

Theale Green School

Church Street, Theale, Reading, Berkshire RG7 5DA

Inspection dates

24–25 May 2017

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
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

- Leaders' evaluation of pupils' progress has been too generous. This has led to low expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Leaders' responses to the national changes in assessment at the end of key stage 4 were slow. This has contributed further to low expectations and limited the effectiveness of preparation for pupils' GCSE examinations.
- Governors have not challenged senior leaders rigorously about the decline in pupils' progress.
- Teaching does not meet the needs of pupils with different abilities well.
- Weak teaching during key stage 3 has slowed the progress that pupils make prior to starting GCSE courses.
- Teachers do not apply the school's own feedback policy consistently. This results in pupils, particularly in key stage 3, being unclear about how to improve their work.
- In 2016, the progress of pupils in Year 11 was well below national averages in English, mathematics and science. Current rates of progress in key stage 4 are slow due to previous weaknesses in teaching and learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make good progress overall.
- Learning is sometimes disrupted because staff do not apply the school's behaviour policy consistently.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has strengthened teaching and leadership, responding successfully to the challenges of a difficult climate in teacher recruitment.
- Pupils attending the autistic spectrum disorder unit are supported well to progress to the next stage of their education. Other pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective support during well-targeted additional teaching.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to accelerate the progress of entitled Year 7 pupils.
- Leaders' actions to promote the personal development and welfare of pupils have a good impact. Pupils are well supported and feel safe.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress because the well-taught curriculum meets their needs well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that improving pupils' progress is a clear priority in leaders' school improvement planning
 - establishing a robust assessment system
 - giving teachers effective opportunities to share good practice.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations for pupils' achievement, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that teaching consistently meets the needs of pupils of all abilities effectively
 - improving the effectiveness of teachers' feedback to pupils about their work, particularly in key stage 3.
- Ensure that staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently in order to eradicate disruptions in learning.

An external review of governance 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

- Since the last inspection, leaders have not acted effectively to reverse the decline in the achievement of pupils.
- Leaders' improvement planning lacks accuracy and rigour and therefore has a limited effect on raising the achievement of all groups of pupils. Improvement planning does not focus precisely on the underachievement of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders' evaluation of pupils' current progress is, at times, overgenerous. Their evaluation does not identify issues sufficiently well to improve the progress of vulnerable groups of pupils.
- Leaders have been slow to respond to recent changes in national assessment arrangements, and have yet to implement a consistent system to assess and record pupils' progress. This has led to low expectations and weak preparation for GCSE examinations in some subjects.
- The headteacher has been successful in recruiting effective staff. Recent appointments of subject leaders are leading to some improvements. They have introduced relevant new systems and processes, but these have yet to have any impact substantially on the outcomes of pupils.
- Teachers feel well supported by the headteacher and other leaders. Teachers are very positive about the changes made by leaders in the last year and feel valued. Greater stability in the teaching staff is leading to improved consistency for pupils this year. The school is offering good support to a number of trainee teachers.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching. They take appropriate action where teaching is not yet good enough. Examples of good practice are shared between colleagues and are helping to raise teachers' expectations, but this approach is not well established.
- The headteacher ensures that the objectives set for teachers as part of their performance management are sufficiently challenging.
- The pupil premium coordinator carefully tracks and evaluates, through a detailed action plan, the impact of interventions provided through this additional funding. These pupils' outcomes are showing some improvement as a result, but this is not well established.
- Senior leaders have ensured that the Year 7 catch-up funding is used well. This is having a positive impact on improving attainment in English and mathematics for the majority of those pupils eligible for this additional support.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced to meet the needs of all pupils, especially through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. This ensures that pupils have a clear understanding of British values. Pupils have the opportunity to experience a broad range of extra-curricular opportunities, including a wide range of sports clubs and educational visits.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures that pupils who have special needs and/or disabilities receive effective additional interventions to address

their specific needs. However, such well-matched provision is not typically seen during class teaching. The SENCo liaises closely with the head of the autistic spectrum disorder unit to ensure that pupils are supported well to make progress in their learning.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not challenged senior leaders effectively to halt the decline in the quality of education provided by the school. Governors have not checked closely the impact on pupils' progress of spending on additional support for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils do not achieve well.
- Governors' understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school has not been accurate over time, leading to a lack of clarity about priorities for improvement.
- Governors have supported leaders to take robust action to improve teaching, including through recruitment.
- Governors take their responsibility for health and safety very seriously. This ensures that the school is a safe learning environment for all pupils. Governors involved in the recruitment of staff have undertaken the appropriate safer recruitment training and apply this effectively.
- Governors have been prudent in their spending to ensure that the financial notice to improve issued by the Education Funding Agency is being addressed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate checks are in place to ensure the suitability of all staff and volunteers who work with pupils. Minor errors in the school's record-keeping were quickly corrected during the inspection. Governors regularly check recruitment and other records to ensure their suitability.
- Leaders are persistent when following up referrals made to children's services. All staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training and know how to keep pupils safe. Most parents were positive about the school's work in keeping children safe.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through the effective PSHE programme and focused assemblies. They know what to do if they have any concerns, including when using the internet. They are very aware of the potential dangers in wider society. Pupils feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. This is particularly the case in key stage 3, leading to some pupils being ill-prepared for GCSE courses.
- Teaching does not meet the needs of pupils with different abilities well, leading to some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, making slow progress.

- The most able pupils are not challenged effectively to enable them to achieve at the highest level. Too often, teaching is focused on the completion of tasks rather than on deepening pupils' knowledge and understanding. The targets set for most-able pupils are not aspirational enough for them to achieve the highest GCSE examination grades.
- The school's marking and feedback policy is not applied consistently in key stage 3, resulting in some pupils being unclear about how to improve their work. In key stage 4, pupils are given a clear understanding of how to improve their work. In art, for example, pupils were rapidly improving their work due to the quality of feedback provided.
- A consistent approach to assessment is not yet in place, resulting in a lack of challenge for pupils. This leads to low expectations of what pupils can achieve, both in key stage 3 and in GCSE examinations in most subjects. In mathematics, however, teaching links well to GCSE examination requirements.
- The teaching of literacy is inconsistent across the wider curriculum and practice does not reliably match the aims of the school's policy. However, additional reading interventions are beginning to have an impact on improving standards for some pupils. In English, pupils are given good opportunities for extended writing. This is leading to improvement in pupils' literacy and greater challenge for the most able.
- Pupils are beginning to respond positively to the regular homework teachers set, although the quality of this independent work is not typically high.
- Stronger teaching is evident in a range of subjects, particularly in the creative arts, English and modern foreign languages. In ethics, sensitive topics are handled well by staff, for example when they highlight issues such as those faced by citizens who have traditions other than pupils' own.
- Teaching in the autistic spectrum disorder unit is effective and enables pupils to make good progress. Good-quality interventions support these pupils well when accessing mainstream lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are very well supported and cared for by staff. Pupils' mental health is given suitable priority. The high level of support for pupils is confirmed by parental comments in Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire.
- Respecting the rights of others is central to the school's ethos and to the PSHE programme. The PSHE curriculum supports pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development effectively, with further helpful opportunities integrated across all subjects. This leads to pupils being prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils and parents report that bullying is rare and when it does occur, it is dealt with effectively by staff. Parents commented positively about the good care and support provided by staff.

- A broad range of extra-curricular opportunities is provided that support the development of pupils' collaboration and respect. The range of sporting opportunities provided for pupils is especially strong.
- Pupils attending alternative provision at the local authority reintegration unit are well provided for. They follow a 12-week programme that aims to return pupils to school. However, the school does not receive regular attendance information for these pupils.
- Pupils in the autistic spectrum disorder unit are supported well with their emotional and mental health needs through a range of activities, including art therapy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Most pupils behave well, but a minority of pupils disrupt learning when teachers do not apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. When staff implement the school's policy effectively, pupils respond well and the relationships within the classroom are good. Both staff and pupils refer to improvements in the behaviour of pupils in lessons since the last inspection.
- In unsupervised situations, pupils do not always behave appropriately. When adults are present, pupils respond positively. Pupils wear their uniform with pride and there is little evidence of litter around the site, reflecting most pupils' pride in their school.
- Historically, attendance has been below national averages, but is now showing improvement. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities remains below that of other pupils. However, the effective actions of leaders are improving the current attendance of pupils overall, and particularly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders ensure close liaison with primary school staff. This particularly helps to identify pupils whose attendance has been poor previously, so that there is a positive transition to secondary school.
- Fixed-term exclusions have been high in the last few years, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders' actions began to reduce the high levels of fixed-term exclusions in 2016, but this improvement has not been maintained.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, the progress of Year 11 pupils was well below that of Year 11 pupils nationally. This was the case in a range of subjects, including in English, mathematics, and science.
- The rate of progress for pupils currently in Year 11 continues to require improvement. This is partly due to a legacy of poor provision for pupils in earlier years.
- In the past, disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieved significantly less well than other pupils with similar starting points. In the last year, clear plans have been put in place to support disadvantaged pupils as well as pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Although there is considerably more to be achieved, early indications show that recent actions are having a positive impact in raising standards for these pupils. The progress of current disadvantaged pupils is improving, particularly in English and mathematics. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are starting to make good progress during targeted additional provision.

- In the past, pupils' achievement in science and humanities subjects has been well below that of other pupils nationally. Current pupils' work shows evidence of recent improvement. In some pupils' work there is strong evidence of progress over time and of pupils having a real sense of pride in their work.
- Leaders' past assessment of pupils' attainment and progress have been inaccurate when predicting GCSE examination outcomes. This has led to an inability to focus interventions accurately to support pupils effectively. Teachers' more effective use of assessment currently is leading to greater accuracy and consistency. However, this practice is not consistently in place.
- Pupils who attend the autistic spectrum disorder unit achieve well. This has a positive impact on their GCSE results, enabling them to progress successfully into the sixth form.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form is strong and ensures that students follow courses appropriate to their needs. As a result, the retention of students is in line with the national average and above this figure for disadvantaged students.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is similar to other students nationally for those taking academic courses. In 2016, students had made rates of progress that were significantly above the national figures for those taking applied A-level courses. Outcomes for current students are on track to be even better in 2017 than in 2016, based on current performance seen.
- Students who did not achieve A* to C GCSE grades in English and/or mathematics at the end of key stage 4 do better than other students nationally in achieving these qualifications in the sixth form.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength. Their enthusiasm for their subjects encourages students to engage well in their learning. Good-quality questioning by teachers enables students to deepen their knowledge and understanding, leading to them making good progress.
- Students are complimentary about the careers education and guidance they receive, including the opportunities they have for work placements. Students who follow one-year courses are successful and progress to apprenticeships or alternative further education provision. Good support is provided from the sponsor school, which prepares students well for university. All students are engaged in education, employment or training after leaving the school.
- Students value their time in the sixth form. Their personal development is catered for in a number of ways, including opportunities to become involved in managing

fundraising charity events. They appreciate the opportunities given to them by staff to develop leadership skills and display mature attitudes to learning.

School details

Unique reference number	139938
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10032898

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 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	687
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	146
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Dudley Fishburn
Headteacher	Sally Beeson
Telephone number	01189 302741
Website	www.thealegreen.w-berks.sch.uk
Email address	inmail@thealegreen.w-berks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is a smaller than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The school opened as a sponsored academy in September 2013. The lead school is Bradfield College, which is an independent school with boarding provision.

- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small percentage of the pupils do not speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school has a specialist unit for 14 pupils in Years 7 to 11 with autistic spectrum disorders.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative off-site provision at the Riverside Community Centre in Newbury.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 44 lessons, including a number of short visits to classrooms. Several lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. During visits to classes, inspectors looked at pupils' work in books.
- Inspectors also examined a selection of pupils' exercise books from key stages 3 and 4.
- Meetings were held with staff, including newly qualified teachers, academic senior and middle leaders, pastoral leaders and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 70 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the school's own parental questionnaire, as well as written comments submitted by 50 parents and one comment received from a parent during the inspection. Inspectors considered 60 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- Pupils' views were gathered from meetings with groups of pupils from Years 7 to 11 and from the sixth form. Informal conversations with pupils took place around the school site. Their views were also gleaned from Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation. This included leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, the school's plans for improvement, information about standards and pupils' progress, the school's website, records of behaviour and attendance, and a range of policies and information, including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Christopher Lee, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Powell	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Beamish	Ofsted Inspector
Mary Hoather	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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