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Chaucer School

Wordsworth Avenue, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S5 8NH

Inspection dates	20–21 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	**Requires improvement**
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**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In the past, leaders at school level, and at multi-academy trust level, were slow to take the actions required to make rapid improvements since the last inspection. As a result, pupils have not made the progress of which they are capable.

- Although the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved, it is too inconsistent to secure good progress for all pupils across subjects.

- Some teachers do not take into consideration pupils' starting points or use assessment information as effectively as they could when planning learning.

- Although they are starting to make better progress, pupils in key stage 4 are well behind where they should be, in a number of subjects, because of a legacy of weak teaching.

- Some teachers apply the school's assessment and feedback policy inconsistently. Pupils' progress is variable.

- Middle leadership has improved. However, in some core subjects, middle leaders are still developing the skills they need to bring about rapid improvement in their areas of responsibility.

- Pupils' attitudes to the school's personal development programmes are variable, due to inconsistencies in its delivery by teachers.

- Behaviour has improved, but a small minority of pupils behave poorly in some lessons, which has a detrimental effect on the learning of others.

The school has the following strengths

- School leaders, including governors, are now strongly focused on the appropriate priorities for improvement.

- Pupils are making much better progress than they have in the past, particularly those in key stage 3.

- Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils, including those who may be at risk of exclusion.

- Leaders have maintained a strong focus on those pupils who are regularly absent, so that they now attend school more often.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
  - ensuring that teachers plan for the needs of pupils by taking into consideration their different starting points
  - ensuring that teachers are consistent in following the school's policy on assessment
  - ensuring that there is directed, individual support in the classroom for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) so they can make the progress they are capable of
  - removing low-level disruption in classrooms so that learning is not disrupted
  - ensuring that the most able pupils are stretched and challenged in their work.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
  - ensuring that all staff have consistently high expectations of pupils, in all aspects of their school experience, so that a culture of good behaviour exists and becomes embedded
  - ensuring that leaders make the best use of subject teaching to enhance the pupils' experiences in the school's personal development ('LIFE') programme and that staff and pupils make the best use of learning time in these sessions
  - maintaining a strong focus on those pupils who are regularly absent from school and work to re-engage them in their learning, so they attend school more often
  - further reducing the levels of fixed-term and permanent exclusions.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
  - building the capacity of middle leadership in some subjects, so that all teachers are held effectively to account for pupils' outcomes
  - making use of the capacity of the multi-academy trust to support the school, particularly in subject areas where outcomes are weaker, or where the school has gaps in specialist teaching staff
  - ensuring that the school's strategies for improving the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND become embedded in classroom practice.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have implemented improvement strategies too slowly in the past. However, recent actions, such as the accurate monitoring of teaching and learning, have meant that those teachers who need further support and development are now receiving it. Teaching is improving.

- During a period of turbulence, the multi-academy trust was unable to provide the support the school urgently required. As a result, there has been a period where ground has been lost, and pupils have underachieved significantly. The trust now has the capacity to support the school effectively. Consequently, the overall effectiveness of the school is improving.

- Subject-level evaluations of pupils' progress have been overgenerous over the past two years. Middle leaders have not been able to focus on the key areas which need improving with any degree of accuracy. Recently, the trust has initiated a system which allows all its secondary schools to compare their assessment methods and standardise their results. This has led to more accurate evaluations, which is allowing leaders to make the best use of their resources in order to make improvements.

- Over time, pupils' progress in English and mathematics has been weak. Leaders, with the help of the multi-academy trust, have provided effective support for the mathematics department in the shape of skilled teachers and enhanced leadership. As a result, pupils are now beginning to catch up with their work and fill the gaps in their knowledge which exist due to weak teaching in the past. The level of support for the English department is not as structured or as strong and, so, although pupils' progress is improving, it is doing so at a slower pace.

- Middle leaders now work closely with senior leaders when monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. In so doing, middle leaders are developing their ability to provide subject-specific support and are instrumental in identifying the professional development needs of teachers and classroom support staff. Leaders ensure that the programme of continuous professional development focuses on both whole school and individual development needs.

- Leaders acknowledge that recruitment and retention of staff remains a challenge. The trust is providing support where it can, targeting hard-to-fill posts, for example, in science and mathematics.

- The additional pupil premium funding is being used more effectively by leaders. They now evaluate the use of the funds regularly and make changes if they identify that actions are not working, or improvements are not rapid enough. As a result, those pupils who benefit from the funding are beginning to make better progress and are attending school more regularly.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders have ensured that curriculum pathways meet the needs of all pupils. Of note is the 'LINCS' pathway which provides those pupils who are at risk of exclusion, or who are returning from long periods of absence, with an alternative programme of study for as long as they require it before they re-join one of the mainstream pathways.

Governance of the school

- Governors admit that, until recently, they lacked the accurate information from leaders which they needed to hold them to account effectively.

- The governing body is under a period of transitional change and currently the chair of the governing body shares responsibilities with her future replacement. This is a strength in that it ensures that the governing body maintains its focus on current improvement priorities, without the distraction of a change of direction.

- Governors are now confident that they accurately understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Inspectors agree with this assertion. Governors' minutes indicate that they are now looking at reliable information and are beginning to ask the challenging questions which school leaders will need to consider if they are to improve the school rapidly.

- Consequently, governors are very clear about the things that need to improve. As an example, they know there is much more to do to eradicate the remaining inconsistencies in teaching, outcomes and some aspects of pupils' behaviour.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Staff are clear about their legal duties to keep pupils safe. They are trained regularly and appropriately. The arrangements for recruiting staff are in line with statutory requirements.

- There are clear systems for checking on those pupils who are vulnerable and the evidence inspectors were shown indicates that leaders act swiftly and appropriately where they have concerns.

- Leaders have established a caring, warm and welcoming environment which pupils regard highly as a place of safety. Pupils universally report that they feel safe when they are in the school, they know who to go to if they have concerns and they are confident that staff will support them with appropriate actions.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment   Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is variable. Teachers' expectations of pupils are not consistently high. For some pupils progress has been slower in some areas. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils.

- Teachers and leaders have, in the past, used inaccurate assessment information to inform their planning for learning. Teachers have not had an accurate view of pupils' starting points and, as a result, pupils have made weaker progress than they should and have underachieved considerably. Leaders are now working with schools across the trust to ensure that assessments are accurate. As a result, teachers and leaders now have an accurate view of pupils' starting points and are planning learning more effectively.

- In many subjects, and particularly in Year 10 and 11 mathematics, it is clear that pupils have fallen behind their peers nationally. This means they are not currently achieving as well as they should be, given their starting points. Because of this, they are studying work they should have already covered in earlier year groups. Nevertheless, they are now making better progress because of improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

- Teachers have taken great care to provide a supportive structure to enable pupils to complete the work they have been set. However, for the most able pupils this approach results in a lack of stretch and challenge. It does not always allow for the deepening of knowledge and understanding.

- The opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills through writing at length are limited in subjects across the school. Where pupils can tackle tasks through extended writing, their learning is deeper, and their understanding is more evident.

- The school's assessment policy is inconsistently applied by teachers; the quality of the feedback and challenge pupils receive is much too variable.

- While the quality and standard of pupils' work varies widely between subjects and classes, improving teaching is leading to better progress, including for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND.

- In some lessons, a small minority of pupils' attitudes to learning were observed to be flippant and, at times, disruptive. In the small number of cases where this occurred, the progress of pupils slowed. Equally, less than positive attitudes to learning were evidenced in a minority of pupils' books through missing, incomplete and poorly presented work.

- The support in classrooms for those pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged is variable. Where teachers make good use of their planning sheets to identify these pupils, they provide appropriate support and direct any additional adults in the classroom so that pupils make better progress. Where less use is made of these planning sheets, pupils do not always get the support they need to develop their understanding, and so they make slower progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.

- Pupils are generally respectful of each other, staff and visitors. In the majority of cases, pupils were polite and cooperative when speaking to inspectors, although, in a very few isolated examples, a small minority of pupils were over-familiar and disrespectful. In addition, on occasion, pupils were discourteous to staff when challenged.

- The vast majority of pupils wear their uniform well and are proud of their school. Where pupils do not wear their uniform to the standard the school expects, staff and leaders challenge them to conform.

- Leaders have developed a well-resourced programme of personal development which is

delivered in daily 'LIFE' sessions. However, despite the high-quality resources and focused staff training provided, the quality of teaching is variable. In some sessions, inspectors observed skilful questioning and high levels of pupil engagement. In others, pupils did not take the sessions seriously and made little progress.

- Although the 'LIFE' programme covers a wide range of personal, social, health and economic issues, along with clear links to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of their experiences, leaders have yet to map these elements against subject content clearly. As a result of this, opportunities are being missed to develop a strong offer of educational and cultural experiences which would result in improved understanding and progress in 'LIFE' sessions and subjects across the school.

- Regular assemblies enhance the 'LIFE' programme. Staff, pupils' and guest speakers' contributions model high expectations and high aspirations.

- A small number of pupils attend an alternative provision which meets their needs and interests more effectively. These pupils are engaged in their learning programmes and attend regularly.

- The vast majority of pupils feel safe in the school and that staff are supportive of them. They are clear about how to stay safe, including online. Some pupils raised concerns that less obvious verbal bullying was not always picked up and dealt with quickly enough by staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.

- Staff and most pupils report that behaviour has improved recently. A small minority of parents and carers are less convinced that the school's work in this area has resulted in enough improvement. Inspectors' observations would agree with parents in that there remains a very small minority of pupils who do not behave themselves as well as they should in lessons and around the school.

- Although teachers are now beginning to apply the school's behaviour policy more consistently, leaders and some pupils acknowledge that there is more to do to ensure that the quality of pupils' learning is high in every lesson.

- The rate of fixed-term exclusions has reduced. In part, this is due to the school's own internal, alternative 'LINCS' pathway, which the school offers to those pupils at risk of exclusion, or who are returning from exclusion. School information shows that the 'LINCS' initiative has been successful in preventing both exclusion and repeat exclusions since it began. Pupils attend the provision regularly and are engaged in their learning, making improved progress.

- There is a strong focus on encouraging pupils to attend school regularly. This is proving effective in reducing rates of absence, although there is more work to do to improve attendance and punctuality overall. However, while overall levels of absence are above the national average, the levels of absence of those pupils who are disadvantaged, and who make up the majority of the pupil population, are below those seen nationally for similar pupils.

- While leaders are having some success in individual cases, through the work of the attendance team, the school's own educational welfare officer and through partnership

work with external agencies, the persistent absence of a few pupils remains high.

Outcomes for pupils	**Requires improvement**

- Typically, pupils enter the school with standards of attainment which are below the national average. In the past, most pupils made significantly less progress than other pupils nationally across a broad range of subjects from the same starting points.

- Published results for 2017 and provisional results for 2018 show that Year 11 pupils who left the school in those years made less progress than other pupils nationally in their overall GCSE outcomes. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

- A legacy of weak teaching and inaccurate assessment has resulted in substantial underperformance in recent years. Pupils, including the most able, those who are disadvantaged, and those with SEND, did not make the progress they should, across subjects, and by the end of each key stage.

- Leaders have now introduced new methods of assessment which more accurately allow them to monitor the current progress of pupils. Leaders can now use this information to identify those pupils who need support and intervention, and can act so that they get it quickly, where necessary, before they reach Year 11. This is beginning to improve the rate of pupils' progress. Leaders acknowledge, however, that there is more work to do to ensure that all pupils benefit from this approach.

- The school's own information, the work in pupils' books and the evidence inspectors collected through lesson observations shows that current pupils are now making better progress than they have done in the past. However, many pupils, particularly those in key stage 4, have a substantial amount of lost ground to make up.

- A small number of pupils follow learning programmes at local, alternative provisions. These programmes are successful in engaging pupils in learning because they are matched appropriately to their needs and interests. As a result, they are making better progress than they would have done otherwise.

- Despite the challenges pupils face because of their underachievement, they leave the school to continue their learning at a high level. Pupils benefit from the guidance the school provides for them when they are choosing their future career pathways.

School details

Unique reference number	138414
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10048286

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	841
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mrs Sarah Draper
Principal	Mr Scott Burnside
Telephone number	0114 2322338
Website	http://www.chaucer.sheffield.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@chaucer.sheffield.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 April 2016

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is significantly higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average. The proportion who have an education, health and care plan is below average.
- Of the cohort, 87% of pupils are White British, 13% are other ethnicities.
- A very small number of pupils attend either the Meadows or the Nurture Odyssey alternative provision.
- The school is a member of the Tapton School Multi-Academy Trust and receives support from subject specialists and senior leaders from within the trust.
- The school takes part in the Transforming Schools Pilot Project, which involves informal partnership working with a number of multi-academy trusts.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 50 lessons and three 'LIFE' sessions, some jointly with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, other staff and representatives from the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and a sample of pupils' workbooks.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour before school, during lessons, around school, and at registration sessions, breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in discussion groups and informally around the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, its improvement plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, information about the attainment and progress of all pupils, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding and information on the school's website.
- Inspectors considered 55 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, alongside 29 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Barry Found, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Cook	Ofsted Inspector
Jamie Lawler	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Cresswell	Ofsted Inspector
Gordon Watts	Ofsted Inspector

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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