and GCSE examinations. For every topic, pupils know the assessment criteria and key scientific vocabulary to attain their target GCSE grades. After their mock examinations, Year 11 pupils took careful note of teachers' detailed analysis of their answers, absorbed the comments and wrote better answers in revision lessons. However, this good practice is not yet evident in all subjects.
- Teachers, particularly in the humanities, sometimes use resources which pupils with dyslexia and other learning needs find particularly helpful. These include, for example, a cartoon to complement a text about sustainability in geography, or captions to put in order when studying the story of Easter week in religious education.
- Teachers and teaching assistants in the 'S' (support) rooms and learning mentors in the Focus Centre are skilful at developing pupils' reading, writing and numeracy. This can also be found in some subject teaching. For example, in a Year 10 physical education lesson, a focus on key words reinforced literacy,

and the calculation of pulse rates linked to age meant that pupils had to use their numeracy skills. Some teaching showed less awareness of the importance of developing and sustaining these skills.

- The quality of support provided by the large number of learning support assistants and learning mentors is often extremely effective. Those with knowledge of the subject being taught often explain work slowly and clearly and help pupils to make progress. On occasions, however, support staff do not spot individual pupils who are struggling or respond firmly enough to reduce low-level disruption.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Whatever their learning or personal needs, the quality of care for pupils is strong. Experienced staff help pupils to cope with problems that may prevent them from learning or which undermine their confidence to get the most out of school life. Pupils with significant health problems receive well-organised home tuition, for example. Pupils who, for a variety of reasons, enter the school after Year 7 are particularly well supported to feel part of the community and participate successfully.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability and pupils with emotional or personal difficulties know there are spaces where they can receive support in calm environments, including the 'S' rooms or the Focus Centre. A parent observed that 'I am always impressed by the level of pastoral care'.
- The small number of pupils attending off-site provision, most for only one day a week, gain enjoyment, confidence and self-esteem from following work-related courses. Many acquire more positive attitudes to learning and behaviour in school as a result. The school keeps in regular contact with all providers and leaders check that the courses are safe, worthwhile and of a good quality.
- Pupils consider the dangers of cyber bullying and the importance of e-safety. Many pupils, including those who have special educational needs or disability, are confident that bullying is rare. As one pupil put it, you can 'be yourself and will not be bullied for being different'. However, a few parents wrote that they were not confident that bullying was dealt with firmly and quickly.
- The school works hard to promote respect for all. For example, Year 7 pupils spoke with maturity about homophobic attitudes and how the word 'gay' is unacceptable as abuse, and Year 11 pupils reflected on an assembly on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues with similar maturity.
- Health education is effective and age-appropriate. For example, Year 11 pupils concentrated well on a video about safe alcohol intake and considered life choices in a PSHE education lesson.
- Governors are particularly proud of the opportunities on offer, many of which develop pupils' confidence, resilience and leadership skills. Pupils can join the combined cadet force, attend camps in Years 8 and 9 and apply to represent their class on the school council or to join a junior leadership team and attend meetings with governors.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This particularly, but not exclusively, relates to pupils in some Year 7 and Year 8 classes who do not settle down quickly, talk when teachers are speaking and lack a positive attitude to learning. A few pupils do not respond to warnings that their behaviour is unacceptable and is stopping other pupils from learning well. Both parents and governors have concerns about behaviour.
- Around the school, pupils' behaviour can be noisy but most are sensible, respectful of others and helpful towards visitors. There is very little inconsiderate behaviour such as throwing litter or using unacceptable language.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils' attendance has improved, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils whose attendance falls below 90% is a concern; it was a factor that contributed to these pupils making less progress than other pupils in 2015.

Outcomes for pupils require improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils and most pupils in mathematics. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have improved in English but not in

mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining five GCSEs at grade C or above including English and mathematics remained well below average in 2015. The proportion of pupils making the expected progress was just above the national average in English but was below average in mathematics.

- The gap between disadvantaged pupils' progress and that made by other pupils in the school reduced a little in English in 2015 and the gap with others nationally halved; both gaps remained wide in mathematics. Adjustments to the support provided for disadvantaged pupils is helping them to make better progress this year but they are still not catching up with others in a few subjects, particularly mathematics.
- In 2015, a lower proportion of higher-attaining pupils than nationally made the necessary progress to reach top grades in English and mathematics. Reflecting good teaching, the most-able pupils who took the three separate sciences achieved above-average A*/A grades. Although the most-able pupils' work is often well presented, in several subjects there is limited evidence that they have developed additional or deeper understanding and knowledge than other pupils.
- In 2015, pupils' attainment was stronger in science, physical education and sports studies and some subjects with smaller cohorts such as Spanish, applied engineering and construction than in other subjects. In most subjects the proportion of pupils attaining higher grades was well below their peers nationally.
- In all years, about two out of five pupils had reading ages below their chronological years when they entered the school. Particularly in Year 7, pupils with very low reading ages who receive catch-up funding are making good progress, but leaders recognise that more staff need to focus on improving all pupils' reading and writing whenever possible.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress in most subjects as their learning is well supported, particularly through the special provision for pupils with dyslexia. In 2015, looked after children made progress in their GCSE courses similar to others; the smaller number of looked after children in the school this year continue to make the same progress as other pupils. Practically all pupils who receive support for special educational needs or disability or who have education, health and care plans, particularly those eligible for pupil premium, make at least the same progress as others.
- Outcomes in sports were particularly exciting this year with a Year 11 boys' football team reaching the quarter finals of the National Schools Cup competition. Musical productions and other performances reflect pupils' enthusiasm and keen participation in extra-curricular activities.

School details

Unique reference number	114581
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10002401

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,005
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Andrews
Headteacher	Jo Cassidy
Telephone number	01273 304086
Website	www.longhill.org.uk
Email address	admin@longhill.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 October 2013

Information about this school

- A deputy headteacher has been the acting headteacher since November 2015. A substantive headteacher has been appointed and will take up post in the near future.
- The school is a little larger than the average-sized 11–16 school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium is well above average and increasing. The pupil premium is funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for looked after children. Several pupils in Year 7 are eligible for catch-up funds if they did not attain the expected standard in English or mathematics at the end of primary school.
- Close to nine out of ten pupils are of White British heritage, with very small numbers from several different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for special educational needs or disability is well above average. Funded by the local authority, the school has a special facility for pupils with dyslexia. They are fully integrated into school life.
- The Focus Centre, a separate building on the school site, provides teaching and support for pupils who struggle to concentrate and participate in school life.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative educational provision at several different local education establishments, including Road 2 Success, City College and Plumpton College. Most of these pupils attend for one day a week; a few attend full time.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in over 40 part-lessons. Several lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. In practically all lessons, inspectors looked at pupils' work in books.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and talked to others informally during breaktimes. Discussions were held with staff, including pastoral and academic senior and middle leaders. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, the Vice-Chair and three other governors.
- Inspectors took account of 89 parents' responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and approximately 100 parents submitted written comments. Inspectors also considered responses to 61 online questionnaires completed by members of staff. There were too few responses to the pupils' questionnaire to consider.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's action plans for 2015–2017, standards and progress information, behaviour and attendance records and a range of policies.

Inspection team

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