

Inspection of Huntcliff School

Redbourne Mere, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire DN21 4NN

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 April 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

A common thread from parents, carers, pupils and staff is that behaviour is poor at Huntcliff School. Inspectors found a deep-rooted culture of bad attitudes to learning in some pupils that is not tackled effectively. The headteacher, who took up post in September 2021, has brought about some positive changes in pupils' behaviour. It was made clear to inspectors that pupils believe in the headteacher. Taking account of the changes already made, inspectors agree with pupils that the headteacher is making the school a better place to learn in.

The new behaviour policy is one of many changes introduced. It is clear pupils and staff are frustrated that the policy is applied inconsistently. Pupils behave better in lessons than they do at less-structured times of the school day. Pupils' movement around school can be challenging and intimidating. Some pupils create pinch points through their pushing and use of foul language.

Bullying is an issue at Huntcliff School. Some staff support pupils who are bullied well. Others do not. However, pupils feel the consistency of the help they receive from staff is improving. Inspectors agree.

Leaders have adjusted the curriculum to give pupils, in all year groups, a broad and balanced offer. The wider development of pupils is supported by the school's 'life' curriculum. The life curriculum is focused on personal development and religious education.

Pupils who are part of the school council are keen to share their efforts to make a positive difference in the school and community. Their charity work and engagement with local primary schools makes them glow with pride.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Although leaders have introduced revised curriculum plans across all subjects, there is some variation in the way in which the agreed content is delivered. This is having a detrimental impact on the consistency of quality across the curriculum. In English, for example, the curriculum is planned and taught by staff who understand how knowledge builds over time. In those subjects which are not as well developed, the end points that pupils should reach are too vague, teachers' subject knowledge is underdeveloped and gaps in pupils' understanding are evident.

The school has some common elements to teaching and learning across subjects, such as 'connect' and 'demonstrate'. When used well, these aspects allow pupils to draw on work done previously. For example, when throwing a javelin in physical education, pupils used their prior knowledge of how to grip, and the best angle of release, confidently. Assessment is used by staff in different ways. Some staff use assessment to inform learning activities well. For example, in mathematics, teachers

ask incisive questions to check pupils' understanding before revisiting content. Teachers do not use assessment consistently well.

Leaders are developing pupils' reading across the school. Pupils are given specific reading time in lessons. Pupils who need additional input, especially those in Years 7 and 8, are identified quickly. They are offered bespoke support.

Leaders have recently made changes to the school's provision for personal development. The new curriculum is at an early stage of implementation. It has been well received by staff and pupils. Personal development is delivered in assemblies, during school visits, by visitors and in form tutor time. Tutors provide pupils with a point of contact daily. Leaders agree with inspectors that there is further work to do to ensure all subject areas support the new personal development offer.

Pupils have access to a variety of options when they leave Year 11. Leaders ensure pupils make well-informed decisions about their next steps in education, employment or training. Pupils appreciate the wide range of visiting speakers and the wider careers support the school offers them. The vast majority of pupils go on to further education or the workplace when they leave school. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause.

The special educational needs coordinator ensures pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are given the bespoke help and care they need in different subjects. Pupils' information, that includes strategies to address the barriers they face, is shared with staff. Most staff use this information to guide classroom activities and resource choices well. Those staff who do not use information about pupils with SEND effectively, are held to account robustly.

Behaviour has improved since the arrival of the new headteacher. However, pupils' poor behaviour is still having a significant and negative impact on the atmosphere for learning in the school. Disruptive behaviour is an unwelcome distraction for staff and pupils. Staff do not apply the new behaviour policy with consistency. The support that staff receive to address pupils' poor behaviour from senior leaders is too variable.

School improvement is supported by senior leaders and a part-time additional member of staff from a local secondary school. The trustees and headteacher are outward looking. The headteacher encourages staff to connect with other schools and national training providers. Staff welcome this initiative. Leaders take time to reflect on the work of the school, evaluate the progress that has been made and identify the actions necessary to create sustained improvement.

Trustees and the headteacher are tackling areas of poor practice but progress is slow. They are united in their ambition to make a difference to the lives of the pupils who attend the school. The headteacher is aware of the importance of staff well-being. She has taken action to reduce the workload of staff. The headteacher has introduced initiatives which make staff feel appreciated. The importance of having

sufficient capacity to deliver the planned changes is something the headteacher and trustees are working to reconcile. Some leaders are close to being overburdened with their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular training and information on safeguarding. They know how to act and who to speak to if they have a concern about a pupil.

The designated safeguarding leader (DSL) provides regular updates and refresher activities with all staff to ensure their safeguarding knowledge is current. The DSL has implemented weekly meetings with pastoral staff which focus on sharing information and the identification of pupils who need support.

Leaders ensure all staff are subject to the appropriate employment checks. Leaders are trained in safer recruitment. Governors provide diligent oversight of safeguarding policies and procedures, including the safe recruitment of staff.

Leaders work with a variety of external agencies to meet the needs of pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not implement the school's behaviour policy consistently. Pupils do not behave well as a matter of course. Their learning is suffering. As a matter of urgency, leaders should ensure that pupils' behaviour improves significantly and that all staff implement the agreed behaviour policy at all times of the school day.
- There is too much variation in the implementation of curriculum plans. Pupils do not acquire the necessary knowledge in all subjects. Leaders need to ensure the curriculum is well planned and implemented across all subjects.
- Senior leaders do not have the capacity to implement the improvement strategies identified in the school's improvement plans. Some leaders are close to being overwhelmed with the task they face. Trustees must ensure there is sufficient leadership capacity in the school to bring about the necessary changes rapidly.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	137832
Local authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10232853
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	570
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Rachel Whipps
Headteacher	Nadia Bibby
Website	www.huntcliff.n-lincs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 February 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Huntcliff School is a standalone academy.
- This school is smaller than an average-size secondary school.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2021.
- The school makes use of nine alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders. They also met with the chair of trustees.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local authority who have supported the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history and physical education. These involved meeting with subject leaders, visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking to pupils and staff. Other subjects were also considered through meetings with subject leaders.
- Information regarding pupils' attendance and behaviour was scrutinised.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the arrangements in place to safeguard all members of the school community. Inspectors scrutinised checks leaders make on the suitability of staff, and other safeguarding records.
- The inspection team spoke to staff about behaviour and their workload in the school. The responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents were also considered.

Inspection team

Richard Jones, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Chris Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Farr	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Vellensworth	Her Majesty's Inspector

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