

Prospect School

Cockney Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4EX

Inspection dates

29–30 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' rates of progress in 2015 were lower than those seen nationally. Pupils' outcomes in some subjects, particularly science, are not good enough.
- Pupils are now making better progress in other subjects, including in English and mathematics, but variations between subjects and year groups still exist. This is because teaching is not consistently good across the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not make good progress, although differences are diminishing between their achievement and other pupils nationally.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils about how to improve their work is not sufficiently effective in helping pupils make better progress.
- Several middle leaders do not make enough difference to pupils' achievement in the subjects they lead.
- The attendance of some pupils is not high enough.
- Some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make slower progress than other pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and leadership team have a firm vision to raise standards further and have determinedly led a shift in culture and expectations. They have strengthened the leadership team so there is now capacity to secure further improvements.
- The majority of teaching is strong in mathematics, art and German.
- Care and support for pupils' welfare is good, thoughtful and well organised.
- New leadership in the sixth form is enabling students to achieve well and access appropriate learning opportunities, including work experience.
- Pupils behave sensibly around the school and are polite. They feel safe and secure.
- Governors know the school well and challenge and support leaders to improve the school's effectiveness and performance.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards of teaching, learning and assessment across all subjects, especially in science, to enable all groups to make at least good progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers use accurate progress and assessment information to plan teaching to meet pupils' needs, including the most able
 - ensuring that teachers' feedback effectively helps pupils make improvements to their work
 - making sure that middle leaders have a clear picture of pupils' progress to enable leaders to target their work to improve their departments effectively.
- Make sure that the difference between disadvantaged pupils' achievement and others' diminishes further.
- Improve the achievement of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who make slower progress.
- Raise overall levels of attendance and reduce rates of persistent absence for a minority of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and his senior team are now bringing about improvements, and have accelerated the pace of change over the last year. The culture in the school is now a positive one, with staff at all levels committed to the headteacher's vision and direction.
- Leaders recognise they are on a journey to embed consistency across the school. Staff recognise the impact of leaders' actions. For example, the new behaviour policy has had an immediate and positive impact.
- Evidence indicates a significant decline in the amount of disruption in lessons. The number of internal exclusions has fallen. Leaders have issued fixed-term exclusions more frequently as a result of their intolerance of poor behaviour and its impact on standards.
- Leaders share a strong desire to support the personal development and well-being of pupils, as well as to equip them with the qualifications necessary to move onto the next stage of education, training or employment.
- An effective system of checking the quality of teaching has been implemented by leaders. This system is beginning to make a difference and teaching is improving, especially in mathematics.
- Leaders have rightly implemented a new system for managing teachers' performance. Each teacher is given a target relating to improving pupils' progress. Leaders are impatient for the impact of this to be felt across the school. They have ensured that the new procedures are transparent, understood by all staff and equitably applied.
- While the quality of teaching is too variable across subjects, the situation is improving. Leaders have ensured that high-quality training and support to improve teachers' skills and knowledge are in place.
- Middle leaders work together successfully to share good practice and support each other, which, over time, is improving the quality of teaching. However, several middle leaders do not have an accurate or clear view of pupils' progress, especially in key stage 3, which limits the impact of their actions on pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is a strength of the school. Staff take frequent opportunities to enhance pupils' understanding of democracy and the benefits of giving to charity. For example, elected pupils on the Prospect Parliament, organised whole-school events to raise £1,600 for Sport Relief. This aided pupils' moral development.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. It provides pupils with an appropriate blend of vocational and academic courses. Pupils receive good-quality careers guidance. This ensures that they are well informed about future employment and education routes. A good range of extra-curricular activities help promote pupils' wider learning. Examples of this include visits to Rushall Farm, participating in the Community Volunteering Certificate (CVQ) and an introduction to driving and road safety. Some pupils also gain from working on the school's own allotment.

- Leadership of support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in the 'Bridge Centre' is particularly effective. Leaders know pupils very well and they use this information in effective ways, working closely with staff to meet pupils' needs.
- Leaders effectively target the pupil premium to support pupils' learning and behaviour by deploying additional teaching assistants, running a mentoring programme for pupils in key stage 3 and providing breakfast clubs. While disadvantaged pupils' progress is not yet good, it is improving.
- Year 7 pupils who are eligible for additional catch-up funding are withdrawn from some lessons to receive extra help with reading and mathematics. As a result, their progress is improving in both English and mathematics.

Governance of the school

- Governors are increasingly effective. They bring a good range of experience and skills, and a strong sense of loyalty to the school. They are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Governors provide valuable strategic direction to the school through their input and checking of the school's long-term planning. Governors are vigilant in managing the school's finances, particularly the pupil premium funding, and challenge school leaders to show the impact it is having on pupils' progress.
- Governors are dedicated and committed. They acquire valuable overviews of any issues and developments on a regular basis. They seek out relevant training and arrange external reviews of their work.
- Governors are now clear about the allocation of pay awards and how the process is linked to pupils' progress. Governors know where the strongest and weakest teaching in the school is found. Governors regularly challenge leaders about the continued variation in teaching in some parts of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Appropriate checks on adults working in the school are in place. All staff are well trained in how to keep pupils safe, including from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Action taken to protect pupils is prompt and effective because of strong partnerships between school staff, parents and external agencies.
- In addition to training for new staff on the first day of term, all staff receive safeguarding training once a year with updates as necessary. They are made aware of, for example, e-safety, radicalisation and other sensitive topics. The school has an appropriate number of well-trained staff who act as designated safeguarding leads.
- Pupils know what to do and who to speak to if they have any concerns. Leaders are tenacious in following up any issues. As a result, there is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are not securing consistently strong progress across all subjects, particularly in science. Teachers' planning and their expectations of pupils' progress are not consistently high. This is because some teachers do not make effective enough use of information about pupils' progress to plan their lessons.

- Not all teachers follow the school's assessment policy. As a result, there is variation in the quality of feedback provided to pupils. Leaders are aware of this and are insisting that pupils receive useful suggestions for improving their work.
- Overall, the most able pupils are not effectively challenged to make the rapid progress of which they are capable because teachers' expectations are not sufficiently high enough.
- Teaching is improving, however. The best teachers share examples of effective practice with their colleagues. For example, pupils have developed resilience in mathematics so that they persevere even when the work is hard. In one mathematics lesson, the teacher supported pupils' learning by asking carefully considered questions which encouraged pupils to justify their answers.
- Teaching is stronger in subjects where teachers use assessment information effectively. This leads to stronger progress because teachers know more clearly where to target support for specific pupils. For example, inspectors observed effective practice in a number of subjects, including mathematics, German and art. In these subjects, pupils were able to produce work of a high standard and to talk about what they are doing with confidence and enthusiasm.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, are supported well across a number of subjects to make expected progress during key stage 3. However, in several areas, such as English, science, geography and history, their progress is slower because teachers do not use information about pupils' progress to identify their needs sharply enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school's 'ready to learn' ethos has improved pupils' punctuality.
- Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills and to influence the work of the school. For example, there is keen competition to be elected to the Prospect Parliament. Disadvantaged pupils are represented on this group.
- Pupils who attend the additionally resourced provision receive high-quality care and support. Their bespoke curriculum helps them to develop essential life skills. Staff within the centre, and those in mainstream lessons, have high expectations and, in response, pupils work hard and apply themselves with enthusiasm.
- Staff care a great deal about pupils' well-being and personal development, so working relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said how much they value the time and support staff willingly give them.
- Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and assembly themes cover many useful and topical issues. These include healthy eating and lifestyles, emotional well-being, road and rail safety and coping with stress. Parents attend seminars about e-safety as part of the PSHE programme.
- Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong, developed in lessons and through discussions relating to the 'theme of the week' in tutor time and assemblies. Leaders ensure that pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons, pupils are attentive and respectful. This contributes to pupils' enjoyment of learning. They are polite and courteous.
- Pupils report that low-level disruption in lessons is rare and that the new behaviour policy is followed well by teachers.
- The behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils move around the school calmly and with purpose. At social times, pupils mix happily in groups. They come to lessons with the right equipment and ready to learn. Pupils are keen to participate in lessons and persevere when things get difficult.
- Pupils know about the dangers of different types of bullying, including homophobic and cyber bullying. They report that bullying is rare, and when it does take place it is tackled quickly by staff. Pupils from different backgrounds mingle together in the canteen. They are ferociously determined to tackle discrimination and are rightly proud of the school's inclusive ethos.
- Not all pupils attend as often as they should. The absence of a few disadvantaged pupils is too high. This is also true of some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff are working hard to get pupils to attend regularly, are taking the right actions but acknowledge there is more to do.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because they do not make good progress in too many subjects. In 2015, the proportions of pupils making expected progress in English and mathematics were below national averages. Early indications for outcomes in 2016 show that, while there have been improvements in levels of attainment, rates of progress remain less than good overall.
- Current pupils' performance in English and mathematics is improving. Differences are diminishing between outcomes for pupils at the school and those with similar starting points nationally. However, pupils' progress in some subjects, particularly science, remains too slow.
- Evidence of work in pupils' books show mixed progress over time. Rates of progress vary depending upon the extent to which teachers use assessment information to challenge pupils appropriately. This leads to variations in pupils' outcomes across a range of subjects, including for the most able pupils.
- While disadvantaged pupils' progress has improved since 2015, including through more effective use of pupil premium funding, there are still differences in their achievement and other pupils nationally. Not all middle leaders ensure that pupils' progress is tracked rigorously so that effective action can be taken to swiftly help pupils in danger of falling behind, including the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Overall, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are not making enough progress and are not making up for previously lower rates of progress. Gaps are increasing between their performance and that of other pupils.
- Pupils who have higher levels of special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because the local authority 'Bridge Resource Provision' provides

a good education for those who have an education, health and care plan, so that many go on to secure placements at Reading College.

- Pupils who receive specific help with reading are making good progress. Additional support provided is effective and leads to more secure outcomes. Leaders have recently introduced an accelerated reading programme to support improvements in reading for those who need to catch up.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Since the previous inspection, new leadership of the sixth form has significantly improved its effectiveness. Leaders have sharpened the monitoring of students' progress. Consequently, leaders are able to identify those who are falling behind in a timely manner. This helps to ensure that students have chosen the right courses.
- Numbers in the sixth form are small and this limits the range of subjects available to students. Most, however, combine subjects into appropriate combinations to support their career aspirations.
- Those who have not achieved at least a grade C in English or mathematics by the end of key stage 4 are helped to do so, and the majority are successful.
- The quality of teaching is more consistent and effective in the sixth form than the main school. Teachers, for the most part, make good use of their subject knowledge. Leaders encourage students to acquire and develop study skills. Leaders encourage students to work effectively and build self-confidence in the process.
- Students receive good careers advice. They also receive good preparation for life beyond education and training. A range of different tutor sessions and assemblies is planned effectively to aid this. External speakers contribute valuable messages as part of the pastoral programme.
- Rates of retention in the sixth form are good. Students visit education establishments, attend conferences and careers fairs. Students undertake a range of suitable work experience placements linked to their aspirations.
- All students go on to further education, work or apprenticeships.
- Students are very good role models for younger pupils. They feel safe and secure and very well supported with any issues they have both within and outside school. Students are enthusiastic, attentive in lessons and keen to do well; they behave sensibly and thoughtfully.

School details

Unique reference number	136876
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10021145

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1343
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Thomas
Headteacher	Philip Davies
Telephone number	01189590466
Website	www.prospect.reading.sch.uk
Email address	pdavies@prospect.reading.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 January 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with DfE guidance on what academies should publish.
- Prospect School converted to become an academy in 2011. When its predecessor school, Prospect School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to require improvement overall.
- Prospect School is a larger-than-average secondary academy with a sixth form.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.

- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is well above average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The academy uses specially resourced on-site provision, 'The Bridge' unit, for around 30 pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning on 41 occasions, across 15 subjects. Senior leaders observed learning jointly on six occasions. In addition, inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the academy. Inspectors also attended an assembly.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, a wide range of middle leaders, the coordinator for provision for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the academy's child protection officer.
- Inspectors also met with members of the governing body and a representative of Reading local authority.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from each year group and talked informally to other pupils in lessons, at break and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors scrutinised a selection of pupils' books as part of the lesson observations.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of academy documentation including the academy improvement plan and evaluation, and information relating to pupils' academic progress, behaviour and attendance and the monitoring of teaching. In addition, inspectors considered 22 parents' and carers' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

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Helen Pennington	Ofsted Inspector

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