

# Inspection of a school judged for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Mirfield Free Grammar School

Kitson Hill Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire WF14 9EZ

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Inspection dates:

19 and 20 November 2024

## Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The principal of this school is Alexandra Fuller. This school is part of Great Heights Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Amanda Bennett, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Carlton Midgley.

## What is it like to attend this school?

The Mirfield Free Grammar School is a warm and supportive community. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. There is a sense of togetherness around the school. Pupils feel safe. They learn about county lines, consent and the value of healthy relationships. Pupils know that they can talk to staff if they have concerns. The school is calm. Pupils behave well both in lessons and during social times.

The school has high expectations for pupils' academic achievement. However, the gap between disadvantaged pupils' performance and their peers in recent public examinations remains too large.

Pupils and students from Year 7 to 13 benefit from a range of careers advice and activities. These include mock interviews and a careers fair. Pupils have opportunities to get involved in school life through the extra-curricular programmes. These include chess, art club, debating and table tennis. Pupils broaden their horizons through a range of trips and visits.

The school develops opportunities for pupil leadership. Pupils play an active role in the life of the school through the Young School Leaders Programme. Through this, pupils build independence and develop responsibility.

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

The school, with the support of the trust, has implemented improvements to the curriculum in recent years. Leaders have considered what pupils should learn and in what order. Where this work is more successful, pupils study a well-planned and challenging curriculum. For example, in mathematics, learning is carefully sequenced. There is a focus on pupils having the foundations to do more complex work later. This is not currently the case in all subjects.

The school has introduced strategies to improve the consistency of how well pupils learn the curriculum. For example, training has equipped teachers to use research-based approaches to classroom teaching. Disadvantaged pupils do not learn and remember the curriculum well enough. The school recognises that these pupils do not achieve as well as their peers.

The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. Individual pupil passports outline pupils' targets. These allow teachers to make adaptations to their teaching. In some cases, targets for pupils with SEND are not specific enough. This means that learning is not always precisely adapted to meet the individual needs of pupils with SEND.

The school places a high priority on reading. Those who struggle with reading are well supported. The trust has supported the school well through its English hub. As a result, the phonics and 'fixing fluency' interventions are highly effective.

Pupils behave well. Lessons are calm and pupils understand what is expected of them. The 'reflect' room helps pupils who struggle to meet the school's behaviour expectations. Many pupils maintain high levels of attendance. A co-ordinated whole school approach to attendance, with expert support from the trust, has had a demonstrable positive impact.

Sixth-form students value the advice and guidance that they receive about university, employment or training. As a result, they make well-informed choices about their next steps. Since the previous inspection, the school has reviewed the range of sixth-form courses on offer to students. The school ensures that courses match the needs of students. Some aspects of the sixth-form curriculum are not implemented consistently. As a result, outcomes in some sixth-form courses are not as strong as the school would like.

Pupils benefit from a well-thought-through personal development offer. Pupils talk with confidence about the importance of fundamental British values. They understand and can talk about a range of different faiths and cultures. They understand the importance of treating everyone equally and with respect. Pupils learn important life lessons to help them grow up in modern Britain. For example, pupils talk about consent and the dangers of online grooming.

Trustees and governors have a strong commitment to the school. They have a thorough understanding of the school's work and fulfil their statutory duties. The school has navigated significant organisational change since the previous inspection. The school has

made considered actions to improve the quality of education. These actions have been made in the best interest of pupils. However, the impact of these actions has not seen the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils improve at the rate the school wants. The school prioritises staff well-being and ensures that workloads are fair and manageable.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Some aspects of the school's work to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are not effective. Where this is the case, disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well enough. The school must ensure that improvements are made to the provision for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders should ensure that their work linked to this is regularly checked and evaluated.
- While the school has made effective changes to the range and structure of sixth-form courses, the implementation of the curriculum and provision is still variable. As a result, some students in the sixth form do not achieve as well as they could. The school should ensure that the curriculum is implemented and embedded across all academic and vocational subjects so that students on all courses achieve well.

## **Background**

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in February 2020.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136674
<b>Local authority</b>	Kirklees
<b>Inspection number</b>	10346417
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,449
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	296
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Carlton Midgley
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Amanda Bennett
<b>Principal</b>	Alexandra Fuller
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.themfg.co.uk">www.themfg.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	12 and 13 February 2020

## Information about this school

- The principal of the school joined in September 2023.
- The school is part of Great Heights Academy Trust.
- The school currently uses three registered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other senior staff.
- An inspector met with the CEO of the trust. In addition, an inspector met with the chair of the local governing body and the chair of the trust board.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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' interest first.
- Inspectors met with groups of staff and considered their opinions expressed through the online staff survey.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents expressed through the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

## Inspection team

Julian Appleyard, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Kilgannon	Ofsted Inspector
Pritiben Patel	Ofsted Inspector

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