

Inspection of Hamilton School

135 Bulmershe Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5SG

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Sarah Concannon. This school is part of the Maiden Erlegh Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jonathon Peck, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Nicholas Jones.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour have increased significantly since the school opened. Pupils are expected to work hard, to behave well, and to do their best. The majority do so and take increasing pride in their achievements because of the good-quality support, care and reassurance provided by the school.

Enrichment activities, such as boxing and cooking, make a valuable contribution to pupils' self-esteem, confidence, and enjoyment of school. Pupils look forward to these and other special events with keen anticipation, such as the upcoming trip to a local theme park to reward positive attitudes and behaviour.

Staff build respectful relationships with pupils, who feel secure as a result. Well-established routines in the morning help pupils to prepare for the day ahead. They are warmly greeted at the start of each school day. Pupils can be kind and thoughtful, welcoming visitors politely and with interest, for instance. Sometimes they become frustrated or agitated with their friends, their teachers, or with life in general. Staff respond calmly and sensitively when this is the case, providing pupils with the time and space needed to help them to manage their emotions in a safe environment.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school's quiet insistence that pupils can, and will, attend regularly, behave appropriately, and achieve well has been a key feature in improving the school and in lifting pupils' aspirations for the future. A consistently strong focus on learning ensures that pupils are left in no doubt about why they are in school.

Lessons are usually calm and settled so that pupils can get on with their work. Behaviour can be lively when pupils are moving between different parts of the school. However, all areas are well supervised, and staff manage behaviour well. The school is working hard to ensure that the revised behaviour management policy is fully embedded in school life. Pupils' attendance is improving.

The trust's commitment to providing high-quality education for some of the most vulnerable pupils in the community is clear. Leaders have worked methodically and systematically to address each of the weaknesses identified when the school first joined the trust. Strengthened leadership capacity in the past two years has accelerated the pace of development. Staff report high morale, strong teamwork, and a culture of mutual care and respect. They feel well supported by leaders and appreciate opportunities to share expertise between schools in the trust.

Teachers are clear about what they will teach in each subject and secure assessment procedures provide helpful information about how well pupils are learning. However, sometimes the curriculum is not adapted as well as it could be to support pupils' individual needs. The work in pupils' books and their contributions

during lessons demonstrate the positive impact the curriculum is having on their knowledge and understanding.

Leaders have raised the profile of reading in recent months. Developments have included the introduction of a school library and a phonics programme. Pupils are increasingly well equipped with secure reading skills as a result. The school has rightly identified the need to ensure that staff have the required subject knowledge to teach early reading skills consistently well.

Pupils are securely prepared for the next stage of their education. Last year, almost all achieved nationally accredited qualifications, including GCSEs, in subjects such as English, mathematics and science. In 2023, all pupils moved on to positive destinations, including colleges of further education. The school has increased the range of qualification courses available this year, with the introduction of functional skills and BTEC programmes.

The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme ensures suitable coverage of a wide range of topics and themes. Curriculum content includes consideration of important issues, such as consent. However, some aspects of the PSHE programme, such as relationships, health and sex education (RSHE), are at an early stage of development. Older pupils receive appropriate careers guidance and benefit from effective support for the coming move out of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The revised curriculum is not always adapted well enough to ensure that all pupils can access the learning fully. As a result, some pupils find it hard to engage with curriculum content in lessons and learn less well. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is adapted appropriately so that all pupils achieve well, regardless of their needs and starting points.
- Variations in staff subject knowledge mean that recent developments in the teaching of reading are not fully established. This means that some pupils make slower progress in learning to read than they could. Leaders should make sure that improvements in the teaching of reading are implemented consistently well.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	147675
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10322040
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nick Jones
Headteacher	Sarah Concannon
Website	www.hamilton-school.co.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed from September 2022.
- The school is part of the Maiden Erlegh Trust.
- Hamilton School converted to become an academy in January 2020. When its predecessor school, Phoenix College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- There are no girls on the school's roll currently, and no pupils in the sixth form.
- The school uses 11 unregistered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings during this inspection. These included discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, and

other leaders. They also spoke with a range of staff at different times during the inspection.

- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer, executive director of education, the chair of trustees, and the chair of the school advisory board.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were gathered through a range of sources, including Ofsted's surveys and discussions. Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and at other times of the school day. They also met with a group of pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, and food technology. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking with subject leaders, teachers and pupils.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kate Fripp

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024