

West Derby School

364 West Derby Rd, Liverpool, Merseyside L13 7HQ

Inspection dates

11–12 January and 1 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils, particularly those who are middle-attaining, do not make consistently good progress in humanities and mathematics.
- Lack of confidence in speaking impedes some pupils' ability to develop their reasoning.
- Pupils studying academic courses in the sixth form do not achieve as well as they should do.
- Pupils do not consistently apply the writing skills that they learn in English in other subjects. Weaknesses in their written expression inhibit their progress.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is driving the school forward with determination, ambition and humanity.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They make wise decisions.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection because teachers' professional development is sharply focused on improving standards.
- Pupils receive excellent pastoral care. They feel safe and have well-founded confidence in the staff. They speak highly of their relationships with teachers, behave well and are proud to be part of the school.
- The curriculum is broad and interesting. It has been adapted to provide stretch and challenge for pupils.
- The quality of leadership of the sixth form has improved and students' ambitious targets are being monitored closely.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rates of progress made by pupils, especially of middle-attaining pupils in mathematics and humanities subjects, by:
 - developing their reasoning skills so that they can explain their thinking logically, accurately and confidently
 - ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply the writing skills they are taught in English to other subjects so that they can express their ideas well.
- Raise the achievement of students following academic courses in the sixth form by ensuring that they receive appropriate challenge.
- Raise attendance for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers show conviction, determination and a strong moral purpose. They have brought about significant improvement in a time of rapid change since the last inspection. The headteacher leads by example and expects high standards of the staff, which they rise to. Staff are strongly of the opinion that they are well led.
- There is an evident culture of respect within the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Parents and carers consider the quality of relationships to be a significant strength of the school. Clear communication channels between school and home, and with external partners, help to ensure that pupils are supported and safe.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is rigorous and insightful. Actions taken to improve the school are made as a result of analysis of the school's performance, along with consideration of national and local priorities.
- School leaders recognised that the demands of the new national curriculum and more-challenging examinations in key stage 4 required them to overhaul the key stage 3 curriculum to avoid pupils experiencing 'wasted years'. Working with colleagues from primary schools, they have adapted schemes of work to ensure that pupils' learning moves on quickly from Year 7. This strength in academic transition complements the school's work to ensure that pupils' pastoral needs are known and acted upon when they join West Derby.
- The headteacher and governors have strengthened many of the areas identified at the previous inspection, particularly by improving the teaching of mathematics. Leadership of mathematics is now strong and much of the teaching in this subject is now effective.
- The headteacher has strengthened the leadership of the sixth form. While the sixth form still requires improvement, teachers are now held accountable for the standards that their students achieve and a rigorous approach is being taken to raising achievement.
- The headteacher and governors have acted to improve the quality of middle leadership across the school. Senior leaders and governors hold heads of department to account effectively through the departmental review system. Middle leaders receive good-quality training and increased opportunities to share the most effective practice that exists across the school. In those subjects where outcomes are not as strong, senior leaders support and challenge middle leaders to bring about improvement.
- The arrangements for managing the performance of teachers are rigorous and teachers' targets match the school's priorities. Those staff who do not meet leaders' expectations are given clear plans and timelines to improve their practice. New teachers speak very highly of the support that they are given, including the advice and encouragement from the headteacher.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively and leaders have taken action to improve the attainment and progress for eligible pupils. The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is improving in most subjects and year groups.

- Additional government funding to support the least able pupils in Year 7 has helped improve their skills in literacy and numeracy.
- The actions of new leaders with responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have resulted in improved outcomes for these pupils. The additional funding provided to support these pupils is effectively used.
- Careers information, advice and guidance are strong, particularly at key stage 4 and in the sixth form. Almost all pupils progress to further education, training or employment. Pupils say that they value this aspect of the school's work very highly.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders have made well-considered adjustments such as introducing oracy lessons in key stage 3 to help pupils develop their speaking skills. Pupils have opportunities to take part in wide-ranging extra-curricular activities. They are proud of the school's strong tradition of sporting success and also enjoy public speaking competitions and cultural events.
- Leaders ensure that reading has a high priority. Effective use is made of the public library adjacent to the school and there is a strong emphasis on reading for pleasure and information, including in displays throughout the school.
- The school has a strong track record of working with the local authority to secure improvements, particularly in mathematics and in provision for pupils educated off site.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a range of skills that inform their work.
- Governors have secured improvements in the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils since the previous inspection. They ensure that additional funding, including that for pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is effectively spent.
- Governors receive clear information about pupils' attainment and progress. They have high expectations for all pupils to achieve well.
- Governors hold senior leaders to account robustly. They ensure that teachers' appraisal is closely linked to pupils' performance.
- Governors are committed to their own development and training.

Safeguarding

- Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are rigorous and effective. Pupils spoken to during the inspection appreciated the pastoral support they received from the school. Parents commented on the welcoming environment and the extent to which their sons, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are kept safe and supported to do well.
- The suitability of staff to work with children is checked on their appointment and they receive regular training sessions to keep them up to date about safeguarding matters.
- The school takes prompt action in response to any safeguarding matters and involves external agencies appropriately. The school works in partnership with the local authority to support pupils who are educated off site. A clear protocol is effectively

used to ensure that these pupils' attendance is closely monitored and that swift action is taken should any concerns arise.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The school has taken rigorous action to improve teaching since the last inspection. Leaders recognised that teaching in key stage 3 was insufficiently challenging and have refocused on building on what pupils have learned at key stage 2. This approach has eliminated unnecessary repetition and developing pupils' resilience. Work in pupils' books indicates that teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils should achieve. The work that teachers provide increases in challenge as the school years progress. There is very little incomplete work.
- The quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, history and some science courses has improved since the last inspection. The most effective teaching provides pupils with interesting tasks that demand deep thinking. High-quality teaching is seen in science where pupils link their work to key concepts and talk confidently about scientific processes. Effective teaching is increasingly evident in mathematics when pupils are expected to explain their reasoning and so deepen their understanding.
- Strengths are also evident in English, drama and physical education. Here, teachers give pupils a clear idea of what is expected of them by showing them what good performance looks like. Most teachers communicate high expectations and use questions effectively to deepen pupils' understanding; this helps pupils make the most gains in their learning. In English, Year 7 pupils explored animatedly the features of persuasive texts and considered which aspects of language use would entice them to visit a theme park, while older pupils explored the structure and imagery of Seamus Heaney's poetry with maturity and perseverance.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons and have good attitudes to learning. Occasionally they become bored or distracted if they are not sure what is expected of them or where tasks are undemanding.
- The school has focused on making sure that pupils respond to teachers' suggestions to help them improve their work. Most pupils reflect on and improve their work, although there is variability in how well they attend to weaknesses in spelling and punctuation. The school recognised that poor handwriting impedes the learning of some pupils and provides extra support to improve their skills.
- Teaching for pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities is good because leaders provide effective support for them. Teaching assistants care for pupils and help them with their learning, but on occasion give them correct answers too readily.
- Parents receive regular and clear information about how their children are progressing.

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 their pupils very well and willingly 'go the extra mile' in the level of care that they provide. Effective pastoral teams support pupils to integrate successfully when they join the school and help them to make the most of school life. This aspect of the school's work is highly valued by pupils and their parents.
- The pupils spoken to during the inspection said that bullying was very rare and that they were confident that staff would address it swiftly. They understand the different forms that bullying takes.
- Pupils have opportunities to understand how to stay safe and lead healthy lifestyles. They are aware of hazards such as the inappropriate use of social media.
- The school's focus on British values is shared through daily assemblies and tutor time when pupils have opportunities to talk about current affairs. Lessons on bullying, conflict resolution and diversity in religious education and personal, social and health education lessons promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school has a strong programme of careers guidance and pupils speak highly of this provision. Good links are in place with universities and employers.
- The school, working in effective partnership with the local authority, ensures the safety of pupils who are educated off site. The attendance, behaviour and achievement of these pupils is closely monitored.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave responsibly and take considerable care of the school environment, keeping it free of litter and graffiti.
- The number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions for all groups of pupils has reduced significantly over the last few years. The incidence of pupils being excluded from lessons has fallen considerably. On those occasions when pupils spend time in the 'isolation room' they are required to work hard, reflect on their behaviour and restore relationships through sincere apology.
- Overall attendance is in line with the national average. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs remains below average and continues to be a priority for the school. Leaders are using imaginative approaches to work with parents and pupils to stress the importance of good attendance and to remove barriers to regular attendance for individual pupils. Case studies indicate that the school does not give up on anybody.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In recent years, pupils have not made enough progress in mathematics. The school's information shows that this will remain the case for the current Year 11 pupils. However, considerable improvements in teaching and planning in this subject have resulted in improved progress for younger pupils.
- In 2016, pupils did not achieve well in humanities, physical education, additional science and media studies. Leaders' actions to address this have resulted in

improvements, particularly in history, physical education, and science. Evidence of pupils' improved progress was seen during the inspection.

- While middle and high prior attaining pupils who are disadvantaged have not achieved as well as others, increased expectations and better-quality teaching mean that outcomes for these pupils currently in the school are improving.
- Pupils, including the disadvantaged, reach good standards in English, Spanish, French, photography, business studies, resistant materials, music, physics and computer science.
- Pupils with low prior attainment, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve well. This is due to the high-quality support they receive both in lessons and through additional catch-up sessions.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities now make at least the progress that is expected of them because of the high-quality support that they receive.
- The use of a reading programme has improved the reading ages of most pupils who have taken part. The development of pupils' speaking skills has been recognised as a priority for school leaders and the teaching of oracy is having an impact at key stage 3. However, some pupils still lack confidence and fluency when explaining their ideas.
- Pupils attend off-site provision for a wide range of reasons. They follow different courses according to their needs. Records of their achievement show that they make variable progress, but that they gain useful vocational skills and continue to develop their learning in English and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils moving on to further education, employment or training is above average. This reflects the high-quality careers information, advice and guidance that the pupils receive.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Students' achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Students do not perform well in academic subjects, but they achieve well in vocational subjects.
- The leadership of the sixth form has improved since the last inspection. For example, students formerly did not have opportunities for work experience and this has now been addressed. New leaders now make use of careful tracking of students' progress towards their targets. Leaders have a clear view, based on assessments, about how well students are performing and this aspect of leadership has improved considerably since the last inspection.
- The recent strengthening of the leadership of the sixth form has focused on working with those subjects where students have not performed as well. While this is beginning to have impact in terms of increasing teachers' expectations, inconsistency in the quality of teaching hampers the progress of some students.
- The curriculum prepares students well for the next stages of education, training or employment. The enrichment programme is well planned and contributes to students' personal development and well-being. It includes access to highly regarded careers programmes, links with universities, volunteering in the community and opportunities

to contribute to the sixth-form leadership team. These are valued by students. The number of students staying on their courses is above the national average and all continue into further education, training or employment.

- Success rates are above average for students resitting GCSE mathematics and English in the sixth form.
- Students conduct themselves well and their attitudes to learning are mature. They value their positive relationships with teachers and the support and guidance that they receive.
- Safeguarding is effective in the sixth form and students say that they feel safe.

School details

Unique reference number	138696
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10024097

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,035
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	139
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Karen Callant
Headteacher	Sian Graham
Telephone number	0151 235 1300
Website	www.westderbyschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@westderbyschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 January 2015

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the curriculum on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the curriculum.
- At the time of the inspection, there was no information about the curriculum on the school's website. This was because the school's website had recently been hacked. The school provided hard copies of curriculum plans during the inspection.
- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.

- Most pupils are White British. The proportions of minority ethnic pupils and those who speak English as an additional language are below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and of those who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- Twenty-three pupils receive their education off site. Pupils follow courses provided by Liverpool Alternative Education Provision at ACE (Alder Centre for Education), Assess, Academy International, Everton Free School, Harmonize Academy, JMH Training, Meadow Park, Prudentia and SALT (Sports Achievement Learning Teaching).

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across all key stages. A number of observations were completed jointly with school leaders. Inspectors observed breaks, lunchtimes, tutorials and an assembly.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, governors, other members of staff and groups of pupils in each year group.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and action plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, safeguarding documents, records of pupils' behaviour and information about pupils' attainment and progress.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents from the 20 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- The views of staff were gained from the 42 responses to the online staff questionnaire and from discussions with individual teachers.
- One of Her Majesty's Inspectors made a further visit to the school on 1 March 2017 to gather additional evidence about the effectiveness of leadership and management and safeguarding. She met with a representative of the local authority, spoke with representatives of alternative provision attended by pupils and considered a wide range of evidence about arrangements to keep these pupils safe. She observed several lessons, scrutinised pupils' books and spoke with staff.

Inspection team

Mary Myatt, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
John Leigh	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Ruddy	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Ofsted Inspector
Shirley Gornall	Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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