

# Eckington School

Dronfield Road, Eckington, Sheffield S21 4GN

## Inspection dates

2–3 March 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Too few of the most-able pupils make the progress they should across a range of subjects. Too few pupils gain the highest grades across the school.
- Boys do not make the same progress as girls. Their attainment, while improving in mathematics and English, is still too low overall. There is no clear strategy to improve their progress.
- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to deepen and apply their knowledge and understanding. Some teachers' support and challenge for the most and least able is not as effective as it should be.
- Teachers' expectation of pupils' work is variable and not consistently high.
- Pupils' literacy skills, especially in writing, are underdeveloped.
- Leaders in the sixth form have not ensured that provision to develop learners' personal and social skills is as effective as it could be.
- Some leaders do not make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching. Their evaluation of teaching is overgenerous.
- The curriculum does not enable some pupils, including in the sixth form, to follow the qualifications and courses which best meet their needs and abilities.
- The information leaders provide for governors to help them carry out their duties effectively is not helpful and, more often than not, confusing.
- Until recently, governors have not always robustly held leaders to account for pupils' past underperformance. The range of skills, knowledge and experience on the governing body is weak.

### The school has the following strengths

- The quality of teaching and pupils' progress in the English department is consistently strong.
- The support provided for disadvantaged pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs or disability, is very effective.
- Most pupils display high standards of conduct and behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- The pastoral care and guidance provided for pupils in the main school is effective and highly regarded by pupils.
- There are wide-ranging and well-thought-out opportunities for pupils to broaden their horizons and develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by:
  - using a range of questioning techniques that deepen pupils' understanding and thinking skills
  - ensuring that expectations for all pupils' work and presentation are consistently high
  - routinely correcting pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar and giving pupils regular opportunities to develop their writing skills
  - structuring tasks to support and challenge pupils with differing needs, especially the most able and the least able.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - ensuring that leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching across the school is as accurate, reliable and consistent as it can be
  - implementing a robust, well-monitored and evaluated approach to improve literacy skills, in particular writing skills, across the school
  - improving course choices and the curriculum in the main school and the sixth form so that pupils are prepared well for progression to the next stage of their education and employment
  - implementing a clear plan to improve the achievement of boys.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management can be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not acted quickly enough to tackle poor performance in the past. It is only recently that subject leaders and teachers whose results have shown a downward trend have been robustly challenged by senior leaders and effective action taken. As a result of this action, attainment and progress, especially in mathematics and English, are improving rapidly.
- The information provided to governors about the school's performance, including the school improvement plan, is not clear enough. The reports given to governors do not clearly convey the key issues in relation to the school's weaknesses. This is because reports are too complicated and are not sufficiently evaluative. This has prevented governors from holding leaders to account as well as they could.
- The school's self-evaluation of the quality of teaching has been overgenerous and is not moderated effectively enough. Subject leaders are sometimes not clear about how to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Some are not skilled enough to carry out lesson observations. Despite boys' achievement not improving quickly enough, there is no whole-school approach to close the gaps between boys' achievement and girls'. Consequently, subject leaders and teachers have not implemented specific actions in their programmes of study and lessons to address this issue.
- Leaders' work to improve the achievement of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is effective. The 'pupil premium champion' has implemented a range of successful strategies to motivate pupils and accelerate the progress they make. Consequently, this group of pupils achieve well.
- The school's literacy strategy is not effective. The literacy coordinator has not been supported well enough to implement plans to address weaknesses in writing. Staff do not regularly attend training. Consequently, there is inconsistent practice across the school.
- The range of courses the school offers has improved but there are no pupils following the more academic and demanding triple science course. This places them at a disadvantage for their future progress onto Level 3 science courses. Provision for the teaching of English literature at GCSE has not been adequate. Consequently, outcomes in this subject are low. In the sixth form, learners are not offered sufficient work-related courses which may appeal to their interest and aptitudes.
- Leaders in the sixth form have not ensured that the pastoral curriculum is effective enough. Opportunities for learners to develop their understanding of personal and social issues appropriate to their age have been limited until very recently.
- The school's pastoral leadership in the main school is effective. Leaders' caring yet tenacious approach to supporting pupils who are experiencing problems is excellent. The leaders work well together and share information in order to provide good all-round support for pupils. They also use the pupils' assessment information to identify potential risks of underachievement and intervene early where necessary. Pupils speak highly of the support they are given.
- The special educational needs coordinator provides effective leadership because she is knowledgeable and diligent in monitoring the support provided for pupils. She trains the teaching assistants well, so that they provide effective support for targeted pupils in the classroom.
- The curriculum to support pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) development in the main school is well thought out and effective. Assemblies, tutorials, outside speakers, trips and charity events take place regularly. Extra-curricular clubs are wide-ranging and well attended. In addition, the school plans and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well across subjects.
- Leaders have improved monitoring and tracking systems of pupils' performance well. Leaders are becoming more proficient in interpreting and filtering assessment information to analyse how well pupils and groups are doing across the school.
- The school's use of alternative provision is carefully chosen, monitored and evaluated.
- School leaders have drawn upon external support where necessary to support leadership development. A local training school alliance supports certain departments with improving their programmes of study and assessments. Examination board experts have helped subject leaders well to implement new examination qualifications and courses.
- The local authority has more recently increased its advisory support for the school. Reviews are mostly helpful and insightful. The support advisers provided for the English department in previous years was successful.

## ■ The governance of the school

- Governors have not held leaders to account well enough. Previous weaknesses in the school were not identified early enough. Governors previously accepted the school's overgenerous evaluation of the school. More recently, governors have stepped up the challenge they provide for school leaders. New appointments to the governing body have significantly plugged certain gaps in governors' skills and knowledge.
  - The headteacher's performance management is carried out rigorously.
  - Governors are now taking advice from a recent whole-school leadership review and they are acting upon some of the recommendations. They agree that an audit of skills is required to ensure that the governing body is fully skilled to carry out their duties effectively. They recognise that the information provided to governors from leaders has not been helpful. Their visits to school, although not as regular as they were intended, provide governors with valuable opportunities to understand its work.
  - Government funding is monitored well. For example, the pupil premium and catch-up funding is evaluated thoroughly and where initiatives have not been effective they cease to continue.
  - Governors check the school's finances well. They have an acute understanding of the consequences of the school's falling roll. They are taking action to prevent a large budget deficit.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Governors keep good oversight of policies and practices. As a result, policies to safeguard pupils are effective and compliant with the latest government and local authority guidance. All staff in the school receive safeguarding training. Senior and pastoral leaders have received specific 'Prevent' training to help them safeguard against the risks of radicalisation and extremism. The designated safeguarding lead is diligent and knowledgeable about safeguarding matters. There are well-thought-out systems to ensure that both staff and pupils can report concerns easily. Pupils say they feel safe and their concerns are treated seriously. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree with this view. Regular use of the reporting channels by both staff and pupils is testament to the school's open culture. The school operates 'safer recruitment' well and keeps accurate records.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across the school and within subject areas is too variable. Work set by teachers is not always challenging enough, especially for the most able. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to apply their learning in a range of situations. This is especially true in lower school mathematics and science. In mathematics, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to go deeper and develop reasoning skills.
- Some teachers' questioning is not skilled enough to help those pupils who need support or to challenge those who can manage more demanding work. On occasions, teachers ask questions which they go on to answer themselves rather than allowing pupils to think through their responses.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations about pupils' work. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils work showed that too many pupils left work unfinished or completed work which was not demanding enough.
- The teaching of literacy, particularly writing, varies across the curriculum. Teachers do not routinely correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. Writing practice is increasing across many subjects, although pupils are not taught consistently well how to improve and develop their writing for particular purposes. They are not taught how to develop their writing to enable them to express themselves more accurately and maturely. Opportunities for teachers to share good practice have been limited. However, the English and history departments have separately developed effective strategies to address pupils' weaknesses in writing, especially in the lower school.
- The quality of teaching in English and history is consistently good.
- The relationships teachers develop in the classroom help pupils to engage well with the learning in lessons. Pupils cooperate well with each other and respond well to teachers' instructions.
- Teaching assistants work well with targeted pupils. They are knowledgeable about the learning objectives and this helps them to move pupils' learning on well.
- Assessments of pupils work have improved. Most teachers' assessments and predictions have traditionally closely matched actual outcomes.

- Inspectors noted a consistent strength in teachers' subject knowledge across many subjects. Where teaching is more effective, teachers are able to use their good knowledge to explain skilfully and correct misunderstanding. For example, in one mathematics lesson, the teacher used previous learning well about squaring a negative term to help pupils to plot quadratic graphs successfully. In a Year 9 science lesson about the heliocentric and geocentric model, the teacher skilfully led an engaging pupil discussion about Galileo and the role of religion in the development of science through time.
- Teachers set homework regularly, most of which is useful and relevant. Pupils routinely receive feedback.
- Reading is promoted well throughout the school. Most students carry a reading book; reading competitions take place in tutor time. The library is used well. Those behind their chronological age in reading are taught well in discrete groups and make good progress.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are taught well to manage their emotional and mental well-being. Support from teachers and mental health professionals and peer-to-peer mentoring mean pupils feel well cared for.
- The PSHE programme is well thought out and delivered creatively. A range of outside speakers' visits and assemblies have developed pupils' understanding of the risks and challenges they may face growing up. These include internet safety, risks from radicalisation and extremism, grooming behaviours and child sexual exploitation. Parents are invited to school to learn about how to help to keep their children safe. These events are increasingly well attended.
- Pupils feel safe in the school. They are not threatened by bullying because incidents of this kind are rare. Pupils are reassured in the knowledge that teachers take bullying very seriously and take action quickly.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. British values are woven through the curriculum and pupils show good attitudes towards people from other faiths and cultures. Pupils practise their democratic rights during discussions in lessons and during 'The Big Vote', an annual event, where pupils are asked to vote on a specific issue. During the General Election, the local Member of Parliament encouraged pupils to carry out their own mock elections. Learners in the sixth form represented each political party and held hustings.
- The range of visits to religious places and visits from religious leaders to the school further develop pupils' cultural and spiritual understanding. During these visits, pupils are encouraged to consider key questions of morality from different religious viewpoints. Every pupil is required to make 'pledges', which include contributions towards the community and charity work. The school helps pupils understand their responsibility towards themselves, their community and wider society.
- Attendance at extra-curricular clubs is high. Pupils come to school smartly dressed and prepared well.
- Pupils show good attitudes towards school. They are mostly engaged in their learning in lessons. There are only a few incidents of low-level behaviour.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are reducing quickly. Rates of fixed-term exclusions have also declined over the last year. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils excluded compared to others has reduced considerably. There are very few repeat exclusions. This is testament to the effective work to support disadvantaged pupils by the school's 'pupil premium champion' and the team of pastoral leads.
- Attendance is close to the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced and the rates are close to the national average. The school has been successful in helping those pupils reluctant to attend to re-engage in school life. A school minibus is used to collect pupils who have been reluctant to attend regularly. This strategy has been very effective. The local authority is supporting those very hard to reach families and provides home tuition.
- The small number of pupils receiving alternative provision attend well. Reports on their progress say they are developing their social skills and their behaviour is improving. The school has used this provision wisely and in so doing has successfully averted the risk of these pupils being permanently excluded.
- Pupils' punctuality is improving. They understand the behaviour policy well. Teachers apply this policy consistently in the main, and rewards are issued regularly.

- Pupils' conduct in and around the school is orderly and they are respectful towards each other and towards adults.

### Outcomes for pupils

### require improvement

- The school has done much to reverse the downward trend of progress in a range of subjects, as current progress is more positive, including in the sixth form. However, the most-able pupils are not making as much progress as they should in key subjects like science and languages, despite improvements.
- The proportion of pupils gaining A and A\* grades is variable across subjects at Key Stage 4. In the key subjects, leaders predict the proportions of high grades in core science, history, mathematics and English language to be at or above national averages. These predictions are reliable. However, predictions for the higher grades in many other subjects lag behind current national averages considerably.
- The attainment gap between boys and girls, while improving, remains wide. However, in both English and mathematics these gaps are narrowing. Leaders acknowledge there is still much work to be done to improve boys' outcomes. The progress that boys make compared to girls is improving in some key subjects, although those set to make more than expected progress is still not as high as it should be.
- There are no pupils studying separate sciences at GCSE, despite the high ability profile of pupils. This represents a significant issue for pupils who wish to pursue science at Level 3 or above. The outcomes in science have been variable previously; too many pupils did not make the progress they should in this subject. The outcomes currently in core and additional science are much more positive, due to new leadership. Leaders are working to encourage more pupils to undertake separate science qualifications.
- Achievement in English literature has been too low. This is because the school had not previously allowed sufficient time for this course to be studied properly. This has hindered pupils' ability to study and understand literary texts to a high level and pursue this study at Key Stage 5.
- Progress in mathematics and English is improving rapidly. Pupils are making expected progress above national averages. The proportion of those expected to reach more than expected levels is moving close to national averages.
- Outcomes in English are consistently strong. Pupils make good progress.
- The gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others both in school and nationally are closing this year. Work undertaken to support this group is becoming more successful. Early intervention has allowed many to make accelerated progress. Over 80% of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding are on track to make expected progress in English. Nearly 60% are set to make expected progress in mathematics. This represents a considerable improvement compared to previous years.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability, and the small number of looked after children, are making good progress. Leaders identify pupils' needs early and accurately and this has led to appropriate intervention. The school's 'early bird' and 'kick start' programmes have been successful initiatives to motivate and re-engage pupils. Pupils with more severe needs are provided with effective out-of-school tuition.
- The school's catch-up programme in English and mathematics in Year 7 is leading to good outcomes for targeted pupils. For example, all pupils who were below functional reading ages achieved their targets. All 19 pupils who followed a specialised spelling programme made excellent progress. In addition, all pupils who completed the school's numeracy intervention programme improved their numeracy skills significantly by the end of Year 7.
- A small but effective range of alternative off-site provision for a small number of pupils has been successful. Pupils following alternative curriculum courses are monitored well and are making progress. They are on track to achieve vocational qualifications.
- The school's careers, information and guidance programme is strengthening. A combination of a scheme of work for Years 7–13 and external professional advisory support means that pupils understand the employment and study options available to them for the next stage of their learning. Currently, the proportion of pupils who leave the school and do not pursue education, employment or training is lower than the national average.

### 16 to 19 study programmes

### require improvement

- The pastoral programme in the sixth form has not been effective. Provision for this aspect of the study programme was not planned for adequately this year. Consequently, too many learners have missed out

on developing their understanding of personal, social and health issues, which are especially pertinent to their age group. For example, learners showed a remarkable lack of awareness of how to manage their finances and how to avoid risky situations such as dangerous driving. Inspectors were reassured that the programme would be developed and adequate time provided immediately.

- In previous years, a significant proportion of learners have elected to pursue one-year courses and therefore left the school at the end of Year 12. One reason for this is that there are too few vocational study options available in the sixth form. Leaders have pledged to widen the course offer from next year.
- Work experience has been successful for many learners. However, for a small proportion, work experience has not been useful or interesting, especially for those studying BTEC science. Leaders are working towards an 'employability passport', which aims to monitor learners' growing skills to pursue and sustain gainful employment.
- Outcomes in the sixth form are improving quickly. Those subjects which had shown a trend of underperformance are no longer offered in the sixth form. In all subjects, learners make broadly average progress. Learners achieved highly in mathematics A level; attainment was in the top 10% in the country in 2015. The proportion of learners achieving the higher grades is increasing, although leaders recognise this is an area for further improvement.
- The leaders of the sixth form monitor the progress of learners and regularly conduct individual one-to-one sessions with all learners. Learners at risk of underperforming receive interviews and targeted intervention.
- Learners who are following GCSE English and mathematics courses are mostly successful. The teaching and provision for this aspect of their study programme is effective.
- Attendance in the sixth form is good and monitored well.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	112943
<b>Local authority</b>	Derbyshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10003152

This inspection was carried out under section 8 deemed section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,161
<b>Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	190
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Chair</b>	Joe Birkin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Patrick Cummings
<b>Telephone number</b>	01246 432849
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.eckington.net">www.eckington.net</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@eckington.derbyshire.sch.uk">admin@eckington.derbyshire.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23–24 November 2011

## Information about this school

- Eckington School is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is smaller than the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for looked after children.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is low compared with the national average. The proportion in receipt of education, health and care plans is slightly higher than the national average.
- Five pupils attend curriculum provision off-site. The provision used is provided by the local authority and includes: Donut Creative Arts Studio in Chesterfield, Groundworks Council Depot in Bolsover, Jigsaw at Chesterfield College and Junior Jigsaw at Whittington Green School. Pupils attend two days per week.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.



## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was originally carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, a short inspection of schools judged good at their most recent section 5 inspection. Inspectors converted the inspection to a section 5 inspection in order to gather more secure evidence about the quality of education at the school.
- Inspectors observed 41 parts of lessons across the main school and the sixth form in a range of subjects. Many of these were undertaken jointly with senior members of staff. Inspectors also visited registration sessions and the library.
- Inspectors spoke with five groups of pupils including one from the sixth form.
- Inspectors met with a range of school leaders including the headteacher, deputy headteacher in charge of teaching and assistant headteachers responsible for behaviour and leaders of the sixth form. Inspectors also interviewed the special educational needs coordinator, the designated safeguarding leader, the leader of careers, pastoral leaders and subject leaders for key subjects. Four governors were also interviewed including the Chair of the Governing Body. The lead inspector also met with the senior local authority representative.
- A range of documentation was examined, including the school's self-evaluation, pupils' performance information, the governing body minutes of meetings, behaviour logs, curriculum plans and school policies in relation to safeguarding, behaviour, the curriculum, and teaching and learning.
- Inspectors evaluated the 27 responses to the staff questionnaire, seven responses to the pupil questionnaire and 75 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.

## Inspection team

Zarina Connolly, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Simon Hollingsworth	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bernadette Green	Ofsted Inspector
Dorothy Martin	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Gulbanu Kader	Ofsted Inspector

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