

Hillside High School

Breeze Hill, Bootle, Merseyside L20 9NU

Inspection dates

21–22 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
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	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The 2017 examination results indicate that pupils made weak progress by the end of key stage 4. The standards they achieved were below the national average. Disadvantaged pupils made particularly poor progress.
- Too many current pupils make inadequate progress across a range of subjects, including mathematics.
- Governors' and leaders' self-evaluation is overgenerous, so that plans to improve the school lack rigour.
- Governors challenge school leaders but do not routinely provide them with sufficient support to meet the challenges that leaders face. Consequently, planned improvements have had variable impact.
- Until recently, leaders have not used additional funding for disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities effectively.
- The quality of teaching is too variable between and within subjects, especially in mathematics.
- Teachers do not routinely set pupils, especially the least and most able, work that closely matches their ability.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not consistently high. As a result, pupils do not always present their work neatly. Moreover, teachers do not consistently expect pupils to write with correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Some teachers do not demonstrate strong subject knowledge. Consequently, in some classes, pupils are not assessed well or supported consistently to deepen their learning.
- School leaders have successfully maintained an effective culture of safeguarding at the school. However, this aspect of school life requires continued vigilance, particularly in relation to e-safety.
- Pupils' attendance is improving, but it remains below that of others nationally. Levels of persistent absence are reducing, but remain high.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are taking effective steps to improve the quality of education at the school. As a result, teaching is improving.
- Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a balanced and relevant curriculum that meets their needs.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved markedly, both in lessons and when moving around the school site.
- The majority of pupils are positive about the school. They describe it as a happy and safe place. They would recommend it to others.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve pupils' progress so that it at least matches national averages, particularly in mathematics.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - sharpening the accuracy of self-evaluation, so that plans and actions to improve the school are more rigorous and effective
 - ensuring that governors consistently provide effective support for school leaders and that they challenge leaders to secure a good standard of education at the school
 - using the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities more effectively, so that pupils in these groups attend school more regularly and make progress that is in line with that of other pupils nationally.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - further reducing inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics
 - ensuring that teachers take greater care to support pupils to use correct spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - ensuring that all teachers have good knowledge of the subjects that they teach, and that they are able to assess pupils' understanding accurately
 - ensuring that pupils, especially the least and most able, are routinely set work that matches their ability, so that they make good progress.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - further improving pupils' attendance, so that it matches that of others nationally
 - supporting pupils to develop the characteristics of effective learners so that they consistently take pride in their work
 - continuing to emphasise to pupils the potential dangers of sharing information via social media sites.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to ascertain how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- School leaders' vision focuses on the provision of high-quality care and raising pupils' aspirations. This vision is promoted enthusiastically by the headteacher and her senior leadership team. They know pupils well and are unwavering in their ambition to improve the school and increase pupils' life chances.
- School leaders understand the significant challenges that the school faces and recognise that outcomes remain inadequate for too many current pupils. However, leaders are taking steps to secure sustainable improvement. Recent improvements, for example in aspects of teaching, demonstrate that leaders have the tenacity and capacity to secure a good education for the pupils of the school. This has been further demonstrated in the way that leaders have orchestrated rapid improvements to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- School leaders are clear that outcomes for pupils who have taken Year 11 examinations have not been good enough across a broad range of subjects, and particularly in mathematics. In 2017, the progress that pupils made was well below average. Disadvantaged pupils made particularly poor progress. Consequently, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards. School leaders' work to improve teaching has led to clear and demonstrable improvement, including in mathematics. Despite this, the quality of teaching requires improvement, because there are still some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching within, and across, subjects.
- School leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of the characteristics of effective teaching. They accurately identify aspects of teaching which are stronger, including the teaching of those who are new to the profession. Leaders know which aspects of teaching need to improve, such as the level of challenge provided to the most able pupils. Leaders have established a culture of professional development across the school, which is effectively tackling the identified weaknesses in teaching.
- Leaders, including representatives of the Wade Deacon Trust, have an overgenerous view of the quality of education that the school currently provides. Consequently, plans to improve the school have not always been effective because priorities for development have not been built upon an accurate view of what needs to improve. Where plans have had greatest impact, leaders have worked with trust employees to plan, monitor and evaluate sharply focused actions with regularity and precision. However, leaders have not ensured that the impact of all the initiatives to improve teaching have been carefully measured.
- The school has a larger than average number of disadvantaged pupils. In 2016 and 2017, these pupils made significantly less progress than others nationally. The school's use of the additional funding for current disadvantaged pupils is now more effective than in the past. However, despite improvement, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils remains slower than that of others. Furthermore, although improving considerably, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains low.
- School leaders have recently taken steps to improve the way that the funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used. This has secured some improvement, but the

legacy of previously weaker provision remains. In many cases, the support that these pupils currently receive has improved and it is well matched to their specific learning needs. However, this is not consistently the case and weaknesses remain in the progress, attendance and engagement of some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

- Leaders use the Year 7 catch-up funding effectively. Pupils receive a range of support which matches their literacy and/or numeracy requirements. Accordingly, most of these pupils make good progress and catch up with their peers. Inspectors listened to some Year 7 pupils read. These pupils joined the school with lower than average reading skills, but they can now read with confidence and fluency.
- School leaders review the school's curriculum regularly. This ensures that pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum which matches their needs. However, pupils do not routinely make the progress that they should because teaching across different subjects remains variable. Pupils follow a range of academic, arts, technical and sporting subjects at key stage 3. The choice available to pupils at GCSE is designed to prepare them well for the next stage of their education. Leaders are currently reviewing the vocational qualifications that are offered, with the aim of strengthening this aspect of provision further.
- A broad and rich range of cultural, creative and sporting activities takes place outside lessons. Pupils enjoy these activities and they are well attended.
- Leadership of careers education is effective. Pupils say that they are engaged in meaningful learning about the next steps in their education from Year 7 onwards. The strong and impartial advice that leaders organise means that, despite many pupils attaining lower examination results than they should, almost all pupils move on to appropriate post-16 education, training or employment.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well catered for. Leaders ensure that pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain and develop a strong sense of community. Pupils have a clear understanding and knowledge of fundamental British values, including their rights and responsibilities.

Governance of the school

- Governance has been strengthened by recent appointments, including new governors who have experience of effective school leadership. As a result, governors are developing a more accurate view of educational standards in the school.
- Those responsible for governance, including representatives of the trust, have not previously secured an effective standard of education at the school. For example, they were not able to prevent outcomes from 2017 public examinations falling below the government's current floor standards. Despite governors challenging school leaders regularly about poor outcomes and teaching, they have offered insufficient support and guidance to help leaders raise standards.
- Governors have not previously been effective in ensuring that school leaders use the additional funding to support different groups of pupils effectively. Although there is clear evidence to indicate that this is changing, the use of these funds has not significantly diminished differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, and other pupils nationally.

- Those responsible for governance have specialist knowledge of financial management, school administration and safeguarding. As a result, governors oversee the school's finances and safeguarding arrangements effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders promote and ensure pupils' safety and well-being. For example, they responded quickly and effectively to a safeguarding incident that came to light at the time of the inspection. This confirmed that there is an effective culture of safeguarding at the school.
- Staff, including non-teaching staff, are vigilant in identifying potential risks to pupils, such as radicalisation, drug- or gang-related dangers, bullying and threats to pupils' mental well-being. Leaders provide regular safeguarding bulletins which provide pupils and staff with an up-to-date awareness of potential risks.
- Leaders maintain good-quality safeguarding records. There are systematic procedures for checking the backgrounds of staff when they are appointed.
- School leaders work effectively with parents and carers and external agencies, and act swiftly when required. Checks made by inspectors demonstrated that referrals to social care are followed up in a robust manner and that record-keeping is of a good quality.
- Most pupils, parents and staff say that pupils are safe and well looked after. Leaders ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of the risks which might affect them and how to keep safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders' plans to improve the quality of teaching have had a positive impact. Furthermore, improvements to pupils' behaviour are enabling lessons to be more purposeful. As a result, teaching is now supporting pupils to make faster progress. Despite this, leaders accept that there is still more to be done to ensure that teaching is consistently good. In particular, there is still too much variability in the quality of teaching across, and within, subjects.
- Teaching is generally strong in Spanish and history, but it requires improvement in other subjects, including mathematics. In addition, some teachers are not doing enough to compensate for the legacy of weak teaching which has left significant gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Some teachers are still not using the assessment information that they have about pupils to plan work at the correct level. As a result, pupils are often set the same work as their peers, regardless of their starting point or level of understanding. Consequently, teachers do not challenge the most able pupils sufficiently for them to make consistently good progress. Moreover, pupils with low starting points are too often set work that they find too easy or too hard.
- Teachers regularly use questioning to assess and secure pupils' knowledge and understanding. In some subjects, including history, teachers plan questions that provide pupils with the opportunity to think and reason deeply. However, in other

subjects, pupils, including those who are most able, are not asked sufficiently challenging questions. This hinders them from making stronger progress over time.

- Recently, school leaders have introduced assessment systems to help them to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress more accurately than in the past. Leaders now identify and support those pupils who are falling behind more quickly and effectively. The actions that leaders have put in place to support pupils who have fallen behind, including additional sessions after school, are helping these pupils to catch up with their peers.
- Teachers use different techniques to inform pupils about how to improve their work across a range of subjects. They are especially effective in history and Spanish. In these subjects, teachers plan interesting activities and use their strong subject knowledge to make it clear to pupils what they need to do to improve. Consequently, pupils make alterations to their work and clarify their misunderstandings.
- School leaders' plans to improve pupils' literacy skills are starting to have a positive impact on their learning. Many pupils read at a standard in line with others of their age nationally. As a result, they confidently and accurately interpret a range of texts. Teachers regularly provide opportunities for pupils to write at length, and this aspect of their literacy is improving through frequent practice. Some teachers tackle misconceptions that pupils have in spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, this does not happen consistently, which limits pupils' written work in other subjects.
- Most teachers' strong subject knowledge has supported improved standards of teaching. However, school leaders are aware that variation remains in the security of teachers' subject knowledge, particularly when subjects are taught by non-specialists or supply teachers. Leaders are taking steps to reduce these inconsistencies so that all teachers have the subject knowledge required for highly effective teaching.
- Leaders have recently introduced systems to improve the quality of the homework that teachers set. This has been effective. Consequently, most pupils and parents say that homework is set regularly, and that the work is useful and pitched at an appropriate level.
- School leaders provided inspectors with examples of reports that they send home to parents. These documents contain information about pupils' recent progress. Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that they receive valuable information from the school about their child's progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils have not been supported well to develop the characteristics of effective learners. For example, there are still too many pupils who do not take pride in their work and do not present their work well. Allied to the continued variability in the quality of teaching, this has meant that pupils' outcomes continue to be inadequate.
- Pupils are taught, and reminded, how to identify dangers and remain safe online. During the inspection, a situation came to light related to the inappropriate sharing of

information on a social media site. However, school leaders dealt with this quickly and decisively. Leaders are aware that they need to continue to emphasise to pupils the dangers of sharing information on the internet. Pupils' online safety is further supported by safety checks, including filtering systems, established by school leaders.

- School leaders place great value on pupils' personal development, safety and welfare. Consequently, the pupils that inspectors met during the inspection spoke positively about their school. They say that they are known and valued as individuals and are well supported by staff. They said that they would recommend the school to others.
- Pupils regularly learn about fundamental British values. They told inspectors that they respect and value differences and are tolerant and accepting of views that are different from their own. Pupils say that racism and homophobia have no place at the school. Pupils have a good understanding of faiths and cultures that are different from their own.
- Most pupils and parents say that bullying is rare at the school. When bullying does take place, pupils say that they know how to report it. They are confident it is dealt with effectively by school staff.
- Leaders' plans to support the transition of pupils from primary school are effective. Staff visit most of the large number of primary schools from which pupils join the school. Leaders have established effective systems for gathering the information from primary schools that is necessary to provide strong levels of personalised support. Despite this, some of the Year 7 pupils that inspectors met with felt that this was an aspect of the school's work that could be improved. Nevertheless, they all said that they are happy at the school and feel safe.
- Leaders take their responsibility for pupils' mental and physical health seriously. The virtues of healthy eating are promoted through the curriculum, and pupils have access to healthy choices in the school canteen. Pupils' emotional well-being is an area of focus for leaders. Leaders have employed a professional counsellor to support pupils to maintain their mental health.
- The school provides effectively for the personal development and welfare of the very small number of pupils who attend alternative provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement
- Pupils' attendance overall is improving, including that of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, it still remains lower than the national average. Rates of persistent absence are also above the national average, despite recent improvement.
- Pupils sometimes engage in low-level misbehaviour during lessons, particularly when the work is not well matched to their needs or on the rare occasions when teachers' expectations are too low. This behaviour can disrupt the flow of learning and prevents pupils from making faster progress.
- Leaders ensure that the school is an orderly community. Inspectors found that pupils were confident and courteous, and their relationships with peers and staff were positive. Pupils treat the school environment with respect. At break, lunchtime and change of lessons, they move around the school in a sensible and considerate manner.

- School leaders manage effectively the attendance, behaviour and safeguarding of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils' examination results in 2016 and 2017 were lower than those of other pupils nationally across a broad range of subjects. These pupils made insufficient progress across key stage 4.
- Inspectors' analysis of pupils' current work revealed a mixed picture. Although some pupils are clearly making faster progress, many continue to make inadequate progress. The progress of pupils in Year 11 remains inadequate, partly as a result of the legacy of weak teaching and low expectations in the past.
- Pupils have been taught effectively in history and Spanish over time, so they make good progress in these areas. However, pupils make variable progress in other subjects as a result of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Leaders have accurately identified the need to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils as a key priority. There are more disadvantaged pupils in the school than is the case nationally. The progress that these pupils made in examinations in 2016 and 2017 was in the bottom 10% nationally. Work seen by inspectors showed that the progress that disadvantaged pupils make is starting to show improvement in some areas, especially in key stage 3. However, too much variation remains, and disadvantaged pupils' current progress in Years 10 and 11 remains stubbornly low across a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils' outcomes in mathematics are inadequate. In 2016 and 2017, pupils' examination results in mathematics were in the lowest 10% nationally. Despite an improving picture for current pupils because of stronger leadership and better teaching in this subject, too much variation remains. Pupils, especially those in key stage 4, are not routinely making the progress that they should in mathematics.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not currently make the progress that they should. Despite some recent improvements, teachers and other adults are still not ensuring that these pupils are consistently well catered for. In particular, these pupils are often set work that is not pitched at the right level. Furthermore, they sometimes do not receive the support that is required for them to overcome their personal barriers to learning.
- Leaders closely monitor the outcomes of the small number of pupils who follow alternative provision. The quality of the courses that these pupils study has improved because of the scrutiny provided by leaders. Consequently, pupils who access alternative provision move successfully to a range of appropriate destinations.
- The proportion of pupils who progress to further education, employment or training is in line with the national average. Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum and effective careers guidance. Most pupils have proceeded to their first-choice destinations, despite the fact that many underachieved considerably during their time at Hillside.

School details

Unique reference number	141693
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10042422

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	682
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Ian Hann
Headteacher	Amanda Ryan
Telephone number	01515252630
Website	www.hillsidehigh.co.uk
Email address	admin@hillsidehigh.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities supported by the school is in line with the national average. The number of pupils who have a statement of SEN or an education, health and care plan is well below the national average.
- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils at Peregrinate Ltd, Pinefields and Alder Centre for Education.
- The school is part of the Wade Deacon Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings took place with school leaders, teachers, representatives of the Wade Deacon Trust and members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Discussions were held with pupils to gather their views on issues including safeguarding, bullying, behaviour, teaching, careers guidance and the curriculum.
- Inspectors examined a range of supporting documentation, such as the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan, assessment information, pupil premium plan, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance and behaviour records, and safeguarding documentation.
- Inspectors considered 65 responses to the Ofsted online parental questionnaire, nine responses to the Ofsted online pupil questionnaire, and 37 responses to the Ofsted online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors conducted learning walks and lesson observations across a range of subjects and year groups. They were accompanied by school leaders on some of these lesson observations.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work in pupils' books by undertaking a work analysis with school leaders.

Inspection team

Stephen Ruddy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Timothy Gartside	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Hanbury	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 2018