

# West Hill School

Thompson Cross, Stamford Street, Stalybridge, Cheshire SK15 1LX

## Inspection dates

15–16 November 2016

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher's leadership is good. He instils a sense of moral purpose across the school. Consequently, standards are improving for all pupils at West Hill School.
- School leaders have a clear vision which is shared by the school community. The very experienced and talented team of senior leaders ably supports the headteacher in his drive to move the school forward.
- Governance is a strength of the school. The chair of governors and her team know the school very well. They have played an instrumental role in bringing about improvements in the school.
- Teachers foster warm and positive relationships with their pupils. Consequently, the majority of pupils are keen to learn and to do their best.
- Pupils make good progress in English, geography, religious education and biology. Progress in mathematics is below the national average but is improving quickly.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and extremely respectful. Older pupils are excellent role models for younger pupils.
- This is an inclusive school. Leadership of learning support is strong and, as a result, all pupils are supported and helped to overcome any difficulties with their learning or behaviour.
- Attendance is consistently above the national average and improving for all groups as a result of diligent monitoring and timely interventions.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. This, coupled with high-quality careers guidance and support, ensures that all pupils are exceedingly well prepared for the next stage in their education or training.
- Performance management has been used highly effectively to improve accountability at all levels. It is clearly linked to the school improvement plan. As a result, all staff know their role in improving the quality of education and are supported well to achieve it.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and pupils are enthusiastic in their praise of the school and would recommend this school to others.
- The quality of teaching is good. When teachers do not routinely plan to challenge pupils, progress is limited.
- Pupil premium funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils, but analysis of the strategies used is underdeveloped. As a result, leaders are not aware of which strategies are having most impact.

## Full report

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

- Take further steps to raise achievement in mathematics by:
  - continuing to plan engaging and challenging activities to help pupils to learn rapidly
  - ensuring that all pupils clearly understand their targets, how they are currently performing, and what they need to do to achieve their aspirational target grade.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, particularly for the most able, by:
  - ensuring that teachers consistently use information about pupils' starting points to plan challenging learning
  - checking that marking and feedback always follows the school's policy.
- Evaluate the impact of pupil premium funding more rigorously so that the school uses only the most effective strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governing body have worked with strength and determination to improve the quality of education provided by the school.
- The headteacher and his leadership team are highly ambitious for the pupils at West Hill School. Leaders are resolutely committed to ensuring that the boys are well prepared for future success, both through the curriculum and through the many enriching extra-curricular opportunities which are on offer.
- Central to the school is a drive to develop the boys as all-round, successful and confident young men, well prepared to take their place in modern Britain.
- Leaders and teachers have very high expectations for behaviour in lessons and around the school. As a result, there is an atmosphere of mutual respect throughout the school which is evident in the manner in which pupils interact with staff, visitors and each other.
- The procedures for managing teachers' performance are robust. Teachers have measurable targets which link to the school's improvement plan. Governors are routinely involved in this process and ensure that there is appropriate accountability at all levels.
- The curriculum offer is broad and balanced. Students are well guided when making choices for key stage 4. There is a range of appropriate courses available for pupils with different starting points: for example, engineering and motor vehicle courses with a local college, additional support in English and mathematics, single sciences, computing and an aspirational programme for gifted and talented pupils.
- The curriculum promotes good behaviour and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about democracy, for example, through assemblies and the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. Pupils held a vote in school after discussing and learning about the issues relating to Great Britain's membership of the European Community.
- Leadership of teaching and learning is highly effective. Incisive and accurate judgements about the quality of teaching mean that leaders know the strengths of teaching. Where teaching is not yet good, leaders challenge and support staff to improve.
- Teacher training reflects the school's key priorities. Leaders have developed a coaching model which has been welcomed by staff, with many taking part in training over a series of weekends. Stronger departments are taking the lead in training others and, as a result, good practice is being shared across the school.
- Newly and recently qualified teachers speak positively about the support offered to them by staff across the school. Staff are encouraged to work collaboratively, using a new school-based network which encourages staff to share resources.
- West Hill School is rich in data and it is used skilfully by leaders and teachers to set aspirational targets and identify any pupils who are not making good enough progress. Leadership of this area is strong and is reflected in the school's prompt responses to curriculum changes. However, some pupils and parents are not yet fully informed as to

the recent changes made to assessment and target-setting, both at national level and within the school.

- Parental responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were overwhelmingly positive about the school. Many parents wrote in detail about how happy they are with the school. For example, one parent commented: 'I cannot stress how positive West Hill is for my two sons ... it is clear West Hill is a team working in a common direction.' However, a minority of parents did express concern regarding some inconsistencies in the setting of homework.
- Leaders' work to ensure a smooth transition from primary to secondary school is strong. There is a determined drive to strengthen academic transition arrangements without losing the positive pastoral features of the school's transition work.
- Senior leaders invest time in working closely with their feeder primary schools to gain as much information as possible about the pupils' academic and pastoral needs before they join the school. Teachers undertake detailed analysis of prior assessments, scrutinising pupils' Year 6 exercise books, and providing parents with guidance during the summer holiday prior to beginning Year 7. As a result, leaders ensure that when pupils start the school, there is little lost learning as work is sufficiently aspirational from the beginning.
- Leaders are aware of the need to ensure consistency across key stages to embed feedback and the new assessment systems in key stage 3.
- Leaders have secured improvements in the standards reached by disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. However, these pupils could make more progress. Although leaders target the extra funding from the government to support disadvantaged pupils, they do not routinely assess how effective their spending has been.
- Pupils who enter the school with below age-related expectations in English and mathematics catch up, due to well-targeted spending of the funds available to support these pupils. Leaders evaluate the impact of their spending of this additional funding against their key priorities and use the funding wisely.
- The headteacher and leaders have good relationships with the local authority and local schools. The local authority has arranged a link with an outstanding primary school and the schools are working together to ensure that the work in Year 7 is suitably challenging and that pupils always produce their best work.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance of the school is effective.
- Governors are passionate and committed to the pupils of West Hill School. They know and understand the school well and are proud of the progress the school has made, particularly under the leadership of the new headteacher.
- The governing body is made up of representatives from a range of backgrounds and experiences, allowing them to perform their core functions well. Governors are perceptive and well informed. They show great foresight in ensuring regular, rigorous self-review and well thought out succession planning for the future.
- Governors recognise that the progress in some areas and for some groups still needs to improve, for example in modern foreign languages, and they are holding leaders to

account to make the necessary changes.

- Governors hold leaders to account for the progress made by disadvantaged pupils by checking how well this group of pupils is achieving. As a result, differences are diminishing between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. Governors do not, however, insist on a regular evaluation of the impact of actions taken by leaders so that they know which of those actions are most effective. Governors do not routinely question the performance of disadvantaged pupils at key stage 3 and as a result do not have a complete picture of progress for this group of pupils across the school.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. All staff are well trained and up to date with the latest national guidance, including training on radicalisation and extremism. This means that all staff in the school are clear on the procedures to follow if they have any concerns. Effective links to external agencies are used well and communication with these agencies ensures that support is promptly given to any vulnerable pupils. The school provides appropriate information to parents.
- Senior leaders are aware of the potential risks associated with the openness of the site and now have a robust risk assessment and safety procedures in place to manage this.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Teaching is typically good. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning in most lessons. They arrive ready and equipped to learn. Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and built on respect; consequently, pupils are motivated to learn well.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is a strength in the school. There is a rigorous programme for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. There is high-quality support and coaching in place to continue to drive improvements in this area.
- The school is aware of some inconsistencies in following school policies for feedback and is working diligently to address them. When the school's policies are fully applied, helpful feedback which extends pupils' learning is given. When there are inconsistencies in application of the policy, learning is not built on effectively.
- Pupils benefit from strong teaching in a wide range of subjects, leading to good progress.
- In many lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge leads to highly developed questioning and consequently pupils deepen their understanding of the subject. For example, in some religious education and humanities lessons, pupils work collaboratively, subject-specific terminology is used appropriately and pupils are fully engaged in the lessons.
- When learning is less well developed, there is a lack of challenge for learners and teaching is not planned to meet the needs of pupils. As a result, pupils are not motivated to learn and they lose interest in the lesson. This is when some low-level disruption to learning occurs.
- Teachers across the school encourage pupils to read widely and often. Year 8 high-

and low-ability pupils were heard reading with confidence from a wide range of texts. Reading ages are shared with staff so that activities are appropriate to the needs of the pupils. Focused intervention and reading rooms also promote a reading culture around the school. Pupils have access to e-readers and disadvantaged pupils were supported in accessing two free books of their choice.

- Teaching assistants provide valuable support to pupils in lessons. Pupils and staff welcome their support and guidance.
- Homework is set regularly to extend and support pupils' learning. There are still some inconsistencies and these are addressed through monitoring by middle and senior leaders.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff know the pupils well, particularly vulnerable pupils. All aspects of the progress of vulnerable pupils are diligently monitored and strategies are put into place swiftly if there are any concerns noted. Highly effective personalised support enables pupils to get back on track quickly.
- Pupils report that bullying, derogatory language and prejudice or discrimination are rare. If bullying does occur, pupils know who to go to and are confident that it will be dealt with effectively. Pupils state that restorative work helps them.
- Pupils are taught fundamental British values through the curriculum; themed assemblies and social issues are discussed regularly at form time. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and can articulate what cyber bullying means. Pupils are confident in discussing diversity and acceptance of other cultures, and this is reflected in the harmonious culture around the school.
- The curriculum is enriched by visiting speakers such as local business people giving an assembly on global entrepreneurship. There is a programme of wide-ranging extra-curricular activities available and there are high numbers of pupils involved in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.
- Careers advice and guidance is a strength of the school. Careers is taught through the curriculum and is appropriate to age. This is supplemented with a personal interview for all pupils, from Year 8 upwards. There is a programme of university visits, including a residential trip. There are aspirational talks about prestigious universities and a considerable amount of work being done to promote higher education to pupils who may not previously have considered university as an option.
- Links with employers and local colleges are strong. The school holds a gold award for information, advice and guidance, achieved in 2015, and pupils have been finalists in the Manchester Skills for Business competition for the past two years. All Year 10 pupils attend two weeks of work experience, with the majority of placements being sourced by the pupils themselves. As a result, these placements are well matched to the needs and interests of pupils. For the past two years, all pupils have been successful in gaining a place for further education or training.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour is well managed in the school. Leaders and staff have high expectations of the boys and a new behaviour policy has improved behaviour for learning in lessons. Pupils and staff speak highly of this new approach and welcome the 'Protecting Learning' detentions which are used to promote positive behaviour in lessons. Behaviour is better at key stage 4 than at key stage 3, and this links to the quality of teachers' planning.
- Pupils take pride in the school. They have driven a push on eliminating litter around the school and this can be seen through pupils' slogans on bins and a neat site after social times. Pupils wear their uniform smartly and are proud of the achievement badges they can earn. Older pupils are prefects and excellent role models for the younger pupils around the school.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good in most lessons. Pupils who spoke to inspectors stated that there are some lessons where disruption to learning occurs. Where teaching lacked pace or challenge, inspectors did see a few lessons where behaviour was not as positive as in other lessons.
- On the whole, pupils behave well at social times. The key stage 3 lunchtime is more boisterous than other social times as pupils are missing the positive role models of older pupils to moderate their behaviour. Pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and are punctual to lessons.
- The rate of permanent exclusions is decreasing. This is now in line with the national average. The rate of fixed-term exclusions rose slightly last year due to the new 'zero tolerance' approach brought in by the new headteacher. These have decreased significantly this year as pupils respond more favourably to the new behaviour policy.
- The school uses its behaviour unit well to help pupils cope better with the demands of school life. Pupils cite the effectiveness of the behaviour support unit in turning around their behaviour. Staff's work to support pupils behaviourally and academically is well managed and highly effective.
- Attendance is high and consistently above the national average for all pupils. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is still below that of other pupils nationally and this remains a barrier to learning for some pupils.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Good

- Pupils are achieving well. Attainment on entry to school is slightly above the national average and there is a larger cohort of more able pupils than found nationally. Attainment is on a three-year rising trend and the proportions of pupils leaving with a good pass in English and mathematics has risen to above the national average. However, attainment in mathematics is not as high as attainment in English.
- It is clear from school information that the proportion of pupils achieving the top grades is improving in English and mathematics and also across a wide range of subjects. There are strengths in English, biology, chemistry, geography, religious education, art and design. Some subjects which are not yet good overall include design

and technology: graphics, French and mathematics.

- The progress of all pupils improved in 2016 although progress in mathematics still lags behind that in other subjects. For current learners in the school however, progress in mathematics is predicted to be above the national average. This information is based on both teacher assessments and on externally validated tests taken at the end of Year 10. Staff have confidence in these estimates due to the amount of external moderation which has taken place.
- Lower-ability pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress across the curriculum. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported on an individual basis to overcome their barriers to learning. As a result, these pupils achieve as well as other pupils nationally who have similar starting points. These outcomes were matched by the strengths seen in lessons during the inspection.
- In the past, progress has not been so strong across the school for higher-ability pupils and disadvantaged pupils. However, progress for these groups is now improving with current learners. Disadvantaged pupils represent almost one fifth of the school population.
- In 2016, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils was below the national average. For current learners in the school, these differences are diminishing. The improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are evidence that the pupil premium funding is being used effectively.
- The school's own information, however, shows that there is still work to be done with the most able disadvantaged pupils, particularly at key stage 3.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision have access to a broad and balanced curriculum, achieve qualifications and make good progress. As a result of good preparation for the future, these pupils have all secured placements for further education or training.



## School details

Unique reference number	137020
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10019824

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	833
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carolyn Wright
Headteacher	Alan Harrison
Telephone number	0161 338 2193
Website	<a href="http://www.westhillschool.co.uk/">www.westhillschool.co.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@westhillschool.co.uk">admin@westhillschool.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	3–4 December 2014

## Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish on its website.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- West Hill is a smaller than average school for boys only with a comprehensive intake.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. Some pupils are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, as is the proportion who have an education, health and care plan.
- A small number of pupils in key stage 4 attend alternative provision for one day per

week at Tameside College. A small number of pupils in key stage 4 spend a few days during the year training at football clubs in the North West.

- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher joined the school in September 2015.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for progress and attainment.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in a wide range of subjects taught across the school to different age groups, some of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons, form times and other activities.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read during form time.
- Inspectors met with pupils both formally and informally to listen to their views.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, newly and recently qualified teachers and student teachers, two groups of pupils, the chair of the governing body and three other governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including: information about pupils' outcomes; the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan; minutes of meetings; and records relating to teaching and learning, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaks, lunchtimes, in registration periods, assemblies, in lessons and at the end of the school day. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and a sample of key stage 3 books were looked at jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors visited the school's internal behaviour support unit and learning support unit. Inspectors also spoke by telephone to members of staff from the external educational provider.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in the 114 responses to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) as well as comments received via the free text facility on Parent View.

## Inspection team

Helen O'Neill, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ahmed Marikar	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Merva	Ofsted Inspector
Debra Wood	Ofsted Inspector

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