

Inspection of Midhurst Rother College

North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex GU29 9DT

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The principal of this school is Stuart Edwards. This school is part of United Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jon Coles, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Dame Reena Keeble.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since May 2013.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school provides pupils with an exceptional education. It strives for 'the best in everyone' and has high academic ambitions for all pupils. This is reflected in everything that the school does. As a result, pupils achieve impressive academic success, reflected in their examination results.

Pupils conduct themselves in an exemplary manner. The school sets high expectations for pupils' behaviour alongside offering high-quality pastoral support. Dedicated staff work tirelessly to create an environment where mutual respect and strong relationships are the norm. On rare occasions that conduct falls below expectations, adults deal with it swiftly. The school does not tolerate any form of bullying. Consequently, learning is rarely interrupted, and pupils feel safe in school.

The school's personal development programme is highly effective. The extended school day includes an enrichment programme that allows pupils to choose from a huge range of opportunities to develop their talents and interests or learn new skills. This includes lessons in Latin and Welsh, astronomy, cheerleading, chess, to name but a few. Pupils benefit from many opportunities to participate in the performing arts, sporting activities and other cultural experiences, including overseas. The school supports high numbers of pupils to engage with these opportunities.

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

The school has created a rigorous, broad, and highly effective curriculum. Learning has been carefully planned and sequenced in each subject so that knowledge and skills build logically from Year 7 to Year 13. The above-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported to access the same broad offer as their peers. They achieve very well in a wide range of subjects and, as a result, are fully prepared for the next stage of their education, employment, or training.

Teachers provide a highly structured learning environment that ensures pupils are focused on their studies. Teachers carefully check pupils' understanding of what has been taught, picking up on and addressing misconceptions. Pupils frequently revisit prior learning at the start of lessons, which helps them remember important knowledge. They are highly proficient in recalling what they have previously learned. Consistently high-quality teaching from staff who are experts in their subjects means pupils develop a deep understanding of the ambitious subject content.

The school has established a very positive reading culture. Pupils speak confidently and knowledgeably about various texts, poetry, and genres. Some pupils require additional help to improve their reading. These pupils receive timely and valuable additional support and catch up quickly with their reading.

Sixth-form students are very well prepared for adulthood. Along with following a broad academic curriculum, they learn how to study independently. Students

contribute to the school and grow their confidence when they take on leadership roles supporting younger pupils. The school has a comprehensive careers programme and engages with local employers to provide all year groups with meaningful experiences of the world of work. As a result, sixth-form students are remarkably well supported in considering their future options.

The personal, social, health education (PSHE) curriculum is exceptionally well-planned to help pupils navigate the world around them. They learn how to look after their mental and physical health, about potential dangers such as county lines, and the importance of their digital footprint. They know how to seek help if needed, and they are confident that adults will support them effectively.

Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. There are clear, well-understood expectations. As a result, there is a calm learning environment. When pupils struggle, the school takes considered steps to support them. For some pupils, this includes carefully planned adaptations to their timetable, such as attending an alternative provision. Leaders use these approaches thoughtfully to support pupils in overcoming barriers to successful learning.

The school is relentless in its support for pupils to achieve regular attendance. It has a deep understanding of the factors that prevent some pupils from attending as often as they could. Investment and support from the trust is supporting leaders in tackling these issues, so that all pupils can benefit fully from the high-quality curriculum on offer. This work is leading to improvement, with persistent absence declining over time. Nevertheless, the school remains determined to achieve further and rapid improvement in this area, keeping the effectiveness of its work under constant review.

Leaders at all levels are relentless in their work to continue improving pupils' achievements and experiences. Those with responsibility for governance support and challenge the school well, ensuring that the school maintains its high standards. The school gives staff exceptionally high-quality training and supports their well-being and workload. They feel valued and are all empowered to contribute to the highly effective culture that prevails across the school. As a result, staff are justifiably proud to work at this school and to serve the community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	135760
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10321932
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1156
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	129
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dame Reena Keeble
Chief executive officer	Jon Coles
Principal	Stuart Edwards
Website	www.mrc-academy.org
Date of previous inspection	1 and 2 May 2013

Information about this school

- Midhurst Rother College is part of United Learning Trust.
- The school currently uses three registered alternative providers.
- 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 inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 school leaders, including the principal, senior leaders, and middle leaders. They also met representatives from the local governing board, the board of trustees, and the regional director from the trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, mathematics, art, languages and geography. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also discussed the curriculum and provision for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, governors, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts the pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

James Stuart, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jo Brinkley	His Majesty's Inspector
Scott Reece	His Majesty's Inspector
Peter Fry	Ofsted Inspector
Owen McColgan	Ofsted Inspector

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