

Cockshut Hill Technology College

Cockshut Hill, Yardley, Birmingham B26 2HX

Inspection dates

17–18 November 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The academic achievements of pupils are not consistently good enough because in some lessons teachers do not take enough account of what pupils can already do.
- The way the school tracks pupils' progress varies between subjects and year groups so some pupils, parents/carers and staff are not sure if pupils are on course to meet their targets.
- The gap in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and others is not closing quickly enough.
- Support for disadvantaged pupils varies too much in quality for all of them to make good enough progress in every lesson.
- In a small minority of lessons, some pupils persistently misbehave. This causes some low-level disruption to their learning.
- Opportunities to enrich pupils' literacy skills are sometimes missed across different subjects.
- Some teachers are not routinely applying the school's clear marking policy.

The school has the following strengths

- Good leadership has reversed the historic decline in outcomes for pupils and secured a stable long-term future for the school.
- In the best lessons, teachers expertly question pupils to draw out more detailed and thoughtful responses.
- The most-able pupils do well compared to similar pupils nationally.
- Staff and pupils are welcoming of newly arrived pupils and exemplify the best of British values.
- The personal development of pupils is good because of the high-quality provision for their care, welfare and safety.
- Almost every Year 11 pupil continues to post-16 education.
- Sixth form learners make good progress in the vocational 16–19 study programmes.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop a straightforward method of tracking pupil progress that makes it clear to pupils and their parents/carers how well they are doing and helps teachers to pinpoint where action is necessary to make sure pupils do not fall behind.
- Reduce low-level disruption by:
 - helping teachers to consistently deploy the effective school behaviour policy
 - providing staff training that further develops their understanding of the links between low-level disruption and learning that does not challenge or interest pupils enough from the outset.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - using information about pupils' attainment more effectively so that lesson activities build on what pupils can already do
 - expecting all pupils, including those eligible for the pupil premium, to achieve at least age-related standards or better
 - further developing the literacy and communication skills of pupils by sharing best practice and encouraging imaginative ideas from teachers and pupils
 - making sure marking and feedback to pupils is carried out by all staff in line with school policy.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The shared determination of the executive principal of Ninestiles Multi-Academy Trust and the Principal of Cockshut Hill in securing the long-term success of Cockshut Hill has held the morale of staff high during the uncertainty and turbulence of the past two years. They have steadfastly and expertly led the school to a position of staff stability and improving pupil achievement. Almost all teachers are now permanently employed in the school.
- School senior and middle leaders, some of whom are recent appointments, all share a common high expectation of what pupils can achieve and want to make sure this happens. They have led substantial curriculum changes away from the historical model of predominantly vocational courses at Key Stage 4. Now, the curriculum to the end of Key Stage 4 is a predominantly academic curriculum of GCSEs; this is fully in place for the current Year 11. At the same time, the inadequate academic sixth form programme was closed to pupils in 2014, leaving a small but effective specialist Level 3 vocational programme.
- Since September 2015 a growing range of extra-curricular clubs and activities have enriched pupils' learning. Many are linked to academic revision, and there are a wide range of well-attended sporting and arts sessions. The short lunchbreak makes it difficult for organised sessions, despite pupils hoping for some, so most sessions run after school.
- The school promotes fundamental British values exceptionally well. This is evident through the professional and caring way that newly arrived pupils from near (Birmingham) and far (international) are welcomed into the school. A well-practised team of staff quickly assess the needs of these pupils, including English language teaching for those with little or no skills on entry to the school. Tutors make sure all these pupils can quickly form friendships with peers, many of whom will have recently experienced a similar situation and use their own successful integration into the school to reassure new pupils. The recently elected school council expressed their pleasure in meeting these new pupils, valuing their cultural input to the school. Typically, there are five newly arrived pupils each week.
- The tutorial and assembly programme leads the effective teaching of social, moral, spiritual and cultural education, with a daily assembly for every pupil as well as daily tutorials that are skilfully delivered.
- This inclusive ethos underpins the exemplary work of the school in keeping pupils safe. This is led by the new pupil services team of teachers and specialist family support staff. This support is predominantly targeted at pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding, which is well spent on their behalf in closing the historically large gap between their achievement and that of other pupils. The Year 7 catch-up funding is deployed effectively and is helping to rapidly improve the reading skills of low-attaining readers in Year 7.
- The partnership with Ninestiles has also led to extensive professional development for teachers, starting with the introduction of the clear and effective pupil behaviour management policy originally developed by Ninestiles. This has transformed the day-to-day learning ethos of the school for the better and is very much welcomed by pupils and staff. Training for middle leaders has enabled them to take much more responsibility for the quality of teaching in their subject areas.
- The performance management of staff is clear to all parties. It is linked to pupil progress and staff development targets, and only rewards good practice. The school now uses the same approach as Ninestiles (an outstanding academy).
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have responded well to the recommendations of the review of governance suggested at the previous inspection. They have made new appointments that bring external business and education expertise to the team. Their actions, however, have been limited by the prolonged uncertainty over the school's future that has only recently been resolved by decisions beyond the remit of the governing body.
 - Nevertheless, governors have taken difficult decisions designed to maximise the outcomes for pupils. These include the closure of the academic sixth form because of persistent low achievement, the strengthening of the vocational sixth form provision to sustain its success and the restructuring of teaching and support staff to reflect the smaller school numbers and changing responsibilities of staff.
 - As a result, the school's finances are now safe into the future. The partnership with Ninestiles Multi-Academy Trust has allowed plans for much-needed refurbishment of some accommodation to go ahead. This includes the modernisation of outside areas to improve wet-weather comfort for staff and pupils as they move around the large site.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The good assessment information that teachers have about the starting points of the pupils in their classes is not consistently used effectively to plan activities that motivate pupils or engage their interest. For example, teachers have information about pupils' reading age. This can vary from well above to well below their actual age, yet some teachers still use the same text with every pupil.
- Some teachers are missing opportunities to improve the reading, writing and verbal communication skills of pupils. When teachers ask 'closed' questions that have single-word responses, pupils have no opportunity to explain their understanding.
- There are many positive exceptions to this; most teachers use excellent 'questioning' skills that promote thinking and discussion among their pupils. These teachers demand full responses, not accepting grunts or shrugs or silence. Pupils enjoy thinking creatively about written tasks and this enhances their literacy skills; for example, in a science lesson, pupils wrote a letter to a patient to explain the results of tests that the pupils had just done that showed the patient had diabetes. By putting the learning into a topical context, the teacher helped to sustain pupils' interest very well.
- Where teaching and learning is good or better, teachers use pupils' prior attainment information effectively to plan a range of activities at appropriate starting points. Often, teachers allow an element of choice so pupils can challenge themselves with more difficult tasks. This works very well in combination with interesting subject content. In these lessons, teachers give full rein to pupils to explore ideas beyond the limits of an exam syllabus, which in turn develops a strong sense of curiosity in pupils. Pupils relish these opportunities and, in their extended learning, also develop good independent research and study skills that they use for completing homework.
- The school uses different measures for assessing pupil progress. Some subjects are using old National Curriculum levels, others are using the new approach of meeting age-related expectations, some use GCSE letter grades, others the replacement GCSE numeric scales. This leaves room for confusion for pupils, parents and carers, and staff. Not every pupil knows how well they are doing in a way that helps them to focus on what they need to do to improve further.
- A few teachers are not following the good school marking policy. When they do, pupils receive good feedback on what has gone well and what they should do next, and they normally respond to that advice.
- Some of this variability in teaching quality is because of frequent staff changes in the past, especially in mathematics. This has been resolved since the start of term in September 2015. The mathematics subject leader has identified deep-seated weakness in the mathematical understanding of many pupils that arose from historically weak mathematics teaching in Key Stage 3. Teaching and learning in mathematics across year groups is addressing those shortfalls, with some recent success. In particular, pupils say they now enjoy learning mathematics much more than previously, and they link that to better teaching and more stable staffing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The work of the pupil services team underpins the good care and support for pupils, with proportionate support available depending on a particular pupil's needs. A key platform that has improved pupils' attendance and punctuality is the behaviour management system. Pupils and staff value the substantial positive impact this has made on day-to-day behaviour. Day-to-day life in school is calm, friendly and enjoyable for pupils as well as staff.
- Pupils are systematically taught how to deal with bullying, internet safety and the risks of radicalisation and exploitation. They say that they feel safe in school and know how to share concerns with school staff.
- Pupils say that their careers advice and guidance is useful, realistic and steers them towards subject choices that retain the widest range of career options at a later stage. They know the relative value of different subjects and recognise that the English Baccalaureate collection of predominantly academic GCSEs is a good way to keep their post-16 options open.
- A pupil services department effectively delivers all aspects of pupil pastoral and academic support. These

staff manage the behaviour policy, dealing with sanctions and tailoring support for pupils who repeatedly misbehave. They work well with parents and carers, and other agencies, to direct support for vulnerable pupils. Specialist staff are effective at dealing with persistent absence, which is falling, and overall attendance, which is rising and is average compared with other schools.

- The whole school community embraces newly arrived pupils; this school is a beacon for what is really meant by fundamental British values, as it lives these values out for these pupils.
- The work to support pupils with special educational needs requires improvement, but is more effective compared to two years ago; value added measures for these pupils have improved significantly although remain lower than the average for all pupils. These pupils are monitored closely, with appropriate intervention including specialist agencies as necessary. Teaching assistants went back to being faculty-based in the 2014/15 academic year which has helped to improve pupil progress. The current focus is for better 'quality first' teaching in routine lessons to reduce the need for separate intervention.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- A small minority of pupils make poor choices in some lessons despite the consistent use of the school's behaviour policy by most teachers. This remains a concern of some staff and parents. Inspectors noted that these pupils had not engaged with the lesson activity, and in many cases this was because the activity was not pitched well enough to engage them. Although these pupils knew the consequences of persistent misbehaviour, that was not deterring them from some silly actions.
- Most pupils behave well all of the time, and this is in marked and welcome contrast to the early monitoring visits by Ofsted. The complicated movements between assembly, tutor time and lessons work smoothly without the need of bells, with pupils taking full responsibility to get to lessons on time.
- Attendance has improved to average for all secondary schools (and therefore better than similar schools) for all pupils, including those attending the alternative provision setting, and persistent absence is reducing.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions was very high in 2013, but has now reduced. It is now typical for the size of the school, with very few repeat offenders. There are no marked differences in these figures between different groups of learners. Very recently, a couple of serious incidents linked to off-site events have required the permanent exclusion of a few pupils; the school's actions have been proportionate and the school has involved external agencies appropriately.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The results in public examinations for 2015 were disappointing overall, with some measures worse than in 2014. Mathematics in particular performed badly in 2015 because too many pupils achieved grade D rather than C, affecting all of the overall performance figures. In English, pupils did better, making reasonable progress from their starting points. Pupils entered the school with significantly lower than average academic attainment on average, and overall attainment was low when they left.
- Inspectors therefore looked carefully and extensively at the evidence available for current outcomes for pupils across all subjects and years since the start of the academic year 2015. There is no sign, from the quality of work seen in books, from the progress that pupils are making in lessons, from conversations with pupils or from the school's own assessment information that pupils are underachieving. Pupil outcomes are at least satisfactory in every area, including mathematics.
- New subject leadership in mathematics is helping to secure adequate achievement here. This, together with the historically good teaching of English, gives confidence that pupil outcomes are no longer inadequate in these important subjects. A similar picture is apparent in other subjects, including the key subject of science. Most pupils are taking a pride in their work now and are looking to improve their learning in response to teacher feedback.
- The proportion of more-able pupils was below average on entry to the school. These pupils, however, did well, making good progress and gaining results that were better than similar pupils nationally.
- Pupils with English as an additional language achieved in line with their peers; many of these pupils have good English skills, but a growing number are learning English for the first time in school. Because the school's teachers and support staff are so resourceful, these pupils quickly acquire English language skills and are fiercely committed to improving them further.

- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium closed the gap with other pupils nationally, compared to 2014, although this gap is still too high at around a GCSE grade per subject. It was very high on entry to the school.
- The four Year 11 pupils that attended the East Birmingham Network alternative provision achieved their targets. There are 18 pupils currently at that provision on a part-time basis at this good (Ofsted inspection grade) setting, who are attending well and are making the expected progress overall.
- In 2015, every pupil seeking a post-16 education or training placement was successful. Four pupils did not, as far as the school is aware; they know the situation of two of these pupils, but the destinations of two pupils are currently being followed up by the pupil services team.
- Specific work to improve pupils' reading is effective; pupils in the Year 7 programme are catching up with their peers quickly. Disadvantaged pupils in these programmes are catching up but not as quickly as their non-disadvantaged peers.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The school's sixth form hosts 16 to 19 study programmes. In the summer of 2014, school leaders decided to close A-level courses to new candidates; this left 40 learners to complete A levels in the summer of 2015 that they had started in autumn 2013. The primary reason for closure was the difficulty of providing a wide enough range of financially viable A-level courses to a small number of learners. A secondary factor was the historically below-average progress of these learners from relatively low academic starting points on average. This weak progress was repeated in the final year of A-level results in 2015. All of those learners have, nonetheless, continued on to some form of higher education, or employment or training.
- In stark and positive contrast is the continuing success of vocational pathways in the sixth form in 2014 and previously, which was repeated in 2015. A limited range of subjects allows large enough classes to make financial sense, coupled with the specific expertise in those subject strands that ensures learners make good progress, with most achieving distinction-level passes in their qualifications. That vocational pathway continues, and its success is the key reason for the overall good inspection judgement. The school describes its sixth form as a 'niche' provision in the locality and is recruiting external candidates from other schools as a consequence of this specialist curriculum offer.
- A strong feature of sixth form teaching is the skilled questioning by teachers that promotes every individual learner's good progress at a brisk pace. This is coupled with high levels of teacher subject knowledge, which in turn stimulates discussion, models high standards and also introduces moral and ethical implications for learners to consider in the context of the subject.
- Learners have straightforward access to the full range of post-16 opportunities including the academic A-level pathways, mainly at Solihull Sixth Form College. The closure of the academic strand at Cockshut Hill has improved opportunities for learners as they now enjoy a wider choice at more successful providers of academic subjects. Clear careers advice and guidance has successfully steered learners towards worthwhile post-16 courses despite the obvious challenges presented by closing some courses at Cockshut Hill. This, helped by good collaboration with these local providers, has also increased the proportion of learners going to a grammar school sixth form. Sixth form leaders are acting responsibly in maximising learner opportunity post-16, whether learners stay or leave.
- About two thirds of the sixth form take part in after-school activities; they have exclusive use of the fitness centre one night a week. All take part in a personalised enrichment programme, including work experience and, if necessary, support for part-time working through helping learners to gain qualifications such as food hygiene.
- Attendance and punctuality at the sixth form is in line with other providers. Learners study personal, social and health education, attend assemblies and have specific lessons on online safety. They are committed to high standards and future successful employment or higher education. All have clear subject targets and receive good ongoing assessment information from teachers that helps them to focus on improving specific knowledge or skills as necessary.
- All sixth form learners resitting GCSE English and mathematics in 2015 passed at grade C or better.

School details

Unique reference number	103513
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10001617

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,096
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Squires
Principal	Sian Hartle
Telephone number	0121 464 2122
Website	www.cockshut.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@cockshut.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 December 2013

Information about this school

- At the inspection in December 2013, the school was judged to require special measures. The local authority asked Ninestiles Academy to provide school improvement support. The previous headteacher retired at the end of 2013. Other senior and middle leaders left the school shortly afterwards.
- Ninestiles Academy provided senior staff to support school leadership, including the current Principal, assistant principals and some subject leadership. There is currently a full complement of teaching staff in most subjects, apart from mathematics which has one teaching vacancy, and permanent subject leadership in all departments.
- The chief executive of Ninestiles Multi-Academy Trust is the executive head at Cockshut Hill. She is a national leader of education. Ninestiles provides teacher professional development support.
- Following prolonged discussion with the local authority and Department for Education, the school will become an academy in the spring of 2016 with Ninestiles Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school is similar in size to most secondary schools, with a small sixth form. Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils has fallen from 1,350. The sixth form closed its A-level courses in 2014 but remains open for vocational courses.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average, and the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average, at one in every two pupils. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- About half of the pupils are from White British backgrounds, which is lower than average, about a fifth

are from Pakistani backgrounds and the rest are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average at one in four pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who arrive at various points during the school year is well above average.
- The school uses East Birmingham Network for alternative provision for 18 pupils.
- The school did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress, in 2014.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons delivered by 44 different teachers. Some of these observations took place with school senior leaders. Inspectors also observed two assemblies and six tutorial times.
- Inspectors met with pupils, the Principal, other senior and middle leaders, teachers, support staff, governors, a representative of the local authority and the chief executive of Ninestiles Multi-Academy Trust.
- Inspectors looked at the current work of pupils, historical examination results, the school's evaluation of those results, current school information about pupil progress, and notes of local authority monitoring visits.
- Inspectors took account of 30 responses to Ofsted's online 'Parent View' survey and 45 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. The school provided additional parent survey information collected during parents' information evenings.

Inspection team

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