

Cansfield High School

Old Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan, Lancashire WN4 9TP

Inspection dates

23–24 January 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since starting in post, the headteacher has carried out a 'root and branch' overhaul of the school to set it back on track. As a result, the school is improving rapidly, even though many leaders have only been in post a short time.
- Leaders are committed to making this school a beacon of excellence for the community. They work together as a united team.
- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate knowledge of the strengths of the school and know the challenges ahead as they work to improve outcomes for all pupils.
- Staff morale is high because of the excellent support they receive from leaders.
- Teaching is improving because teachers receive high-quality training. Teachers feel valued because they are encouraged to share their practice with others as they develop their skills.
- Leaders are improving the curriculum to better meet the needs of pupils wanting to specialise in languages and humanities, or to study a range of vocational and academic courses.
- Staff, pupils, parents and carers are unanimous in their views that behaviour is good throughout the school. Pupils are proud of their school and show respect to each other and to adults.
- Pupils are well cared for, but some do not know enough about other faiths and cultures to be fully prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Attendance is improving because pupils enjoy school more than in the past.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not attend school as regularly as their peers, although this is improving.
- Outcomes require improvement because results, although improving, are not securely good. Some groups of pupils struggle to overcome a legacy of underachievement from the past.
- Teachers plan activities to engage and challenge pupils. As a result, progress for the most able is improving and there is now very little difference between the progress of boys and girls.
- Differences remain in the performance of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school compared with their peers, although this is reducing.
- Progress in mathematics is improving but lags behind the stronger progress seen in other subjects. Some pupils in Years 7 and 8 miss out on opportunities to practise their mathematical fluency, reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- Although the weakest readers receive highly effective support to improve their reading, a culture of reading across the school is missing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop a strong culture of reading in the school so that all pupils, especially the most able, read a range of suitably challenging books and different genres, including non-fiction books.
- Continue to embed effective teaching and learning strategies so that progress improves further, especially in mathematics and for disadvantaged pupils.
- Ensure that all pupils are taught about other faiths and cultures to increase their understanding of tolerance and awareness of life in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Transformational change has taken place in the school since the appointment of the new headteacher, who is a national leader of education. After just two terms in post, and a complete restructure of staff, systems and processes, he and his new senior team have reinvigorated the whole school community.
- Governors, leaders, teachers and support staff believe in the headteacher's vision to make sure that the school becomes a beacon of excellence for the community it serves. Everyone works as a united team to bring about the changes required to set the school back on the right track.
- The headteacher has restructured leadership and streamlined the number of senior leaders. Leaders are in place who have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to lead the necessary improvements. New faculties were introduced at the start of this academic year, led by teachers who model consistently effective teaching.
- The development of leadership is given a high priority through accredited leadership programmes, such as national professional qualifications for senior and middle leaders, and the national award for leadership of special educational needs provision. Middle leaders have a better understanding of their responsibilities to improve teaching in their area of responsibility and now better hold other teachers to account for their own practice. As a result, teaching is improving.
- Teachers, including those at the early stages of their careers, say they feel empowered to teach better because of the high-quality support they receive from leaders. Teachers are encouraged to complete Masters-level degrees and to embark on classroom-based research to improve their understanding of how children learn.
- Staff morale is high, and teachers say they feel valued. They gave examples of how they are encouraged to share their practice with others in faculty meetings and invite other teachers to drop in to their lessons.
- The headteacher inherited a curriculum which, for many pupils, was not fit for purpose because it did not meet their needs or interests. Leaders made immediate changes, making sure pupils in Years 10 and 11 were entered for examinations at the right level and changed some courses where necessary. Off-site alternative provision has been withdrawn because it was of poor quality and did not help pupils to re-engage with education or to prepare them for college. As a result, the curriculum is now fit for purpose and further improvements are planned.
- Attendance in the past was low and exclusions were high for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. New behaviour management systems were introduced, which are applied consistently by all staff. Attendance has improved, especially for disadvantaged pupils, and there has been a marked reduction in exclusions.
- Feedback from external reviews, completed by independent experts in their field, have been used to guide and inform improvements. As a result, leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school, and development plans reflect an exciting future

ahead.

- The spending of the pupil premium has already had an impact on raising aspirations for these pupils but is not yet fully effective in increasing progress for this group. Plans are already in place to make sure pupil premium funding is used far more effectively than in the past. For example, some will be used in further curriculum improvements to make sure all pupils develop creative talents and can visit the theatre and art galleries to broaden their experiences.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to support lower-attaining pupils when they start in the school and funds help the pupils to catch up. Pupils who are eligible for support through this funding benefit from an extra lesson of mathematics and/or English each week. Pupils told inspectors that they really enjoyed having the extra help with their reading when they were in Year 7 but were disappointed this stopped when they had caught up.
- Funding for pupils with SEND is used effectively to support learning, including for the weakest readers in Years 8 to 11. The special educational needs coordinator makes sure that all staff know pupils' barriers to learning and how to help pupils to overcome them.
- Pupils enthusiastically take part in a range of opportunities provided for them to make sure their learning extends beyond the classroom. They develop first-hand knowledge of democracy through electing representatives for the 'Student Parliament' which is led by the head boy and head girl. Pupils take part in committees, some of which have a focus on school improvement or helping others in the community through charity work, for example.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the many changes implemented by the new leadership team. Parents say their children are excelling at school. They say the pastoral team are extremely approachable and believe 'Cansfield is a caring school because staff always have children's best interests at heart.'
- Leaders give a high priority to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning, delivered mainly through lessons in personal, social and health education, assemblies and more focused days to learn about particular themes. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn about other faiths and cultures which are not represented in their mainly White British community.

Governance of the school

- Governors care passionately about their school and are determined to learn from their experiences in the past to improve the opportunities for Cansfield pupils. They have had to face difficult staffing issues during the staffing restructuring but have not shied away from the challenges facing them.
- Governors have used the findings from their external review to improve the way that governance works. Governors are more informed because they have been proactive in improving their skills through seizing opportunities for training appropriate to their role. This includes training in safeguarding, preventing extremism and radicalisation, safer recruitment and effective use of the pupil premium fund.
- Governors know the school well and have a more accurate knowledge of the strengths

and weaknesses of the school since the new headteacher was appointed. They regularly gather the views of parents, staff and pupils and use responses to improve the school.

- The governing body discharges its statutory duties with diligence.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff work together to create a culture of safeguarding in the school. All staff understand their responsibility to keep children safe. The designated person for safeguarding ensures this through keeping all staff training up to date and providing regular updates on pupils in difficulty.
- Systems for reporting a concern about a child are robust, and all concerns are acted upon quickly. As a result, pupils and families receive the help they need.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe because they are taught about many of the issues facing life in modern Britain. As a result, they have a greater awareness of issues such as domestic violence, safe and healthy relationships, drugs and alcohol abuse, and the safe use of social media.
- The single central record of pre-employment checks on staff and governors is well-maintained. Regular external evaluations of this record are carried out, and advice is acted upon.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is improving because teachers are now able to concentrate on developing their practice to improve pupils' learning, rather than prioritising behaviour management, as in the past.
- Teaching is particularly effective in physical education, art, design and technology, and photography, which pupils say they particularly enjoy.
- Over time, some teachers have not planned and delivered work which was suitably challenging for pupils. Leaders have delivered training in how to challenge pupils effectively. Teachers are now better at designing tasks to make pupils think about their work and deepen their understanding, rather than keeping them busy. The impact of this training is regularly checked through leaders' visits to classrooms.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong and supportive. Pupils are attentive and listen well to their teachers. They show respect for each other and listen when classmates are speaking or presenting their ideas to the class. Teachers encourage this through praising pupils for their efforts, willingness to 'have a go' and their good behaviour.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use to plan engaging activities that build on learning that has gone before. Questioning is improving and teachers increasingly ask pupils to explain their answers in order to develop pupils' reasoning skills. For example, in Year 10 photography, pupils confidently explain the criteria they use when choosing particular images to work with.

- Teachers make the most of opportunities to promote numeracy skills across the curriculum. For example, in Year 8 geography pupils confidently extract key information from tables and charts to investigate ideas and to support their conclusions. In Year 11 physics, pupils know how to apply their knowledge of solving equations for calculations involving momentum.
- Teachers support literacy development well through their focus on correct use of technical language and their regular checks on pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to produce extended pieces of written work. Some pupils are restricted in what they can write about because their knowledge is limited to information from teachers' explanations, rather than from information they have found out for themselves, such as from non-fiction reading.
- New assessment systems were introduced at the start of this academic year. As well as providing far more helpful information for parents on their children's achievements, teachers use this to identify gaps in learning and to provide additional help to make sure pupils keep up with their classmates. This intervention now takes place regularly for all pupils, not just those in Year 11, to provide more challenging work.
- Teachers' assessments are accurate because teachers moderate these together to check they have marked correctly. External validation, using standardised mark-schemes and nationally agreed benchmarks, provides an extra layer of checking. Some teachers are GCSE examiners and use these skills well to support other teachers with assessment.
- In mathematics, teaching is better for pupils at key stage 4 than for pupils in Years 7 and 8. Pupils do not have enough variety in the tasks they are given and are not provided with opportunities to make links between topics. Some teachers do not focus enough on teaching pupils to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills.
- Teachers help the weakest readers in the school to improve their reading through extra support and regularly listening to them read. Pupils who attend the 'Harry Potter reading group' talk excitedly about their interest in books by J K Rowling. A culture of encouraging all pupils, including the disadvantaged, to read for pleasure is less evident.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders have created a fully inclusive school environment, where all are welcomed. This includes a small group of pupils from a local special school who attend Cansfield for some of their lessons. These pupils say they love the school and particularly like the teachers who, they say, make learning fun.
- Careers education forms an integral part of pupils' learning from Year 7 through to Year 11. Pupils experience an increasing range of opportunities to find out more about their own strengths and skills, and how to present these by writing curriculum vitae and in mock interviews. These skills are helping pupils to become more successful learners.
- Pupils learn about different careers and education pathways available to them. In

assemblies, ex-pupils, parents and local business people are invited to speak to pupils about their career. Pupils attend careers fairs and meetings with a careers adviser, and visit colleges. In addition, pupils in Years 9 and 10 take part in an apprenticeship fair and visits to universities. As a result, they are exceptionally well-prepared for the next stage in their education or training, and a higher proportion than seen nationally continue with their education or training when they leave school.

- Leaders value the views of pupils. All pupils are members of one of eight committees in school: teaching and learning, behaviour, safeguarding, charity and careers, school environment, rewards, home learning, and data and assessments. As well as providing a position of responsibility, pupils are given ownership of an aspect of school improvement and know that their views are important.
- The school has a well-stocked library available for pupils to use from 8am to 4pm. Many pupils use this area at lunchtime, including for film club, and detailed records are kept on pupils' 'borrowing rates'. However, not enough is done to make sure all pupils, but especially the most able and those who are disadvantaged, develop a love of reading, read plays and poetry, for example, or are directed to read non-fiction books that might link to their interests or subject strengths.
- Pupils say they like their lessons in personal, social and health education. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, such as when using social media, forming healthy relationships and preventing bullying. Pupils learn about life in multicultural Britain but some pupils' knowledge and understanding of other faiths and cultures is superficial. Pupils say they would like more information on mental health well-being.
- Pupils say that bullying is very rare but are confident that any concerns shared with their teachers would be swiftly acted upon.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are proud of their school and the atmosphere is calm and orderly. They are polite and welcoming towards visitors, offering inspectors a chair to sit on in lessons. Around the school, pupils hold doors open for each other and greet staff with a smile.
- Pupils say behaviour has 'improved massively' since the new headteacher was appointed. They like that he is regularly seen walking around the school, often with the chair of governors, and knows many of them by name.
- Attendance is improving and is already higher than at the same point last year, reflecting pupils' more positive attitudes to school. Persistent absence, although reducing, continues to be higher for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- Exclusions, which have been high in the past, especially for boys, have reduced since April 2018 and there have been no exclusions since September 2018. The few pupils who have difficulty accepting leaders' expectations for high standards of behaviour are supported well so that they don't disrupt the learning of others, but also so that they do not fall behind in their learning.
- As a result of the highly personalised support provided and plans which focus on making sure pupils quickly return to their classes after a period of exclusion, pupils

successfully re-engage with learning. Pupils receive extra help in English and mathematics to make sure they don't miss out on learning while receiving this additional support.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes for at least the last three years have been much lower than they should have been compared with similar pupils nationally. This is because pupils have not been taught consistently well. Many pupils underachieved, especially boys, disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils.
- Teaching is now improving rapidly as a result of the support from leaders and the many opportunities teachers now have to improve their practice. Despite these improvements in teaching, progress is not consistently good in some subjects and year groups.
- Boys' achievement has caught up with that of girls in Years 7 to 10. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils requires improvement as they continue to perform less well than others in the school.
- Weaknesses exist in mathematics where there is still a legacy of underachievement to overcome, especially for pupils in Year 11. This is because pupils have gaps in the foundations upon which to build their skills. Work seen in pupils' books suggests that learning in mathematics is now improving. Pupils present their work neatly, showing clearly each stage in their method and demonstrate resilience as they work through problems. However, in Years 7 and 8, some pupils are not making enough progress in mathematics because the work set for them is too repetitive.
- Teachers' higher expectations are having a positive impact on the progress of pupils as they aim to reach higher standards across the curriculum. Pupils are now making better progress, especially the most able, because more challenging work is provided for them.
- Pupils' literacy development is supported well in lessons through teachers pointing out spelling errors, which pupils correct, and reinforcing key words and technical language. The weakest readers in Year 7, and those with SEND, make good progress in their reading because of the extra help they receive.
- Pupils with SEND are supported well across the curriculum. Some pupils with SEND have significant gaps in their learning when they arrive in the school. Pupils make better progress as they move through the school because the coordinator for SEND assesses pupils accurately to identify their needs and makes sure teachers know how to help pupils to overcome their barriers to learning. Pupils are fully included in all aspects of life at Cansfield and are prepared well for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' oracy skills are improving because teachers expect pupils to explain their responses in class. Occasionally, teachers do not model correct spoken language well, including in English lessons.

School details

Unique reference number	106521
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10057922

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	961
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Les Archer
Headteacher	Dr Geoff Baker
Telephone number	01942 727391
Website	www.cansfield.wigan.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@admin.cansfield.wigan.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 September 2016

Information about this school

- Cansfield High School is an average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than the national average and very few pupils are identified as speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for SEND is broadly average when compared with the national figure. A very small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to leadership. This includes the appointment of a new headteacher from April 2018 and the subsequent reduction and restructure of the senior leadership team, and changes to other leaders in the school.
- The school uses no off-site alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in all year groups and in a wide range of subjects to observe teaching and pupils' learning. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- A detailed review of pupils' work in books was carried out for a sample of pupils from Years 8 and 10.
- Inspectors met formally with governors, senior and middle leaders, and teachers, including those who are newly qualified. The views of 44 staff who answered Ofsted's staff questionnaire were considered.
- An inspector met with a representative from the local authority and had a discussion with the school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors observed pupils as they moved between lessons and observed and spoke to pupils during break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors met formally with three groups of pupils and considered the 52 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils. An inspector listened to a small number of pupils read.
- The views of 85 parents were considered who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire), along with 62 free-text comments.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, policies, behaviour and attendance information, and information on pupils' achievements and senior leaders' monitoring of teaching.

Inspection team

Denah Jones, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector
Jan Rowney	Ofsted Inspector
Tim Long	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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