

Inspection of Houlton School

Signal Drive, Houlton, Rugby, Warwickshire CV23 1ED

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 February 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The principal of this school is Michael McCulley. This school is part of Transforming Lives Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, James Higham, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Guy French.

What is it like to attend this school?

Houlton school is aspirational for all its pupils, including those pupils with special needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It wants all pupils to achieve well academically and be ready for life in the wider world.

Many pupils rise to the challenges set by the school. They work hard, adhere to the rules and routines and contribute to school life. As a result most pupils learn well in their lessons and take part in the wealth of clubs and trips on offer. Many pupils take pride in their work and are eager to earn 'college points'. Pupils develop as young adults, for instance by taking on a role in the school council or completing their Duke of Edinburgh award.

Pupils know it is important that they attend well. The school monitors pupils' attendance so that it can spot if a pupil is struggling to attend. As soon as a pupil's rate of attendance begins to fall, the school acts.

Most pupils behave well. They meet the high standards that the school expects of their behaviour. Teachers welcome pupils into their classrooms and routines are well understood. However, some pupils feel that the behaviour policy is not fairly and consistently applied. Some parents and carers are also concerned about this aspect of the school's work.

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

The school has developed a broad and wide-ranging curriculum for all pupils. For example, pupils study two modern foreign languages throughout key stage 3. They also learn a broad creative curriculum that includes subjects such as dance. While there are no pupils currently in Year 10, the school is determined that this breadth should extend into key stage 4 as the school grows. The academic curriculum sits alongside a 'co-curriculum' that extends pupils' learning beyond their taught subjects. All staff and most pupils participate. Pupils learn a range of new skills and develop their wider interests alongside staff. These range from learning how to crochet, playing ultimate Frisbee and taking part in the school musical.

The school has given careful thought to the substance of the curriculum in each subject. For instance, in modern foreign languages, pupils build their phonetic, grammatical and cultural knowledge gradually over time. Each new topic in each subject is underpinned by a 'big question'. Pupils learn the important knowledge that they need to help answer this question, connecting new knowledge with what they have learned before. Teachers review the learning with pupils to help consolidate their understanding.

Pupils with SEND are expected to learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Staff identify pupils' specific needs and share detailed information with teachers so that they can support pupils in their lessons. Staff are using this information increasingly effectively.

The school has prioritised the professional development of staff so that they can teach the curriculum effectively. In many classrooms, teachers carefully craft explanations and use appropriate resources to help pupils learn. However, this is not universally so. In some instances, teachers are not alert to the misconceptions and errors pupils make. In other cases they do not explore pupils' responses fully to help deepen their understanding. This lack of consistency hinders some pupils' learning.

The school is determined that pupils should read widely and often. Pupils have regular reading sessions in the library and pupils told inspectors that they are encouraged to read. In developing the curriculum, each subject team has also considered how it can promote and model reading. Pupils who need help to improve their reading, including those with SEND, get the help and support they need.

The school has a clear vision of the inclusive culture it wants Houlton School to have. However, this has not been achieved fully. For instance, the school is clear that it does not tolerate discriminatory language, but pupils told inspectors that they do still hear it. Some pupils feel that they are unfairly penalised for small lapses in their behaviour. The trust and governors provide effective support and challenge to leaders and this is helping to distil, strengthen and share the vision for the school.

Leaders know that some pupils do not attend well enough. They are taking a wide range of effective steps to support these pupils to improve their attendance.

Pupils learn about a range of pertinent issues in their personal, social and health education lessons. This includes learning how to keep safe online. Pupils' careers education programme is built into this aspect of the curriculum. They also attend an annual careers fair in school and have visits from a range of professionals to learn about the world of work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not ensured that all teachers deliver the curriculum well. As a result, in some instances, teachers are not alert to the misconceptions and errors that hinder pupils' learning. The school should ensure that all teaching staff have the knowledge and skill to teach the curriculum to a high standard so that all pupils learn well and make progress.
- The school has not yet created a culture that fully matches its ambition and vision. As a result, some pupils and their families do not understand or support what the school is trying to achieve. They also lack faith in the school's systems for addressing their concerns. As the school continues to grow, leaders should

find ways to engage with all pupils and parents. The school should ensure that all understand its vision, commit to its ethos and values and are heard so that concerns are addressed and included to help shape a school that all are proud to be a part of.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	143707
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10294627
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	540
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Guy French
Principal	Michael McCulley
Website	www.houltonschool.org.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Transforming Lives Educational Trust. It opened to Year 7 pupils in September 2021.
- At the time of the inspection the school had pupils in Year 7, 8 and 9 on roll only.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

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 and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, art and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors held discussions with the principal and other senior and middle leaders, including the SEND coordinator.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the local governing body, members of the board of trustees, members of the local governing body and the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's extra-curricular activities, enrichment programme and personal development programme with leaders.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. They took account of responses to a pupil survey, a staff survey and Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to attendance, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Ian Tustian, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Guy Shears	Ofsted Inspector
Heather Simpson	His Majesty's Inspector
Mike Cladingbowl	Ofsted Inspector

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