

Arnold Hill Academy

Gedling Road, Arnold, Nottinghamshire NG5 6NZ

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils are not making consistently good progress because the quality of teaching varies too much. However, the headteacher is providing effective staff training to improve teaching.
- In the past, subject leaders have not been fully effective in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Recently appointed faculty heads are now driving improvements in weaker subjects, including English.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not routinely high enough. Some pupils, especially those who start secondary school with low attainment, underachieve.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is not improving quickly enough. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been low. This has now started to rise.
- Teachers' questions and the activities they organise are not always well matched to pupils' abilities. Because of this, some pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- A minority of pupils disrupt learning. The school's standards for pupils' behaviour have not been high enough. However, school records show that behaviour is now improving.
- Leaders' plans for improvement do not consistently set ambitious targets that are easy to measure. This makes it difficult for governors to understand and monitor the progress the school is making.
- Pupils taking work-related courses make less progress than they should. Leaders are tackling this by recruiting high-quality teachers.

The school has the following strengths

- There are now highly capable leaders at all levels to make the changes necessary to improve the school further.
- The sixth form is effective. Students on A-level courses make good progress. Their progress is stronger than that of younger pupils.
- Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics at GCSE is above national averages.
- Governors give robust challenge and effective support to leaders in many areas.
- Pupils are safe, well cared for and enjoy school. Attendance is high. Most pupils are polite and courteous.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make consistently good progress by:
 - ensuring that activities are challenging and well matched to pupils' abilities
 - ensuring that teachers pitch questions carefully to improve learning for pupils of different abilities
 - providing appropriate support to disadvantaged pupils in order to accelerate their progress
 - improving the quality of work-related learning courses, including those in the sixth form
 - ensuring that all teachers have the same high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement
 - ensuring that staff consistently follow the school's behaviour policy.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders take effective action if pupils repeatedly disrupt the learning of others
 - creating improvement plans with ambitious, measurable goals that support governors in holding leaders to account
 - putting more emphasis on pupils' progress when assessing how well the school is doing, so that pupils of all abilities benefit equally from improvements
 - carefully monitoring the impact of new subject leaders' work to strengthen the quality of teaching.
- An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher has been permanently in post since February 2017. The multi-academy trust has now secured strength in school leadership and this is beginning to have an impact throughout the school. The headteacher knows how to motivate staff. After a period of considerable turbulence, staffing is now stable and the school has the professionals it needs to improve further. Staff morale is now high.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' achievements has varied too much across the school. Recent appointments of senior and middle leaders, and new teaching staff, have strengthened the school's capacity to improve teaching. The quality of teaching and learning is improving across the school. Consequently, pupils who have underachieved are now beginning to make stronger progress.
- Leaders have not been ambitious enough for the school's pupils who start Year 7 with attainment below national averages. They have not ensured that pupils of all abilities make consistently good progress across the curriculum. Leaders have, however, encouraged the most able pupils to aim high and achieve well.
- Leaders' use of extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils has not had enough impact on pupils' progress. School leaders have not measured the impact of the different strategies used to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress carefully enough. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' progress has been insufficient. However, there have been improvements in the examination results of disadvantaged pupils in English and mathematics.
- Leaders have not used additional catch-up funding effectively to improve pupils' number skills. However, leaders have used catch-up funding well to improve pupils' literacy skills. Weaker readers at key stage 3 are now improving quickly. Leaders promote the importance of reading effectively across the school. The school library offers a wide range of activities to develop pupils' love of reading.
- Leaders have not yet ensured that pupils' behaviour is consistently good. A recently appointed senior leader is now working closely with the headteacher to improve pupils' behaviour. However, the changes have not been in place long enough to achieve consistently high standards of behaviour across the school. However, pupils told inspectors that they believe behaviour is improving.
- Leaders' improvement plans do not always set goals that are easy to measure. The milestones to achieving these goals are often about completing actions, rather than measuring the impact of these actions. When leaders consider school improvements, they put too much weight on pupils' attainment rather than pupils' progress. However, leaders' plans accurately identify the key areas where the school needs to improve and they set out appropriate actions.
- The trust's chief executive officer ably supports school improvement work. Leaders work closely with the multi-academy trust and benefit from the well-targeted support and scrutiny they receive. This has included support to improve assessment and pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science.

- Pupils of all abilities have a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders have recently changed the curriculum, so that pupils choosing GCSE options have more opportunities to follow their interests. Staff enhance pupils' formal education with a range of extra-curricular clubs which offer sporting, academic and arts activities. The school has recently introduced the Combined Cadet Force to its enrichment offer, which pupils are enjoying.
- The curriculum gives pupils good opportunities to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Leaders make sure that all pupils understand the importance of fundamental democratic British values. In an inspiring assembly, an inspector observed pupils telling their peers about the positive impact British music has had on challenging stereotypes. The school has very effective 'bright days', which allow pupils to cover important topics that do not fit in neatly to the curriculum of individual subjects.
- The leadership of provision for special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is effective. Leaders make good use of the extra funding they receive to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The support given to these pupils out of lessons in the SEN base is particularly strong. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are now making better progress than previously.
- Leaders give detailed information to parents about pupils' progress. The school is committed to working with parents and uses a wide variety of approaches. For example, leaders use school newsletters and social media to update parents about pupils' activities and achievements. Most parents support the work of the school, but a small number of parents showed some dissatisfaction during the inspection.
- Governors have made sure that a rigorous system is in place for managing staff performance. Leaders' training and support for teachers is well focused on the development of teaching. This training programme is beginning to have an impact on the quality of pupils' learning. Leaders provide good support for newly qualified teachers through an effective training programme.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is effective. Governors understand their responsibilities for improving the school. The multi-academy trust deploys new governors carefully to make the best use of their skills. The governing body now has the wide range of skills it needs to successfully challenge and support school leaders. Governors make careful checks on the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas of development. They are passionate about improving pupils' life chances. Governors are aware that pupils do not make consistently good progress across the curriculum. They are challenging leaders well to improve teaching and learning.
- School governors understand and challenge leaders' use of the pupil premium. In the past, however, governors' response to the limited impact of this spending on pupils' progress has not been strong enough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. A large majority of parents believe

that school staff look after pupils well. Staff are all well trained and understand what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare or safety. The school has a high number of pupils who need extra support to make sure that they stay safe and well. Staff look after these pupils exceptionally well.

- School staff communicate well with other agencies to make sure that pupils are safe. Staff keep detailed records of any concerns they raise and any actions they then take. Senior leaders follow up referrals to other agencies if the responses they receive are not quick enough.
- The school gives effective opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. Recent work on child sexual exploitation, for example, has helped pupils understand how they might be vulnerable to this risk and how to protect themselves.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Although improving, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across the school or within subjects. This is because teaching does not always match pupils' needs. For example, teachers often give pupils choices about the activities they complete. In practice, pupils do not always pick tasks at the right level of difficulty for them. In some lessons, teachers do not direct pupils carefully enough to the right tasks.
- Occasionally, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and their behaviour can be too low. The impact of teachers' questioning varies. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not pitch questions correctly for the ability of pupils. Some pupils struggle to understand what teachers are asking them. Teachers' questioning of the most able pupils is more effective and helps them think deeply about the subjects they are learning.
- Pupils' presentation of their work is variable. Pupils do not always complete the tasks teachers set, particularly lower-ability pupils. This means that pupils sometimes go on to the next topic without having learned what they needed to from the previous topic.
- Leaders have strengthened teaching and learning through successful recruitment of new staff and well-focused training and support for teachers. This work has not yet had time to impact fully on teaching, learning and assessment.
- There are particular strengths in the teaching of the humanities and technology, and in the sixth form. Pupils are making rapid progress in these areas. Teaching in science is improving quickly. New leadership in English is providing focused support to improve the quality of teaching, which has been inconsistent over time. The impact of this work is not clear at this early stage.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use effectively to interest pupils. Teachers use their subject expertise well in the sixth form when preparing students for examinations.
- Inspectors saw many examples of teaching that promotes equality. Pupils studying the slave trade and man-made causes of flooding had a good understanding of social injustice.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are proud to be members of the school community and wear their uniform smartly. They are confident and most join in their lessons well. Pupils bring the right equipment to school. Older pupils recognise the steps the school has taken to improve their education. They appreciate the learning environment in the very attractive new buildings.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They understand the consequences of sexting and the dangers of sharing their personal details online. Staff help pupils to keep emotionally and mentally healthy. Most pupils and parents say that incidents of bullying are rare. School records show that leaders deal with bullying incidents quickly and effectively when they do occur.
- Pastoral staff have good relationships with young people and their families, which helps them to support pupils. Each year team works effectively to check pupils' progress and personal development.
- Pupils attending off-site courses have improved levels of behaviour and attendance. Their attitudes to learning are better and they make positive progress in their studies.
- Pupils are respectful towards each other. Most are also respectful to adults in the school. However, inspectors saw a few pupils being rude to staff in lessons.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. When learning does not engage, a minority of pupils cause low-level disruption in lessons that affects the learning of others. Staff do not always enforce the school's behaviour policy to help them manage these situations. In some instances, pupils repeatedly misbehave.
- The atmosphere is calm around the school during social times and between lessons. Most pupils are well mannered and conduct themselves well. Pupils enter and leave the school site at the beginning and end of the day safely and responsibly. Staff supervision is visible and effective.
- Last year there was an increase in the number of exclusions. This reflected leaders' determination to tackle instances of poor behaviour. Compared with other pupils, leaders have excluded higher proportions of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. The number of exclusions of pupils in all groups has now reduced. This is because leaders are now using more effective ways of dealing with poor behaviour. School documents show that leaders are also using other sanctions, such as isolation, less often than in the past.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average. The number of pupils regularly absent from school is exceptionally low. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been low, but has started to improve and is currently closer to the national average. Some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have low attendance. School staff are supporting these pupils well to improve their attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is inconsistent. It varies too much between subjects and between different groups of pupils.
- In 2017, the progress pupils made in their GCSE examinations was similar to national averages. However, the progress pupils made in their optional subjects remained very variable. Progress in GCSE English improved in 2017, although progress in English literature at A level did not.
- The progress made by pupils who start Year 7 below national averages, and those who are disadvantaged, is much weaker than that of other pupils. Although the differences between these pupils' progress and that of others nationally are narrowing, especially for younger pupils, these improvements are not happening quickly enough.
- A large proportion of pupils at the school are very able. These pupils make good progress. This is because the teaching of the most able pupils is often better matched to their abilities.
- The school's 2017 GCSE examination results were above national averages in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. The school's assessment information suggests similar results are likely in 2018.
- Leaders make sure that pupils receive high-quality careers advice and guidance. Leaders use the support available from the multi-academy trust careers expert to strengthen the guidance programme. The school works exceptionally well with local employers and has been publicly recognised for the quality of this partnership work. Pupils are well prepared for further education and employment. Almost all pupils go on to appropriate next steps at 16.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form provides a good quality of education. Staff in the sixth form have high expectations of students and encourage them to do their best.
- The leadership of the sixth form is effective. Leaders have made sure that students' examination results continue to improve. A-level results in 2017 were slightly above national averages.
- Students who enter the sixth form without reaching grade 4 in English and/or mathematics learn well and make very good progress. Almost all these students reach grade 4, allowing them a wider range of opportunities when they leave school.
- Safeguarding is effective in the sixth form. Staff know the sixth-form students well and can recognise when they need extra care or support. Leaders manage safety in the sixth-form block effectively. Students wear lanyards, linked to an electronic system, which means that the staff always know where students are in case of fire. Teachers use tutor periods to make sure that students fully understand the dangers they face, including those posed by extremist views.

- Sixth-form students are an important part of the school community. They support the work of the school as ambassadors on public occasions. Students also help support younger pupils in a range of ways, for example through paired reading.
- Careers advice and guidance are effective. Leaders ensure that there is a broad range of courses available to match students' interests and ambitions. Because of this, high numbers of students complete the courses they start in the sixth form. Retention on work-related learning courses has improved and is now exceptionally high. Students are well prepared for the working world. All students have planned work experience in Year 12, which supports their personal development and employment prospects well.
- Students have a full programme of extra-curricular opportunities which supplement their academic studies. The school runs a successful programme of higher education preparation. The proportion of students who go on to university or employment is above average. Increasing numbers of students go on to Russell Group universities.
- Students are positive about their experience in the sixth form. They are loyal to the school and appreciate all that staff do to help them. Students' behaviour is good and they are determined to succeed. Their attendance and punctuality to lessons are good, although a minority of students arrive late for registration.
- The teaching on most courses is very good. Students' progress is exceptional in psychology and mathematics. Leaders are working effectively to improve teaching in the small number of A-level courses where students' progress is less good. Over time, students have made stronger progress on A-level courses than on work-related courses. Leaders are tackling this difference by strengthening teaching through recruitment of high-quality staff.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 137536 |
| Local authority | Nottinghamshire |
| Inspection number | 10036078 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1501 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 254 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Andrew Pickin |
| Headteacher | Matt Robertson |
| Telephone number | 01159 554 804 |
| Website | www.arnoldhillacademy.co.uk |
| Email address | schooloffice@arnoldhillacademy.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 13–14 October 2015 |

Information about this school

- Arnold Hill Academy is part of Trent Academies Group, together with The Farnborough Academy and Rushcliffe School.
- The trustees of Trent Academies Group have the overall responsibility for the governance of the school. The trust delegates some of its functions to the local governing body. Local governors make checks on the day-to-day running of the school, especially on safeguarding; teaching, learning and assessment; and pupils' progress.
- The school moved into new buildings in September 2016.
- Trent Academies Group gives extensive support to the school.

- The school uses Stone Soup, Nottingham College, Channelling Positivity and Cast Education Centre for alternative education provision.
- The school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils at the end of Year 11.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons throughout the school and in a range of subjects. Some lessons were observed jointly with school leaders. Inspectors also made a number of short visits to lessons to evaluate pupils' progress and behaviour in a range of classrooms.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in books, during lessons and at other times during the inspection.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, other senior and middle leaders, and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plan and safeguarding records.
- An inspector also spoke with staff at a unit that offers off-site training for a small number of pupils at the school.
- Inspectors looked at the 97 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 131 free-text responses from parents.
- The inspection team listened to the views of pupils in key stage 3, key stage 4 and the sixth form during discussions, and considered 30 responses from pupils to Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered 97 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and talked with staff after lessons to seek their views.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Ellenor Beighton, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Ash Rahman | Ofsted Inspector |
| Nigel Boyd | Ofsted Inspector |
| Gary Nixon | Ofsted Inspector |
| Graeme Rudland | Ofsted Inspector |

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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