

# The George Eliot School

Raveloe Drive, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV11 4QP

## Inspection dates

8–9 November 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 |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good                 |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Outcomes for Year 11 pupils in 2016 and 2017 were weak. This was as a result of weak teaching and turbulence in the school’s staffing.
- While there have been positive, sustainable changes to teaching over the last year, pupils’ outcomes are not yet good enough.
- The attendance of some groups of pupils has been weak in the past. Attendance is improving but it is not yet good enough. The rates of persistent absence for some groups continue to be too high.
- Some groups of pupils have a limited understanding of what their next steps might be and what careers they might aspire to.
- While pupils have a basic understanding of citizenship, fundamental British values, radicalisation and extremism, their understanding is not as strong as it needs to be in order to keep themselves safe from the risks they might face.
- Pupils and staff say that behaviour has improved recently. However, in a minority of lessons, low-level disruption means that pupils’ learning is negatively affected.
- The new expectations that leaders have about how teachers should teach and the new assessment system are not being regularly implemented by staff. As a result, they are not having a consistently positive impact on pupils’ progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new principal has a clear, ambitious vision. This is understood and shared by her senior team and the wider staff.
- The school’s work to support pupils’ mental health and well-being is having a positive impact.

## Full report

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

- Improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring that:
  - the quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to improve
  - teachers implement the new teaching and assessment systems consistently
  - teachers match learning tasks to pupils' needs more consistently
  - pupils understand the new teaching and assessment systems and their roles in them
  - low-level disruption ceases to have a negative impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- Improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of citizenship, fundamental British values, radicalisation and extremism in order to ensure pupils are safe from the risks they may face. Do this by:
  - reviewing and evaluating all of the experiences that contribute to pupils' understanding of these aspects
  - monitoring the effectiveness of the curriculum in these areas
  - making sure that appropriate opportunities are taken in lessons to reinforce pupils' understanding
  - ensuring that pupils have strong knowledge, confidence and understanding in these areas.
- Where groups of pupils have missed out on careers information, advice and guidance in the past, make sure that these pupils are given the information and opportunities they need to make informed choices about next steps and careers.
- Improve behaviour so that fixed-term exclusions continue to fall and the number of pupils who are removed from lessons to internal isolation falls.
- Continue to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, and that of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The new leadership team has quickly and accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have created an action plan that directly addresses previous weaknesses. However, some of the changes that leaders have made are not yet fully embedded or it is too early to see their impact.
- The new headteacher has successfully improved staff morale. Staff share her goal of rapidly improving the school. The majority of staff agree that they are proud to be a member of staff at the school and that the school has improved recently. One member of staff commented: 'Senior leaders now listen and include staff in discussion before implementing changes.' Another said: 'This school takes teacher workload seriously.'
- Leaders introduced new, specific expectations of how teachers should teach in the autumn term of 2017. The main expectation is that teachers will use assessment to plan work that matches pupils' needs closely. While this is working well in places, it is not yet implemented consistently. Pupils are not yet fully used to the new ways of working.
- The school's recent plans for the spending of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding are now coherent and detailed. A new leader for disadvantaged pupils has been appointed who has a track record of improvements in this area. Although the strategy has only been in place for a short time, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils has already begun to show firm signs of improvement. The extra funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is spent carefully and these pupils' needs are being met well.
- The changes leaders have made to the curriculum at key stage 3 are relatively recent and have not had sustained impact. However, staff are passionate about these changes because they can see that they are already improving pupils' knowledge and confidence.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders have made changes that ensure all pupils study a range of subjects so they will leave the school with a wide range of skills and knowledge. Pupils can also access some subjects across the multi-academy trust (MAT), which further enhances the range of courses available.
- Pupils have access to a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. However, the proportion of pupils who take part in these activities is relatively low. Leaders are attempting to increase the number of pupils who participate in extra-curricular opportunities but do not track how well different groups of pupils take part.

### Governance of the school

- The MAT has recently changed the way in which governance is organised in the school. The local governing body has been replaced with a 'raising achievement board' (RAB). The RAB's remit is to focus entirely on pupils' progress, while the MAT board will take care of all other governance functions. It is too soon to see the impact of this change because the RAB has only met once so far.

- It is clear from governing body and the RAB meeting notes that members of the RAB have a strong understanding of school data and know how to hold school leaders to account. They ask pertinent questions and leaders give governors and the RAB clear information. This means that members of the RAB are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Governors have a strong strategic overview of safeguarding and visit the school in person to assure themselves of the accuracy of, for example, vetting checks on staff.

## Safeguarding

- The systems that leaders have designed to safeguard pupils meet all of the statutory requirements. Leaders have made sure that all of the documentation on the vetting of staff is complete and fit for purpose.
- The leaders responsible for safeguarding have introduced very simple, clear systems for the reporting of concerns about pupils. This means that leaders can spot patterns in problems and make sure that help is provided to pupils when they need it. This well-organised system shows that teachers and leaders take concerns seriously, respond swiftly and appropriately, and have a strong knowledge of safeguarding.
- Leaders keep meticulous records of the ways in which concerns about pupils are responded to. They work closely with outside agencies to make sure that pupils get the help that they need. They show tenacity in their work, visiting pupils when required and taking any action needed to keep pupils safe.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- In a minority of lessons, work is too easy for some pupils, too hard for other pupils, or it does not engage pupils' interest. In these lessons, pupils' low-level disruption sometimes slows their learning, and the learning of others, considerably.
- Overall, teaching has improved recently as a result of leaders' higher expectations of teachers' practice and more effective professional development. Additionally, the school has been able to fill all of its posts with subject specialists. However, as a result of disrupted teaching, the use of non-specialists and cover teachers in the past, pupils have not made the progress that they are capable of. It is too early to see the full impact of the improvements to teaching, learning and assessment in the school.
- Teachers use a host of different tasks in their lessons, such as video clips, written tasks, pair work, questioning, imaginative and dramatic activities. Pupils appreciate this variety because it makes their lessons more interesting and challenges them to work in a wide range of ways. However, sometimes teachers choose tasks which do not challenge pupils. In these lessons, pupils' progress is slow. For example, in languages, sometimes pupils do not have enough opportunity to speak in the target language. Their tasks are based too much on grammar and vocabulary without the opportunity to practice in the target language.
- The recently introduced assessment strategy contributes well to pupils' progress when teachers follow it closely. However, it is not yet fully embedded because staff do not follow the strategy consistently.

- In some lessons, teachers do not direct more complex work to the most able pupils. In others, pupils choose their own tasks without teachers' direction and select tasks that are too easy for them. Sometimes, teachers' assessments are too general to help pupils make strong progress.
- Generally, teachers have strong subject knowledge and mostly provide clear explanations to pupils. As a result, in many lessons, pupils' understanding is strong. For example, in a science lesson, a teacher used a physical model to clearly articulate the role of the organs in the human body. In a mathematics lesson, pupils moved from the calculation of simple interest to compound interest, and then to compound interest in a real-life complicated scenario. The teacher expected pupils to use their new knowledge in unfamiliar and complex new ways.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers use questioning to make sure that pupils have understood and to deepen pupils' understanding. They improve pupils' confidence through careful questioning and gradually increase the complexity of their questions. In these lessons, pupils make strong progress.
- Teachers deploy teaching assistants well. They are clear as to their role in pupils' learning, support pupils effectively and enable the pupils who they work with to make progress.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Require improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe from a range of risks needs development. For example, although pupils have some knowledge of radicalisation and extremism, this knowledge is not well developed. They do not have a strong enough understanding of citizenship. While the school offers pupils a variety of opportunities to experience cultural activities, be part of the school and local community, and take part in activities related to fundamental British values, pupils do not consistently understand the relevance of these things to their personal development.
- Pupils wear their uniforms smartly and proudly. Many of the pupils who spoke with inspectors displayed confidence and were highly articulate about their experiences of the school. Pupils' pride in their school is developing as leaders continue to make improvements. However, pupils say that litter is an issue. Inspectors observed this at the end of social times, when much litter was left in the playground even though bins were nearby.
- Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that rare occurrences of bullying will be dealt with effectively by staff. The vigilance that safeguarding leaders display helps to promote pupils' welfare.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.

- Overall, pupils' attendance across the school is in line with the national average. However, the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils, is not yet in line with the national average for all pupils. Leaders know this and have implemented a range of interventions to help pupils to attend more regularly. Recent attendance figures show that these interventions are having a positive impact.
- Inspectors observed a significant minority of lessons where low-level disruption slowed pupils' progress. Pupils told inspectors that this was still a typical occurrence in some lessons. However, teachers and pupils told inspectors that, as a result of leaders' higher expectations, behaviour has improved over the past few months. Pupils are much clearer on what is expected of them and leaders are taking a 'zero-tolerance approach' to poor behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that they appreciate this clarity.
- As a result of leaders' new, higher expectations of behaviour, fixed-term exclusions are higher than the national average. However, repeat fixed-term exclusions are relatively low.
- Leaders have introduced a 'seclusion room'. This room aims to help pupils manage their behaviour by offering quiet, reflective time. It is too soon to see the impact of this on pupils' behaviour.
- Around the school, pupils' behaviour is generally positive. They move around sensibly between lessons and at social times, and are respectful towards one another.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Despite making changes to make sure that Year 11 pupils in 2017 had strong, specialist teaching, leaders' actions were too late to address the legacy of underachievement. However, the school's own information shows that these pupils went on to a range of destinations in line with their aspirations.
- Leaders are filling in the gaps where pupils in other year groups have not had effective or comprehensive careers information, advice and guidance due to past turbulence. This means, for example, that the current Year 7 are being prepared more effectively for their future destinations.
- As a result of the closure of a studio school in the same multi-academy trust, a number of pupils joined the school during Year 11. These pupils could neither complete their studio school curriculum, nor take a full range of subjects at The George Eliot School. As a result of this disruption to their education, these pupils did not make the progress that they were capable of. However, by working closely with local further education providers, school leaders ensured that these pupils went on to destinations that matched their aspirations.
- In Years 10 and 11, current pupils' progress is much stronger across all year groups and across a range of subjects. However, the legacy of weak teaching means that some groups of pupils still have a lot of catching up to do. Leaders have identified that disadvantaged pupils in Year 10 are behind where they should be. They have implemented plans that are beginning to address this issue. In languages, pupils are not making as much progress as they should, sometimes because of low-level disruption and sometimes because of weaker teaching.

- As a result of effective assessments of pupils' skills and needs at the beginning of the year, teachers have specific knowledge about what pupils are struggling with. Following highly focused teaching, current assessments show that many key stage 4 pupils have made rapid progress since September. It is too early to see the full impact of this.
- The school's progress analysis shows that pupils at key stage 3 are making the progress that their teachers expect of them, across a range of subjects. Inspectors agreed with this analysis.

## School details

|                         |              |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Unique reference number | 137079       |
| Local authority         | Warwickshire |
| Inspection number       | 10037898     |

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 16   |
| Gender of pupils                    | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 815  |
| Appropriate authority               | Board of trustees  |
| Chair                               | Tim Render   |
| Principal                           | Homeira Zakary   |
| Telephone number                    | 024 7674 4000  |
| Website                             | <a href="http://www.george-eliot.warwickshire.sch.uk">www.george-eliot.warwickshire.sch.uk</a>   |
| Email address                       | <a href="mailto:info@george-eliot.warwickshire.sch.uk">info@george-eliot.warwickshire.sch.uk</a> |
| Date of previous inspection         | 3–4 June 2014  |

## Information about this school

- The school meets 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 sponsored by the Midland Academies Trust. The trust delegates responsibility for standards in the school to a raising achievement board. All other governance functions are undertaken by the trust board.
- Leaders from the multi-academy trust work across all of the schools in the trust. The new headteacher took over the school in spring 2017. A new leadership team was formed from September 2017.
- The school uses Grapevine alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is



slightly higher than the national average. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is above the national average.

- The school meets the government's floor standards for secondary schools.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the principal, her senior leadership team and other leaders across the school. Meetings were also held with the executive principal, chief executive officer of the trust, and the chair of the school's raising achievement board.
- Inspectors evaluated pupils' views through 85 responses to Ofsted's online survey, formal discussions with pupils from all year groups and informal discussions during breaks and lunchtimes.
- The views of parents were evaluated through the 183 responses to Parent View and 92 free-text responses. Inspectors also met with the chair of the school's parent voice panel.
- Inspectors visited parts of lessons across the curriculum and year groups. They looked at pupils' work to evaluate the progress that pupils are making. They took the views of staff into account through the 43 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- Documents from a range of the school's activities were scrutinised, including those about safeguarding, governance, attendance and behaviour.

## Inspection team

|                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Dan Owen, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Chris Stevens            | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Graeme Rudland           | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Andrea Quigley           | Ofsted Inspector        |

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