

The Heath School

Clifton Road, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4SY

Inspection dates

12–13 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils receive a good and improving education. Leaders have stopped the decline in standards and have driven far-reaching improvements that are helping pupils throughout the school to make faster progress.
- Leaders have established a harmonious community based upon respect, tolerance and consideration for others. Opportunities for pupils' personal development are exemplary.
- Leaders at all levels, including the governors, have the highest expectations for pupils, regardless of their backgrounds. Pupils value greatly the support they receive from members of staff.
- The large number of pupils who join the school midway through the academic year receive excellent support. They settle quickly and make good progress.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils feel safe and are well looked after.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and during the school day. They are courteous and polite, and are committed to working hard.
- Leaders have recently developed a more accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require further development. However, leaders still have an overgenerous view of the quality of teaching.
- Leaders do not consistently set targets for teachers' performance that directly address areas of relative weakness within the school.
- Teaching is good overall. However, the quality of teaching is variable, particularly in mathematics. Some lessons in mathematics do not challenge the most able pupils enough.
- After a period of decline, leaders have secured fast improvements in pupils' outcomes across the curriculum. These improvements have been particularly impressive in humanities and science. Pupils are also making faster progress in mathematics, although the improvements have not been as rapid as in other areas.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making faster progress than before due to careful use of the pupil premium.
- The school has a broad and balanced curriculum that serves its pupils well. Pupils also benefit from an impressive range of extra-curricular opportunities.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in high levels of attendance.
- The sixth form requires improvement. In response to low student numbers, all current Year 12 students are being taught at a neighbouring school. The quality of teaching in the remaining sixth-form classes is too variable.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the impact of leadership and management on the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - leaders' self-evaluation of teaching and learning is more accurate and identifies areas that require further development to ensure that pupils across all subjects make the best possible progress
 - teachers are consistently set ambitious targets as part of their performance management that directly address areas of relative weakness within the school.
- Improve the progress made by pupils in mathematics further by ensuring that teaching in this area consistently challenges pupils, particularly the most able.
- Urgently establish a strategic vision for 16 to 19 study programmes so that students have access to a broad curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Between 2014 and 2016, the high standards previously achieved by pupils were not sustained across the curriculum and throughout the school. During this period, leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness was overgenerous and effective systems to counter the falling standards were not put in place. In particular, the rate of progress made by pupils during key stage 4 in mathematics and science slowed considerably. Many boys, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made slow progress during this period.
- However, leaders came to realise that urgent action was needed to address the issue of falling standards. The principal refocused the efforts of the school community and far-reaching improvements were made that have led to significant and sustained improvements in all areas that were causing concern. The decline in standards has therefore been decisively halted and pupils throughout the school are making significantly better rates of progress.
- Leaders have created a harmonious and respectful community. Members of staff have the highest expectations of what pupils, irrespective of their background, can achieve. Leaders have ensured that the community is united in its belief that barriers to achievement are never seen as insurmountable. In tandem with leaders' increasingly shrewd use of pupil premium funding, this has transformed the rate of progress made by disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have been astute in their use of additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have managed to secure rapid improvements in outcomes for these pupils at a time when the number of pupils entering the school with special educational needs and/or disabilities has risen sharply.
- Leaders have been careful and considerate to ensure that high levels of staff morale have been maintained during a period of intense school improvement. Relationships are excellent throughout the school and pupils speak very fondly about the support they receive, and the rapport they enjoy with members of staff.
- The accuracy of leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses has improved markedly. This has enabled leaders to take decisive action to improve areas of weakness. Despite this, leaders are still overgenerous in their evaluation of the quality of teaching at the school and they have not always identified variations in the quality of teaching in different subjects and year groups. As a result, leaders have been too slow to put precise plans in place that would improve the quality of teaching at a faster rate.
- Members of staff value the training they receive to improve the quality of their practice. Leaders have established effective systems for sharing good practice such as a teaching and learning blog and the establishment of working groups that develop different aspects of teaching, such as assessment and feedback. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and teachers are helping pupils to make faster progress.
- Leaders have successfully tackled areas of weak teaching. However, not all teachers agree specific and ambitious targets with leaders that directly address areas of relative

weakness. Consequently, leaders' use of staff appraisal is underdeveloped as a tool for driving improvements across the school.

- Middle leaders have worked closely with senior leaders to bring about recent improvements. Middle leaders are clear on priorities for improvement and are becoming increasingly adept at securing improvements within their areas.
- Leaders can identify clearly how additional funding to support pupils who join the school with attainment below national expectations is being used to help them catch up with their peers. In particular, these pupils are making impressive gains in English. As a result, the fast development of these pupils' literacy skills is helping them to make rapid progress across the full curriculum.
- Leaders provide pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum that serves them well. Leaders have a clear vision and a sound rationale for the curriculum. The implementation of the two-year key stage 3 curriculum is well planned and ensures that pupils receive an education that is both broad and deep. Leaders consult regularly with pupils and staff to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and make modifications where necessary.
- Pupils appreciate the breadth of subjects taught in key stage 4. Leaders have ensured that the key stage 4 curriculum maintains an academic core, with most pupils being entered for the English Baccalaureate. Leaders have also ensured that pupils can study subjects that suit their aptitudes and future aspirations. For example, pupils can choose subjects such as astronomy, fashion and textiles, and animal care.
- Pupils benefit from an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils participate in a wide range of sports, from table tennis to handball. Among other opportunities, they can join the debating society, the creative writing club or the taiko drumming group.
- Leaders have been very effective in developing pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. Pupils are supported to develop their extended writing within a range of subjects and teachers have appropriate expectations for the depth, detail and technical accuracy of pupils' writing. Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to discuss and debate and this plays an important role in the impressive development of pupils' speaking skills. Several pupils told inspectors how much they enjoy discussing topical and controversial issues such as euthanasia and abortion. In contrast, pupils are not supported as effectively to develop their numeracy skills in a range of subjects.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a real strength of the school, because leaders create numerous rich and varied opportunities for pupils to become caring and responsible citizens. Leaders are aware of the lack of ethnic diversity at the school and consciously seek to develop pupils' awareness of other cultures and religions. Great attention is paid to learning about major world faiths and pupils benefit from opportunities to visit different places of worship.
- Leaders' promotion of fundamental British values is highly effective. The school has undertaken a project on identity with the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester, entitled 'What makes me?' Pupils also develop an understanding of the value of democracy through their learning on the European Union referendum and the general election. As a result, pupils receive a broad and thorough preparation for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school well. They are proud of the school and committed to improving areas of weakness.
- The governing body evaluates its own effectiveness regularly and governors set themselves appropriate targets for their own development. As a result, the governing body continues to develop and improve.
- Governors have worked with perseverance and determination alongside the principal to secure a new school building, which is currently being built. Governors have managed resources and personnel skilfully. They have ensured that the school has appropriate staffing structures in place to bring about improvements where the need is greatest. For example, the school has recently appointed a full-time member of staff to increase the school's capacity to support the families of pupils with low attendance.
- Governors are linked to key areas within school. They act as 'critical friends' to middle and senior leaders and the challenge they provide has been instrumental in bringing about recent improvements.
- Governors have demonstrated particularly strong oversight in relation to safeguarding and inclusion and this has helped these areas to become established strengths.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's work in this area is exemplary because leaders have created a culture where all members of staff take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously.
- Staff are vigilant to signs of abuse and neglect. They know the local context well and understand the safeguarding concerns that are more prevalent among local communities.
- Staff fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities and there are highly effective systems in place for ensuring that concerns are communicated accurately and with an appropriate sense of urgency. Record-keeping is precise and work with other agencies is strong.
- The curriculum makes a significant contribution to keeping pupils safe by equipping them with the knowledge and understanding to make informed and sensible decisions about matters of personal safety. 'Learning for Life' days provide a focal point for this work, because pupils learn about a range of potential risks, such as relationships, drugs and alcohol, in an age-appropriate manner. Key messages to do with safety are regularly promoted through assemblies, personal, social and health education lessons and tutor periods.
- Staff receive regular training on different aspects of safeguarding, including e-safety and how they can help keep pupils safe from people with extreme views.
- The school works effectively with parents to keep pupils safe, particularly in relation to e-safety. The school has established excellent working relationship with the parents of

vulnerable pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- First-hand inspection evidence shows that teaching overall is good.
- Pupils display very positive attitudes to learning. They arrive at lessons well equipped and ready to learn. Pupils enjoy productive and harmonious relationships with their peers and members of staff. They work hard and are determined to do their best.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge, which they use to plan stimulating work for pupils. This strong subject knowledge helps teachers to pre-empt and address pupils' misconceptions. Teachers answer pupils' questions with authority and clarity, which deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- A great deal of teaching is highly effective and supports pupils to make rapid and sustained gains in their learning. Teachers use questioning skilfully to assess pupils' understanding and develop their thinking. Teachers are skilled at structuring discussion and debate. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy discussing topical and controversial issues such as euthanasia and abortion.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils, particularly of low ability and middle ability, can achieve. They provide the right amount of challenge for these pupils and, as a result, they make solid progress.
- The quality of assessment has improved and is helping pupils to make faster progress across the curriculum. Teachers use assessment to identify precisely how well their pupils are attaining and they intervene quickly to ensure that pupils who are at risk of falling behind are supported effectively.
- Despite being good overall, there is still too much variability in the quality of teaching. In particular, the effectiveness of teaching in mathematics is uneven. Not all mathematics teachers have high enough expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve. As a result, they do not consistently provide these pupils with work that challenges them to make fast progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding and lies at the very heart of the school's ethos. All staff take their responsibilities in this area very seriously. The care and consideration that staff have for pupils is evident in the daily interactions that take place in classrooms and on corridors.
- Pupils are committed to doing their best and pupils of all abilities demonstrate resilience in lessons. They persevere when they find things difficult and respond well when teachers explain things in different ways to support their learning.
- Pupils clearly express that they feel safe in school. They are confident that if problems arise, they know whom to turn to. They trust staff to help and support them. Lessons,

assemblies, tutor time and 'learn for life' days equip pupils with the skills and knowledge necessary to keep themselves safe. Pupils are supported to avoid the dangers of social networking, mobile technology and being online. Pupils are also helped to develop an age-appropriate understanding of what constitutes healthy relationships.

- Pupils say that bullying is very rare within the school. Pupils say they know whom to speak to if they encounter bullying and they are confident that members of staff will resolve any issues effectively.
- The school's work to promote equality is excellent and strengthened by features such as the provision of a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender club.
- Leaders have effectively prioritised the promotion of pupils' physical and emotional well-being. The school utilises the support of counsellors to support vulnerable pupils and undertakes some innovative work to help pupils cope with the stress and anxiety that can be caused by preparing for public examinations.
- The school works closely with alternative providers to ensure that the very small number of pupils in alternative provision are safe and well looked after.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils behave exceptionally well in all areas of school. They are sensible, mature and courteous towards others in lessons and when moving around the site.
- Inspectors saw very few examples of low-level misbehaviour and pupils confirm that it is extremely rare for their lessons to be disrupted by poor behaviour. They also say that, on the rare occasions when low-level misbehaviour does occur, teachers take swift and appropriate action to ensure that the pace of learning is maintained.
- There are few incidents of serious misbehaviour in school. Pupils are rarely excluded because they respond positively to the school's insistence on high standards of behaviour.
- The school works closely with pupils who have exhibited poor behaviour in the past to secure significant and sustained improvements to their conduct and attitude to learning. Members of staff go the extra mile to ensure that pupils who are new to the school settle quickly and live up to the high expectations of being a pupil at 'The Heath'.
- Pupils' attendance is excellent. Leaders have implemented a broad range of strategies that have brought about a significant increase in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, no group of pupils is disadvantaged by regular absence.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Results from public examinations between 2014 and 2016 indicated that pupils were not making good progress. However, information provided by school leaders and evidence seen by inspectors indicates that outcomes for pupils have improved

considerably and are now good. This is a result of improved teaching, effective assessment and interventions that provide carefully targeted support for pupils at risk of falling behind. Boys, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have made considerably quicker progress recently.

- Leaders have driven changes that have brought about rapid improvements in science and humanities. Pupils are also making quicker progress in mathematics, although leaders acknowledge that there is still work to be done in this area. Leaders' efforts to improve outcomes have been underpinned by the school's positive and ambitious ethos, which has instilled within pupils a tangible commitment to doing their best.
- An unusually high number of pupils have joined the school at different points during recent academic years. Many of these pupils have been vulnerable and have joined the school after periods of disruption to their education. The school provides intensive support for these new arrivals and most have made good progress between starting the school and finishing Year 11.
- Pupils who have been at the school for most of their secondary education have made good progress from their different starting points. Pupils with low and average prior attainment make particularly strong progress. The most able pupils are now making faster progress. However, leaders acknowledge that more can be done to help the most able pupils to make faster progress, particularly in mathematics and humanities.
- Leaders have ensured that all members of staff are united in pursuit of the best outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils are making much faster progress across the curriculum and their progress is now similar to other pupils nationally. This is because teachers know the disadvantaged pupils very well and they are exceptionally attentive to their needs. Members of staff ensure that these pupils are carefully targeted so they receive the support needed to thrive. Leadership in this area has helped to drive improvements for disadvantaged pupils. Previous spending of the pupil premium is evaluated carefully and this information is used to inform how future funding will be spent to remove identified barriers to achievement.
- The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has also been transformed and now compares favourably to national averages. This is because they benefit from good teaching and are well supported by teaching assistants.
- The school's own data shows that pupils are making much faster progress in all year groups. This is the result of a long-term strategy implemented by leaders to accelerate the rate of progress made by different groups of pupils throughout key stage 3.
- The school has a very small group of pupils who are educated by an alternative provider for two days per week. Leaders work in close partnership with this provider to ensure that pupils continue to make good progress and gain level 2 qualifications in business and enterprise, and health and fitness.
- Pupils benefit from extensive careers guidance, which becomes increasingly detailed and frequent from Year 8 onwards. Pupils are provided with valuable information about different options that are available to them when they leave school. They also have individual meetings with a careers advisor. As a result of this work, and the wider efforts of the school, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment and almost all pupils proceed to destinations that are well

suited to their interests, aptitudes and aspirations.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The sixth form opened in 2014 and offers a range of academic and vocational courses. Since opening, leaders have found it difficult to recruit large numbers of students. The number of students opting to join the sixth form has dropped further this year. As a result, leaders took the decision to stop teaching Year 12 classes at the school. There are currently 10 students in Year 12 and they are all taught at Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy.
- Leaders are beginning to communicate with other post-16 providers to explore the viability of establishing a post-16 consortium where students study courses at several different post-16 providers. However, leaders currently do not have concrete plans for where prospective students will study or what courses they will be able to access.
- Leaders' evaluation of the sixth form is overgenerous. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is too variable. Although teachers' subject knowledge is secure, teachers do not always have appropriate expectations of what students can achieve. As a result, students do not consistently complete work that challenges them to make the fastest possible progress from their relative starting points.
- Over time, there has been a marked difference in the amount of progress students have made on academic and vocational courses. Female students have made much slower progress on academic courses in the past. However, stronger results in recent AS-level examinations indicate that teaching is beginning to facilitate faster rates of progress on academic courses.
- Rates of attendance are not high in the sixth form. Furthermore, the proportion of students completing their studies does not compare favourably to national averages.
- Current students speak positively about their experience in the sixth form. They value the personalised support that members of staff give them. Students also value the careers advice they receive and past students have advanced to a range of appropriate destinations.
- A small number of students enter the sixth form without attaining at least a standard pass in English and/or mathematics. These students receive appropriate teaching and support. The success rates when these students retake these examinations are significantly above national figures.
- The sixth form meets the requirements for 16 to 19 study programmes, including appropriate opportunities for students to gain work experience and participate in enrichment activities.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective, including for those students who are educated off-site.

School details

Unique reference number	136779
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10036787

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,099
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Ainsworth
Principal	Jamie Jardine
Telephone number	01928 576664
Website	www.heathschool.org.uk
Email address	mwadsworth@heathschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Heath School is larger than the average secondary school. It converted to academy status in June 2011. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted in 2010 it was judged to be outstanding.
- The Heath School is part of the Heath Family Trust with four primary schools and three other secondary schools.
- The school is a national teaching school.
- The school is currently being rebuilt and the new building is due to open in January

2018.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly similar to the national average. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and of pupils who speak English as an additional language are much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.
- More pupils join the school at different times of the year than is seen nationally.
- Four Year 10 pupils currently attend off-site provision at Stuart Gelling International Ltd two days per week.
- The school opened a sixth form in 2014. There are currently 10 students in Year 12, who are all educated off-site at Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subjects and year groups, including some joint observations with school leaders. They also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils, and talked informally with others at break and lunchtimes. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. An inspector listened to a group of pupils read.
- Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders and classroom teachers. A meeting was held with the vice-chair of governors. An inspector also met with the chief executive officer of the Heath Family Trust and spoke with the academy's improvement partner.
- Inspectors scrutinised information about the school's performance and a range of other documents. These included the school's self-evaluation, its development plan and information on the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

Will Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marcia Harding	Ofsted Inspector
John Leigh	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Cooper	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Lomas	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017