

The Henry Box School

Church Green, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 4AX

Inspection dates

21–22 November 2017

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	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, senior and middle leaders relentlessly focus on improving the outcomes of all pupils in the school. Consequently, pupils are making good progress.
- Leaders are ambitious for their school and have high expectations of the staff and pupils. Leaders are clear about priorities for improvement and are rapidly taking action to bring about necessary changes.
- Leaders responded quickly when pupils' outcomes in GCSE English in 2016 caused concern. Effective remedial actions led to much better results in 2017.
- Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and understand the requirements of the examination courses they offer. Pupils are confident that they are well prepared for national examinations in most subjects.
- Teachers ask pupils questions to deepen their understanding of subjects. Teachers are persistent in encouraging detailed responses and making sure that all pupils understand.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported well by trained and experienced additional adults and now make good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making increasingly good progress across a wide range of subjects.
- The majority of pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. Leaders have taken effective action to improve the attendance of vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils follow a rich and varied curriculum that prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Pupils enjoy extra-curricular activities and are excited by inter-house competitions.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and have good relationships with their teachers. Pupils work well with their peers when they are in pairs and small groups.
- During social times, pupils' behaviour is good when supervised, but some younger pupils' behaviour is immature when they are in areas that are unsupervised.
- Leaders of the sixth form provide a very positive experience for the students. Consequently, students enjoy being at school, and those who join from other schools integrate quickly.
- Leaders have introduced some changes to improve the outcomes of pupils that have not been welcomed by some parents. The headteacher has plans to communicate with a wider group of the school community.
- Leaders know that there is a need to continue to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils so that the rapid improvements they are making in some subjects are replicated in all.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that proven strategies to accelerate the progress of key groups of pupils lead to consistently rapid progress across a broad range of subjects, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those with low starting points.
- Work more closely with parents, so that they understand the reasons behind leaders' changes to the school and are able to become more effectively engaged in supporting pupils' learning.
- Put measures in place to ensure that pupils, especially the younger boys, regulate their own behaviour around school during breaks and lunchtimes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has developed a culture of strong leadership across the school. All leaders are driven by a shared commitment to ensure that pupils benefit from the carefully researched and trialled changes they make to the school. Leaders constantly review the impact of new initiatives on pupils' outcomes. This makes sure that their actions help the school to continue to improve.
- Leaders and governors have managed a difficult period of staff turbulence effectively. Staffing is now stable and teachers told inspectors that they stay at the school because they feel motivated and respected.
- Middle leaders are effective in their roles, benefiting from appropriate support and challenge from senior leaders. Subject leaders are respected as experts in their fields. The responsibility they are given to implement whole-school decisions, such as applying the school's marking policy in their departments, enables them to drive school improvement effectively.
- Teachers' engagement in training has had a positive impact on improving teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection. Leaders have designed and planned a coherent training programme to reflect the needs of individual teachers, based on the principle that 'every lesson counts'. Most teachers feel that the school's training encourages, challenges and supports their improvement.
- Leaders have implemented a very effective approach to checking the quality of teaching, and they know the staff well. If gaps in teachers' skills are noticed, teachers are quickly given specific support that leads to improvement.
- Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum that has been skilfully designed to provide clear progression routes to a wide range of future options. Leaders make sure that the curriculum is suitable for different groups of pupils to reach their potential, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Leaders work very closely with primary schools to ensure that pupils experience a smooth transfer to the secondary school. This approach has been noted by parents, who reported very positively on the transition process.
- Leaders have ensured that additional funding is used well to support pupils who arrive at the school needing help to catch up with their peers in literacy and numeracy. Successful actions are also having a positive impact on lower-ability pupils' learning across the school.
- All teachers are aware of the need to help disadvantaged pupils make more rapid progress to reach the outcomes achieved by others. Since the last inspection, leaders have used funding successfully to reduce the achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and others. Leaders know that they must continue to focus on accelerating progress for disadvantaged pupils so that it is consistently rapid across the curriculum.
- Leaders' ambitious pursuit of improving the quality of pupils' education has led to actions which have not been well received by some parents. Leaders recognise the

need to work more directly with parents, to engage them more closely in pupils' learning. This will help them to understand the valid reasons behind leaders' decisions.

Governance of the school

- Since joining the multi-academy trust, governors have reformed the way they work. Newly appointed governors provide skills that complement those already identified as present in the new governing body. This supports governors' effective work.
- Governors have worked hard to improve their knowledge of the school. Consequently, they know the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Governors are now better equipped to hold leaders to account than in the past. Leaders feel that they are supported well and stringently challenged by the governors.
- Governors are committed to the school and work closely with members of staff to carry out their statutory duties, including safeguarding, well. At the time of the inspection, a new website was being prepared. Although governors had not recently checked that essential information and most recent versions of policies were available on the website, immediate action was taken during the inspection to meet statutory requirements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are safe in school by taking robust steps to ensure that all staff have rigorous checks when they are employed. Staff are aware of risks to pupils and capably support pupils when they have difficulties, working with a wide range of external specialists where appropriate.
- Senior leaders are well qualified and experienced, and as a result carry out their responsibilities conscientiously and with precision. All pupils, including those who are vulnerable, young carers and children looked after, are very well protected from harm.
- All members of staff understand their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils. Leaders provide regular training and frequent briefing to keep staff up to date when guidance and advice are refreshed.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they felt safe in school because of the support they have from their teachers. The majority of pupils are confident that there are adults they can talk to if they are facing difficulties.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers, regardless of their experience, are ambitious to become excellent teachers. They hone their skills by participating in national training, and a considerable number keep themselves informed by continuing to study or working with examination boards. Pupils respect that their teachers work hard to help them achieve good outcomes.
- Teachers know their pupils well and plan learning carefully that caters for pupils' needs. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and set them challenging tasks accordingly.

- Teachers are very skilled in questioning pupils to deepen their learning. Teachers direct questions carefully, so that pupils are challenged and supported appropriately to think and learn. In addition, teachers develop pupils' independence by encouraging them to refer to a range of resources to find answers for themselves.
- Teachers foster warm and professional relationships with pupils and a purposeful atmosphere in classrooms. The majority of pupils show respect for their teachers by paying attention in lessons and taking care with their work. The level of pupils' engagement in most lessons is high.
- In all subjects, teachers expertly reinforce pupils' literacy skills by demanding the use of subject-specific vocabulary and technical terms in their writing. Teachers encourage pupils to read aloud and increasingly in the upper years to read texts beyond the basic requirements of the course.
- Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on the standard of their own work, and sometimes that of their peers, to think about how they could improve. An example of where this is effective is in mathematics, where pupils' self-reflection is insightful and clearly leads to improvements in the standard of pupils' work.
- Teachers commonly plan and use strategies that successfully engage disadvantaged pupils. Pupils respond well in lessons and are clearly proud when answering questions accurately and achieving well.
- Teachers, in many lessons, set most-able pupils challenges to stretch them and extend their learning beyond that of their peers. Pupils do not always respond by applying themselves to the best of their abilities, and a very small number take little care with their work.

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 taught well to keep themselves safe through a programme of personal development provided in tutor time, assemblies and special events. Pupils know about the risks associated with drug and alcohol misuse, grooming, all forms of bullying, radicalisation and extremism. Leaders are vigilant to prevent pupils becoming involved in cyber bullying.
- Leaders enhance the curriculum with opportunities to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. As a result, pupils demonstrate their understanding of prejudice, discrimination, diversity and tolerance in school.
- Pupils keenly participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities that include sports and music as well as opportunities to seek extra support from teachers. In addition, pupils enjoy residential trips, charitable activities and work experience. Pupils feel that the introduction of inter-house sports competitions has contributed brilliantly to their physical well-being, as everyone takes part.
- Leaders share a commitment to help pupils with challenging issues, including mental health concerns. To this end, qualified and experienced professionals are employed at the school to provide a wide range of support. Pupils know that they may access help

when needed. However, some expressed the view that they choose not to because they do not want to miss lessons.

- Pupils, from Year 7 onwards, are taught with enthusiasm about careers. Year 7 pupils are keen to participate in the personal development days that introduce employability skills, and in Year 8 pupils are encouraged to start thinking about what drives and inspires them. Pupils in Year 11 attend valuable sessions about different areas of work as well as having conversations with staff and a specialist adviser before choosing their post-16 options.

Behaviour

- Pupils are polite to staff and welcoming to visitors. They move calmly around the school and wear their uniforms smartly. Pupils are punctual to lessons and are well equipped with the equipment they need to start learning quickly.
- Pupils behave very well in most lessons because teaching is engaging and motivating. Pupils are aware of, and generally most diligently follow, the school's behaviour procedures. Low-level disruption in lessons is minimal. A few pupils lose concentration in some lessons but seldom disturb the learning of others.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved pupils' attendance, which overall has been above the national average in recent years. Leaders have worked closely and effectively with families of pupils who were frequently absent but are now attending school more regularly.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision do so more regularly than they come to school. Leaders meet frequently with staff from the pupil referral unit to work on improving pupils' progress and on implementing strategies to increase their attendance further. They have sound processes in place to ensure the safeguarding of pupils who are educated off-site.
- Some pupils and parents who responded to Ofsted's online surveys indicated that they had some concerns regarding bullying at the school. Leaders have recently revised behaviour procedures and keep meticulous records, which show that appropriate actions are taken when bullying has occurred.
- Pupils behave maturely during social times where they are supervised by staff. A small number of younger boys can sometimes be disrespectful of the school's attractive site and are not always aware of how their boisterous play makes others feel less safe.
- Staff identify how pupils' behaviour has improved as a result of the policy leaders recently put in place. The number of pupils whose behaviour warrants more than one fixed-term exclusion over time has reduced notably. This is because leaders' actions have been effective in improving pupils' behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2016, Year 11 pupils achieved in line with national figures. They typically made good progress across a range of subjects, although their outcomes in English were less secure. Provisional performance information for 2017 shows that outcomes in English

by the end of key stage 4 improved notably, with pupils making above-average progress.

- The headteacher, senior and middle leaders and staff are fervent about improving pupils' reading ability. They are introducing different approaches to make a difference to lower-ability and disadvantaged pupils. The headteacher's commitment to implementing these effective strategies has had a very positive impact in a short time. Pupils in Year 7 who entered the school with low reading ages are already reading aloud fluently and with confidence.
- Leaders identify promptly those pupils who are at risk of not making strong progress over time. Their successful fresh-start approach helps pupils in Year 7 to keep up or catch up quickly with their peers in school.
- Teachers of English and mathematics prepare pupils well for the more demanding content of the new curriculum. The whole-school focus on literacy and reading in particular is boosting outcomes in English and other subjects across the school, including history, science and modern foreign languages. Teachers have a clear sense of the strategies that will bring about further improvement in the longer term.
- In the past, some groups of pupils, including boys and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, did not make good progress from their starting points. Leaders recognised rightly the need to accelerate these pupils' progress so that they attain more highly by the end of Year 11. For some groups of pupils, notably those with low prior attainment, this remains a priority.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are provided with specific support from their teachers and additional adults in lessons. The high quality of the support is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning and the increasingly rapid progress they are making.
- Subject leaders ensure that teachers plan learning that helps disadvantaged pupils to make good progress. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 achieve similarly to other pupils, and their progress is accelerating. There is further work to do to ensure that this becomes consistently the case across the curriculum.
- The most able pupils typically make very good progress and achieve well across a range of subjects. In mathematics in particular, their work challenges them effectively. For example, during the inspection, Year 11 pupils grappled with manipulating complex equations and were supported well by their teacher to understand each step of the process.
- Current pupils make consistently better progress than in the past, achieving well in a wider range of subjects across the school. As well as in English and mathematics, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are more rapidly excelling in art, drama, music, history, modern foreign languages and food and nutrition. This provides pupils with a firm foundation on which to make choices for GCSE and prepare effectively for the next stage in their education.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders of the sixth form clearly communicate their high expectations of students and are focused on improving outcomes, including for those who are disadvantaged.

Students follow a curriculum that meets the statutory regulations, including the requirement for the hours of study and work experience.

- At 16, pupils can choose from suitable academic courses or vocational programmes as a result of the school's strengthening partnership with other local providers, including a further education college. Pupils who leave school after the sixth form are well equipped to go on to a variety of destinations.
- In 2016, students' A level outcomes were similar to the national average. Provisional information shows that students did even better in 2017, making strong progress in a wider range of subjects. More students achieved the highest A-level grades than in the past. Students' current work and information from assessments show that students are on track to build on the improvements in outcomes seen in 2017.
- A small number of students join the sixth form having not achieved a grade C at GCSE in English or mathematics. As a result of effective support, all those who left the sixth form in 2017 improved their understanding and achieved this standard.
- Leaders have been effective in improving students' attendance. For the past two years, students' attendance has been above the national average. The percentage of pupils remaining at the sixth form until the end of their A-level courses is also above average.
- Teachers adeptly plan lessons at an appropriate level, and students engage in activities that consolidate learning. Students enjoy purposeful relationships with teachers and feel that they are treated as young adults. Consequently, students are maturely disciplined in their independent study.
- Leaders provide students with advice and guidance that are very helpful in making choices for the next stage of their education, training or employment. The percentage of students moving on to university regularly exceeds the national average, and others take further courses at a college or gain employment, including apprenticeships.

School details

Unique reference number	138210
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10037807

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	1226
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	172
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of the local governing body	John Phipps
Headteacher	Wendy Hemmingsley
Telephone number	01993 703955
Website	www.henrybox.oxon.sch.uk
Email address	office.4050@henrybox.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school formed the MILL academy trust in October 2015 and was joined by two primary schools. They are Queen Emma's Primary School and Finstock Church of England Primary School.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below that found nationally.
- The school uses alternative provision at Abingdon and Witney College and Meadowbrook College on a full-time basis for a small number of pupils, to support their specific needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' and students' learning in 45 lessons across a range of subjects and year groups. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with four groups of pupils and held informal discussions with many more pupils in lessons and around the school during break and at lunchtimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work from a range of subjects across the school. Work in books was also looked at during lessons.
- A wide range of documentary evidence was reviewed, including the whole-school and departmental plans for improvement, a range of policies, safeguarding records, teaching and learning monitoring information, pupils' performance information and minutes of the governing body's meetings. The school's single central record was also checked.
- Inspectors took account of the 129 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the comments received via the free-text facility, 104 staff survey responses and 251 pupil questionnaire responses.
- Meetings were held with governors, the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, subject teachers and newly qualified teachers. Discussions took place with leaders from Abingdon and Witney College and Meadowbrook College.

Inspection team

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