

Mount Gilbert School

Hinkshay Road, Dawley, Telford TF4 3PP

Inspection dates

6–7 July 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils do not do well enough in mathematics and in science.
- In mathematics, pupils do not extend their knowledge and understanding as they have limited opportunities to apply their skills to a range of problems.
- The quality of learning, teaching and assessment is variable. At times, some teachers set work that is too easy for the most able pupils and too difficult for the least able pupils.
- Not all teachers consistently apply the school's assessment and behaviour policies. As a result, pupils are unsure about how to improve their work or correct their mistakes and their poor behaviour is sometimes unchallenged.
- Pupils' attendance, while improving, is below national figures. Too many pupils are persistently absent from school (missing more than 10% of lessons).
- Pupils' handwriting skills are not well developed as they do not have enough chances to write at length.
- Pupils do not read widely and often in school or at home.
- Some pupils give up too easily and react negatively when they encounter problems with their schoolwork or in social situations.
- A very small minority of pupils do not accept others' differences and make comments that are spiteful and hurtful.

The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school. Leaders have secured some improvements in the quality of learning, teaching and assessment, pupils' attendance and behaviour, and progress in English, art, design technology, physical education, humanities and food technology.
- Pupils are well prepared for leaving school and almost all pupils secure a college place or employment and training.
- Pupils have opportunities to take part in a wide range of enrichment activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and museum visits.
- The school places a high priority on making sure pupils are safe. As a result, the school's safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive and detailed. The school works effectively with a wide range of agencies and professionals to provide the help pupils and their families need.
- Pupils and their families are very positive about the school and about the difference it makes to their lives.

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?

- Ensure that pupils, including the most able, make rapid progress, particularly in mathematics and science, by making certain that:
 - teachers set work that meets the needs of the pupils – improving, consolidating or extending pupils' knowledge and understanding where appropriate
 - teachers develop pupils' skills to reason mathematically and to solve increasingly difficult problems
 - teachers' subject knowledge and application of this knowledge is strengthened in mathematics
 - pupils are provided with sufficient opportunities to practise their handwriting and to write at length
 - pupils read widely and often in school and at home.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - all subject leaders have the skills and expertise to maintain the recent improvements and to play their part in the ongoing drive for improvement
 - the views of all staff are considered and acted upon and their successes recognised
 - teachers consistently apply the school's assessment policy so that the verbal and written feedback pupils receive helps them to improve their work or rectify their mistakes.

- Improve pupils' attendance, behaviour, academic progress and social skills by making sure that:
 - teachers consistently apply the school's behaviour policy so that pupils' poor behaviour is quickly and effectively challenged and that pupils understand the consequences of their actions
 - pupils fully understand the negative effect poor attendance has on their academic progress and take greater responsibility for their attendance in school
 - pupils develop resilience and the skills to react positively to problems they may encounter socially or in their academic work
 - all pupils understand and accept that all individuals have the right to feel safe and to be respected.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- The headteacher and other leaders have led many positive developments since the last inspection resulting in improvements in pupils' attendance, behaviour and academic progress. However, inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' progress, especially in mathematics. Although improving, pupils' attendance is still below the national average for mainstream schools and special schools.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have used this information to plan appropriate actions to raise standards. However, these actions have not yet led to significant and sustained improvements, particularly in pupils' attendance and progress in mathematics.
- Leaders use staff's appraisals to identify their strengths, areas for improvement and training needs. Staff who fail to meet the school's expectations are challenged and supported through action plans. Staff have received appropriate and effective in-house and externally led training. This has included information, support and guidance about subject-specific matters, special educational needs and/or disabilities, safeguarding and behaviour management. The majority of staff who completed the inspection questionnaire said that the training has helped them improve their knowledge, skills, understanding and performance. Inspectors agree with this view. However, a small minority of staff who completed the staff questionnaire think that the school is not well led and managed and that their views are not considered and their hard work and successes are not recognised.
- The checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are frequent and thorough. The checks include scrutinies of pupils' work, brief and extended lesson observations and discussions with pupils. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection but leaders recognise that there is still some variability.
- The majority of subject leaders have the knowledge and expertise to make sure pupils do well in the subject for which they have responsibility. However, a very small minority of leaders are not doing enough to secure the rapid improvements necessary to make sure pupils do as well as they should.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. However, a minority of staff do not apply the school's assessment policy consistently. As a result, pupils are not always sure how to improve their work or how to rectify their mistakes.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have remodelled and reorganised the curriculum. The variety of subjects, activities and experiences is broad and balanced and generally meets the wide range of pupils' needs. The key stage 3 'nurture' curriculum is effective in closing pupils' gaps in learning and improving their attitudes to learning. At key stage 4, all pupils have opportunities to study at least five courses that lead to externally validated qualifications including GCSEs in English and mathematics. However, there is variability in the way that the curriculum is delivered which results in some pupils not doing as well as they should, particularly in mathematics.
- Enrichment activities and educational visits are popular with pupils and enhance their learning. For example, during this inspection pupils took part in an 'immersion' day focusing on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) activities. Pupils participated enthusiastically in buying the materials for a rocket and then building and firing it. Pupils also had opportunities to develop their financial understanding through budgeting and writing cheques.
- Pupils have opportunities to visit museums, go to the cinema and to take part in outdoor and adventurous activities. Some pupils have the opportunity to follow the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 have work experience opportunities. Pupils from Year 8 onwards have careers information, advice and guidance. As a result, almost all pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 11 secure a college place or employment and training.
- The school actively promotes fundamental British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most of the pupils have a clear understanding of how to play a constructive role in modern Britain. A very large majority of pupils understand, accept and tolerate others' differences and behave in a way that supports a calm, purposeful and positive atmosphere in the school. However, there is a very small minority of pupils who are intolerant of others' differences and use language that is unkind.
- The school works effectively with an array of external agencies to support the wide range of pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. For example, an educational psychologist assesses and identifies pupils' needs. The school works with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and other

organisations, such as the Youth Offending Service, to make sure pupils' needs are met.

- The school has received effective support from the local authority for teachers, leaders and pupils and their families. The local authority has commissioned the support of a local leader of education (LLE) and taken action against parents and carers who have not made sure their child attends school regularly.
- The local authority's behaviour support team and learning support advisory team have also provided effective support. This backing has been welcomed and appreciated by senior leaders and governors. As a result, improvements are evident in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' work, attendance and behaviour. The local authority and the LLE have recently reduced the level of their support, demonstrating their confidence in the school's leadership team to sustain and improve the school's performance.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have a clear view of what needs to be done to maintain recent improvements and to move the school forward. Governors have shared their vision and expectations with staff and are clear that staff and pupils who do not meet expectations will be challenged. They confidently question the headteacher about the progress of pupils and what actions are being taken to address weaknesses in teaching and in pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour. They are fully aware of how the pupil premium funding is being used to improve the progress and educational experiences of pupils who are disadvantaged.
 - Governors meet regularly with staff and leaders, offering effective support with strategic plans, as well as checking the impact of these strategies. Governors make regular visits to see the school at work and to scrutinise the progress of priority areas of the school's 'raising attainment plan'.
 - The governing body carries out its statutory obligations to keep pupils safe, to ensure equality of opportunity and to make sure statutory policies and the school's website comply with current guidance.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and underpinned by detailed policies, procedures and staff training. The school site is secure and all visitors are checked appropriately. All staff have been trained in child protection and safeguarding issues, including sessions on how to recognise the warning signs that pupils may be at possible risk of radicalisation or sexual exploitation. As a result, all staff are vigilant and understand their safeguarding duties. A number of leaders and governors have completed safer recruitment training. The checks on staff members' suitability to work with children are thorough and rigorous as a result. Leaders and governors make sure that all safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements and are fit for purpose. Record-keeping is detailed and of high quality. The school works effectively with a wide range of agencies and professionals such as the police and social workers to make sure pupils are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching has not enabled pupils to make the progress they should in mathematics and science, or in developing their handwriting and writing skills.
- There is a considerable range of ability in many classes. The majority of teachers use the information they have about what pupils know and can do to plan effectively to meet pupils' needs. However, a small minority of teachers do not evaluate pupils' knowledge and understanding carefully. As a result, some pupils are given work that is too easy or too hard.
- Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. This is particularly the case in mathematics. Pupils who readily grasp an idea or concept do not have sufficient opportunities to deepen or extend their knowledge and understanding by solving increasingly difficult problems or by giving reasons for their answers. As a consequence, the most able pupils do not do well.
- The teaching of English has improved since the previous inspection and an increasing number of pupils are doing well in this subject. Pupils' reading skills are improved through a range of strategies and support including the teaching of phonics for pupils still at the early stages of reading. Pupils' understanding of what they have read is improved through effective questioning about the text. However, pupils are not always encouraged to read at home or at times other than in English lessons.
- Where there is too much reliance on the use of worksheets, the development of pupils' handwriting skills is limited and opportunities to write at length are reduced. Too often, pupils complete short or one-word answers to questions rather than exploring and deepening their knowledge with longer answers to more open-ended and challenging problems.

- Pupils' speaking skills are well developed as they have opportunities to discuss and debate ideas and topical issues. During this inspection, pupils were seen heatedly and eloquently debating the topic of culpable homicide. However, many pupils do not have enough opportunities to write down and edit their thoughts, ideas and opinions.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They keep pupils on task when their behaviour deteriorates and ask open-ended questions to help pupils think about their work. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they value the help, encouragement and support they receive from teaching assistants.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Many pupils are courteous, polite and thoughtful and accept and respect that not all people have the same views, values and beliefs as them. Nevertheless, there is a very small minority of pupils who exhibit prejudiced attitudes towards some staff and pupils. This small group of pupils use derogatory language that is upsetting. Leaders are aware of this issue and are taking effective steps to reduce the number of incidents of prejudiced behaviour.
- The majority of pupils are able to control their feelings and emotions when they encounter difficulties. However, a minority of pupils' behaviour worsens or they 'give up' when they find work boring or difficult or when they meet problems, or are anxious, in social situations. As a result, their work deteriorates, they fail to make the progress of which they are capable and the learning of other pupils is disrupted.
- Almost all of the pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in school. The vast majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the school's own questionnaire agree that their child feels safe in school. Pupils are taught how to keep safe and how to identify potential dangers and risks through personal, social and health education lessons and the school's work with external agencies such as the police and the local authority's alcohol and drug misuse team. The school helps families to keep their child safe. For example, parents have opportunities to attend workshops on e-safety.
- Pupils from Years 8 to 11 have frequent careers information, advice and guidance. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have work experience. Pupils' financial capability and understanding is developed well through a range of activities that include budgeting and money management. As a result, almost all pupils leaving the school in Year 11 secure a college place or employment and training and are well prepared for the next stage in their life.
- Pupils who follow courses at off-site providers develop a range of work-related skills including problem solving, resilience and functional literacy and numeracy. Information provided by the school shows that this group of pupils are doing well academically, attend regularly, are well behaved and have positive attitudes to learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' overall absence, though improving, is higher than the national average for mainstream and special schools. However, the attendance of the vast majority of pupils has improved from very low starting points. For example, pupils' attendance has improved from single figures at their previous school to 80% at Mount Gilbert.
- The school works well with external agencies to make sure pupils are safe. For example, the school follows up on pupils' absence and refers pupils who have long-term absence to the local authority's children missing from education team.
- Pupils arrive at the school with a history of social, emotional and mental health difficulties and a disrupted education. From this starting point, leaders have worked effectively to improve pupils' behaviour and to develop their attitudes to learning. However, behaviour observed during this inspection was mixed. Some pupils lose interest in their learning and misbehave, disrupting the learning of others. This is not helped by a small minority of staff who do not apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. Records of exclusions show that there are some serious incidents of poor behaviour, and fixed-term exclusions remain high.
- A reward system is in place and pupils told inspectors that they like being recognised for 'getting things

right'. Pupils with improving and/or high attendance are regularly rewarded.

- Pupils are well supervised at break and lunchtimes and the vast majority of pupils mix well with staff and other pupils and behave well. The number of incidents of pupils leaving lessons or the school site have reduced significantly. There have been no recent incidents of pupils smoking on the school site.
- The vast majority of pupils wear their uniform as the school expects. The school site is clean and tidy and there is little litter. The numerous bright and lively displays around the school are respected and make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils respect the school site and the incidents of damage to school property have greatly reduced. There is no graffiti in the building.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils enter the school with standards of attainment that are well below the national average as a result of a disrupted education and poor attendance at previous schools.
- Since the previous inspection, progress, although improving, remains variable. Current pupils' work shows that pupils do well in English in key stages 3 and 4, mathematics in Years 7 and 11 and science in Year 7 and in key stage 4. However, pupils do not do well in mathematics in Years 8, 9 and 10 and science in Years 8 and 9. In addition, the most able pupils have not been challenged well enough in mathematics and science to make the progress they should in order to achieve an increased number of GCSE A* to C or equivalent qualifications.
- Information provided by the school, and confirmed by a scrutiny of pupils' work, shows that pupils do well in a range of other subjects including art, core and examination physical education, design technology, humanities and food technology.
- Most of the pupils enter the school with reading ages that are well below their chronological age. From these very low starting points, pupils' reading skills are developed well. This is achieved through effective teaching and a range of support and intervention including tuition in phonics (the sounds that letters represent) for pupils still in the early stages of being able to read. However, pupils do not read widely and often in lessons, other than in English lessons, or at home.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are developed well. Pupils are given opportunities to formulate arguments and to discuss and debate their views with staff and other pupils. As a result, pupils are able to use a good range of subject-specific vocabulary and terminology. However, pupils' good speaking skills are not always reflected in the quality of their writing.
- The work in pupils' books shows that recently more pupils have been making better progress in mathematics. However, pupils, especially the most able, have too few opportunities to reason mathematically and to solve increasingly difficult problems. As a consequence, pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts and theories is not consolidated or extended.
- Leaders and governors make sure that the pupil premium funding is used to provide a wide variety of support for eligible pupils. The impact of this is that the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and nationally in terms of their academic progress and social and emotional development are closing.
- Pupils following courses at off-site provision have good attendance and do well in developing literacy, numeracy and specific skills such as motor-vehicle maintenance.
- Almost all pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. As a result, the overwhelming majority of the pupils who left the school at the end of Year 11 in 2015 and 2016 secured a college place or employment and training.

School details

Unique reference number	132122
Local authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	10008198

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Roberts
Headteacher	Lisa Lyon
Telephone number	01952 387 670
Website	www.mountgilbertschool.co.uk
Email address	Admin.mountgilbert@taw.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 March 2014

Information about this school

- Mount Gilbert is a local authority maintained special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The vast majority of pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school takes pupils from Telford and Wrekin, Wolverhampton, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire East local authorities.
- Nearly all pupils are White British.
- A very small minority of the pupils are girls.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is much higher than the national average.
- A large number of pupils start at the school at times other than the start of the autumn term. A high proportion of pupils start at the school during key stage 4.
- The school provides opportunities for pupils to follow off-site courses at Telford Drive for motor vehicle maintenance, the Education Development Centre for English and mathematics functional skills and the National Tuition Advisory Service to provide tuition for pupils with long-term absence.
- The school meets the requirements for the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed pupils' learning in classes in all year groups across the school and in a range of subjects. Some of these observations were done jointly with a deputy headteacher. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning and progress. Inspectors also observed a pupil council meeting.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher, other school leaders, teachers and members of the governing body including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors also met with social workers, a representative from the local authority and a local leader of education who provides support to the school.
- The views of the 12 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered. Parents' views were also considered from written responses to Ofsted's questionnaire and from the school's own parent questionnaires. Questionnaire responses from 24 members of staff were analysed.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about what it is like to be a pupil at Mount Gilbert School. Their views were also considered from the school's own pupil questionnaires.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 9 read to an inspector.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's information on pupils' current progress, attendance and behaviour, the school's self-evaluation and subsequent improvement plans, work in pupils' books, safeguarding and child protection documents including the checks made on staff's suitability to work with children. Inspectors also scrutinised pupils' statements of special educational needs, education, health and care plans and provision maps (documents used to show the provision and support for individual pupils).
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils as they arrived at school, during break and lunchtimes, and as they left the school premises at the end of the day, as well as in lessons.

Inspection team

Peter Humphries, lead inspector

Sarah Ashley

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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