

# Inspection of a good school: Richard Hale School

Hale Road, Hertford SG13 8EN

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Inspection dates:

3–4 December 2019

## Outcome

Richard Hale School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils conduct themselves well. They show respect and courtesy to their peers and the adults that work with them. Pupils live up to leaders' high expectations of behaviour. Pupils understand the behaviour systems. They trust adults to manage pupils' behaviour and rare incidents of bullying.

Pupils, staff and parents talk about this school as one that offers high-quality care. Pupils are proud to tell their friends that they attend the school. Parents typically say, 'My son loves coming to school. We are proud that our son is a Richard Hale pupil.' This sense of pride runs throughout the school, in how pupils support each other in classes and during break and lunchtimes.

Richard Hale School offers lots of opportunities to its pupils beyond their lessons. Pupils participate in an extensive range of extra activities: sporting, musical, dramatic, artistic and cultural. A large proportion of pupils enjoy learning to play a musical instrument through one-to-one tuition.

Sixth formers are fully involved in the life of the school. They organise many events for pupils lower down the school, such as the mentoring programme to help with younger pupils' welfare.

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

The curriculum is planned well. It ensures that work follows a logical sequence so that pupils build on what they have learned before. In mathematics there is a strong focus on establishing basic knowledge so that pupils are ready for more complex tasks. In English, pupils' skills of analysis are built through different texts over time. Across subjects, pupils are well prepared for current and future study.

Teachers have a strong understanding of the subjects they teach. They use questions well to draw out pupils' understanding. Teachers check whether pupils understand what they are

taught. Teachers are also adept at correcting pupils' misconceptions. Most pupils learn well over time. However, some teachers do not recognise when some pupils are ready to achieve more. They do not help the pupils to apply their learning in more complex ways. This limits the achievement of some pupils.

Typically, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well and access a high-quality curriculum. Most go on to achieve well by the end of Year 11. Some teachers are not as effective as most in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders are working with some teachers to develop their practice where this has been identified as an issue.

The key stage 4 curriculum begins in Year 9. Leaders make sure most aspects of the key stage 3 curriculum are taught in Years 7 and 8. Formal study is supplemented by a rich and wide ranging extra-curricular programme, in which most pupils in key stage 3 participate well. As pupils progress through the school, the curriculum remains ambitious. This is well exemplified by the high proportion of pupils following the courses that make up the English Baccalaureate as they progress through key stage 4. Nonetheless, pupils do not study some subjects in as much depth as they should at key stage 3. Leaders are currently reviewing the length and depth of the key stage 3 curriculum to make sure it meets the needs of pupils as well as it should.

Pupils work well together and have good relationships with staff. Staff use the school's behaviour systems effectively to deal with incidents of poor behaviour. As a result, behaviour around the school and in lessons is positive and respectful.

Tutorials and assemblies meet pupils' moral, spiritual, social and cultural needs well. Pupils learn how to deal with tricky situations and make difficult decisions. They learn about other cultures, religions and how to keep safe.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities to develop their interests and skills. They take part in drama, music and sports competitions. There are public speaking and debating clubs. There is a school quiz team and a high number of pupils are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils fundraise for charity. They value the work they do relating to making decisions in the key skills programme at key stage 3.

The sixth form is thriving. There are a wide range of opportunities for students. The curriculum is based on A levels with a vocational offer. The personal development programme helps students prepare for the next stage of their education. Leaders have a secure understanding of how well students achieve. They set ambitious targets and students achieve well.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Leaders place great emphasis on the importance of people caring for each other. Staff and pupils explained to inspectors that they feel like they are part of a large, supportive family.

Pupils are clear who to go to if they need any support. Many of those who responded to Ofsted's surveys indicate that they feel safe at school. This was also a feature in the parent feedback.

School systems are robust. Safeguarding of the most vulnerable pupils is handled well and prompt action taken to support those who need help, including liaison with relevant external agencies.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Pupils do not learn all key stage 3 subjects in as much depth as they should. Leaders should use their review of the curriculum to ensure that what pupils study in Years 7 to 9 is comparable in ambition to the scope of the national curriculum.
- Some teachers do not recognise that pupils are ready to achieve more. Some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all teachers help pupils to develop a suitably deep understanding of what they are taught.
- Some teachers do not meet the needs of pupils with SEND as well as they should. This means that some pupils with SEND do not always access the curriculum as fully as they could. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers understand and meet the needs of pupils with SEND.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Richard Hale School, to be good on 28–29 November 2011.

## **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 Ofsted Parent View information 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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139873
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110256
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,271
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	292
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Barbara Holm
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ian Hawkins
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.richardhale.herts.sch.uk">www.richardhale.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 March 2016

## Information about this school

- The current headteacher has been in post at the school for nearly two years.
- The school is a single academy trust. The trust board refers to itself as a governing body.
- This is a boys' comprehensive school with a mixed sixth form. There are currently 68 girls in a sixth form of 292.
- The school uses one alternative provider: Rivers Education Support Centre, Hertford.

## Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. We also met with teachers, curriculum leaders and members of the school's support staff.

- We did deep dives in the following subjects: English, science, mathematics, art and geography. Discussions about curriculum design took place with senior and curriculum leaders. Discussions were followed up with visits to lessons, scrutinising pupils' work and talking to teachers and pupils about the curriculum. Curriculum leaders accompanied us on lesson visits and when we reviewed pupils' work.
- We evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. We spoke with the senior designated safeguarding lead, teachers, support staff, pupils and governors about safeguarding in the school. Processes and procedures for safeguarding were reviewed as a part of the evaluation.
- We met with three members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative from Hertfordshire local authority.
- We met with senior staff from the alternative education provider, Rivers Education Support Centre.
- We observed behaviour around the school, during lesson time and during pupils' free time.
- We met with pupils, informally and in groups, to ascertain their views of the school.
- We took account of the 244 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 241 free-text responses.
- We considered the 57 responses from staff who completed the Ofsted staff survey and the 111 pupils who completed the Ofsted pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

Russell Ayling, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Kerridge	Ofsted Inspector
Bruce Goddard	Ofsted Inspector

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