

The Prescott School

Knowsley Park Lane, Prescott, Liverpool, Merseyside L34 3NB

Inspection dates

12 to 13 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
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

- Pupils who attend The Prescott School do not make the progress of which they are capable, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- In the last three years, pupils' outcomes have been weak. In 2018, from an already well-below-average position, there was deterioration in the amount of progress that pupils made. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are exceptionally poor.
- Before the start of this academic year, senior leaders, including governors and trustees, had allowed the quality of education to fall to an unacceptable standard.
- The strategic leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is weak. Consequently, these pupils do not make the progress that they should.
- Most subject leaders do not have the necessary skills and expertise to lead their respective areas effectively.
- Pupils do not benefit from strong teaching. This has a detrimental effect on the progress they make. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.
- Most teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. They do not sequence learning effectively nor provide pupils with the right level of challenge.
- Senior leaders have not ensured that the curriculum enables pupils to develop effectively their knowledge, understanding and skills across a range of subjects. This has a negative impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- The attendance rate of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, is well below the national average.
- Despite recent improvements, the number of fixed-term exclusions remains high, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils' learning is sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour in lessons.

The school has the following strengths

- Since the appointment of the new chief executive officer (CEO), the trust is providing more effective support to the school.
- The new executive principal and head of school have brought much-needed improvement to the leadership of the school.
- This is a very caring school where staff show genuine concern for the welfare of their pupils.
- Most pupils behave well around school. They are polite and friendly.
- Pupils benefit from strong teaching in photography, drama, music and art.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that senior leaders, including governors and trustees, provide effective leadership and improve the quality of education at the school by:
 - designing a curriculum that enables all pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills, make the best possible progress and achieve their academic potential
 - making decisions about the curriculum that are based on sound educational rationale
 - making sure that all subject leaders have the necessary skills and expertise to lead their respective areas effectively
 - ensuring that there is strong strategic leadership of the provision for pupils with SEND.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making sure that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve
 - insist that pupils, particularly boys, complete their work and take pride in its presentation
 - provide the right level of challenge for their pupils, particularly for the most and the least able
 - sequence learning in a way that enables pupils to make links with and build on what they already know
 - use questioning effectively to resolve misconceptions and deepen pupils' understanding.
- Rapidly improve outcomes by ensuring that pupils in all year groups, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, make good progress in all subjects, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - more pupils attend school regularly, particularly those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged
 - the correct attendance code is used for all pupils who attend off-site alternative provision
 - the number of fixed-term exclusions, particularly of disadvantaged pupils, continues to decrease
 - staff use the behaviour management system effectively so pupils do not have their

learning disrupted by poor behaviour in their lessons

- all pupils benefit from a high-quality programme and effective teaching in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The Prescott School joined The Heath Family multi-academy trust in August 2016. In the two years following conversion to academy status, trustees, governors and senior leaders did not ensure that the school provided an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. During this period, weak leadership meant that pupils did not learn effectively and made poor progress.
- The new CEO of the trust, who was appointed 18 months ago, has brought much-needed stronger leadership. The changes he has made mean the trust is now in a much better position to support the school. He has also ensured that the senior leadership of the school has been strengthened.
- Following a recent restructure, the school is now led by an executive principal and head of school. From September 2018, all members of the senior leadership team have had new roles and responsibilities. These changes mean that the quality of senior leadership in the school is better than in the last two years. However, at the time of this inspection, leaders' actions have not had significant impact on improving the quality of education in the school.
- In the first two years after converting to academy status, a lack of strong strategic direction resulted in significant weaknesses in leadership across the school. Pupils currently in school are still being affected by the poor leadership decisions that were taken about the curriculum. For example, the current Year 11 were entered early for the English literature examination. This has prevented nearly all pupils from gaining the GCSE grades of which they are capable in this subject. Indeed, 18 pupils were so underprepared to sit this examination that they did not attain a GCSE grade at all.
- From September 2018, leaders have made some changes to the curriculum. These have been pragmatic decisions, which leaders themselves describe as 'quick fixes'. Senior leaders do not have a clear and coherent vision about the curriculum.
- The current curriculum does not enable pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively across a range of subjects from Years 7 to 11. This means that pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, do not learn well, which prevents them from making good progress and achieving their potential. This is particularly evident in the current Years 9 and 10. After a shortened key stage 3, pupils follow one of four curriculum pathways. It is of great concern that no pupil in Year 10 is taking the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). The situation is the same in Year 9 where currently only 0.8% of pupils are taking the EBacc. This has significant implications for pupils' post-16 and post-18 study choices. Currently in Years 9 and 10, all pupils are spending six hours a fortnight on physical education (PE) with a view to taking a formal qualification in this subject. Leaders could give no clear rationale why so much curriculum time was allocated to PE, nor why all pupils were preparing to take a qualification in this subject.
- The overall quality of subject leadership across the school is not strong. Most subject leaders do not have the necessary skills and expertise to lead their respective areas effectively. This means that they have not been able to secure improvements to teaching and outcomes in their subjects. This is particularly the case in science and

mathematics.

- The strategic leadership of the provision for pupils with SEND is weak. Within the caring culture of the school, individual pupils with SEND are looked after very well. However, there is no strategic overview of the provision across the school to support these pupils. Consequently, leaders do not know whether their actions are enabling pupils to make better progress.
- Until very recently, the leadership of the use of the pupil premium funding was ineffective. The senior leader who has led this area since the start of this academic year has introduced a sharper approach to identifying why disadvantaged pupils are underachieving and to providing appropriate support. Actions taken to improve disadvantaged pupils' literacy skills have had some impact on improving their reading ages. It is too early to know whether this new approach will have an impact on improving outcomes for these pupils at the end of the year. Senior leaders understand that an external review of the school's use of this funding would help to improve further their work in this area.
- Teachers have access to school-based and external professional development. They are encouraged to share good practice with their colleagues. Senior leaders provide more personalised support for teachers where necessary. However, senior leaders do not focus enough on the impact of their actions on improving the quality of teaching across the school.
- Pupils have the opportunity to be involved in a range of extra-curricular activities. However, leaders do not monitor how many pupils take advantage of these. Consequently, they do not know how many pupils are benefiting from these enrichment activities.
- Newly and recently qualified teachers speak positively about the support they receive. Most pupils behave well in lessons. Consequently, there is no reason to recommend the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- In the two years following conversion to academy status, trustees did not ensure that the school benefited from strong governance. This has been remedied from the start of this academic year when trustees appointed a new chair of the governing body who has educational experience. The governing body has been reconstituted with clear terms of reference. Three-quarters of its members are new. This has strengthened governance significantly because these new governors have a range of relevant skills and expertise. The trust ensures that governors have access to ongoing support to enable them to carry out their roles effectively. Under the leadership of the new chair, governance of the school has improved. Minutes of the monthly meeting of the governing body show that they ask probing questions and challenge senior and middle leaders, particularly about the impact of their actions.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that all staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities in

relation to safeguarding. The high-quality training staff receive means they are well placed to spot any signs of pupils being at risk.

- Leaders have created a strong culture in which pupils feel safe, valued and happy. The way that staff support pupils with their social and emotional needs is a strength of the school. There is a strong safeguarding team in place, led by the Head of School. Members of this team work well with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the appropriate support.
- All protocols, systems and practices are fit for purpose. Staff keep detailed records of safeguarding concerns.
- Leaders understand their safeguarding responsibilities for all their pupils, especially those with poor attendance. Urgent attention has been given to improving pupils' absence since the start of this academic year. Despite some improvements, a high proportion of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are still not attending school regularly. Addressing this issue is a high priority for leaders.
- During the inspection, it became apparent that leaders had used attendance codes incorrectly for a small number of pupils who attend alternative provision. Inspectors were satisfied that leaders would respond urgently to this matter and ensure that the correct codes were used from now on. Leaders understood the importance of this in relation to their responsibility for the safety and welfare of these pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Only a small proportion of pupils benefit from consistently good teaching. This means that most are not able to learn effectively. As a result, they make very poor progress particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Most teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Nearly all of the staff who responded to the online questionnaire think that pupils are challenged to make at least good progress. This is clearly not the case and shows that teachers do not have an accurate understanding of what their pupils are capable of achieving.
- Many teachers do not have high enough expectations of the quality and presentation of their pupils' work. They are too willing to accept work that is of a poor standard, untidily presented and frequently incomplete, particularly from boys.
- Most teachers do not plan learning that provides pupils with the right level of challenge. This prevents pupils, particularly the most and least able, from making good progress. Typically, work is not demanding enough for the most able. Equally, work is sometimes pitched too high for the least able pupils to learn effectively.
- Programmes of study do not help pupils to develop their knowledge and deepen their conceptual understanding. Most teachers do not sequence learning in a way that helps pupils to make links with and build on what they already know. Most teachers do not use assessment information effectively to meet pupils' needs and inform future learning. This has a particularly detrimental effect on the progress of pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged.
- Many teachers do not use questioning well enough to encourage pupils to think and explain their answers. Too often, questioning remains at a superficial level and is not

used to probe and develop pupils' understanding. It is also not used well to tease out any misconceptions. This means that pupils do not have a firm foundation on which to build new learning.

- Most relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils value the support they receive from their teachers. This is particularly the case in Year 11 where pupils are very appreciative of the time their teachers give to help them with their revision.
- Pupils benefit from high-quality teaching in creative subjects, such as photography, drama and music and art. In these classrooms, teachers routinely use their expertise in their subjects to build pupils' confidence in their learning. They ensure that pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and skills securely. Pupils live up to the high expectations that their teachers have of what they can achieve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils who attend this school are cared for very well. Leaders have created a nurturing environment in which pupils' welfare is a high priority. The school's culture is one in which pupils feel safe and comfortable.
- Most pupils who spoke with inspectors said that bullying is not a problem in the school. They said that when it does happen it is usually dealt with effectively by staff.
- The planned programme for PSHE education is effective and covers a range of relevant topics related to pupils' personal development and well-being. Much of the school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also delivered through this programme. However, leaders know that the delivery of the content of this programme is variable. In addition, leaders do not ensure that it remains a high-enough priority in the curriculum for all pupils. For example, the programme is sometimes interrupted for other aspects of the curriculum, which leaders deem to be more important. Indeed, some Year 11 pupils told inspectors that they no longer have PSHE lessons because these are devoted to other areas of study. This raises questions about what important aspects of the PSHE programme they are missing.
- For those pupils who attend off-site alternative provision, leaders could explain how this is benefiting their personal development. This is a high priority for leaders. Effective communication exists between school staff and the providers. School staff make weekly visits to each provider to check on the progress, behaviour and attendance of each pupil.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- In recent years, pupils' attendance has been exceptionally low, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. From a very low point in 2017, pupils'

attendance deteriorated further in 2018. Current attendance data indicates that leaders' actions this year to address this very worrying situation have had some impact. However, the overall absence rate and that of persistent absence remain well above the national average. Currently, a third of the disadvantaged pupils in the school do not attend school regularly.

- Leaders' actions to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions have had some impact but these remain above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be excluded than their peers.
- Many pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. However, pupils told inspectors that their learning is sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour in lessons. They said some staff do not use the behaviour management system effectively. They also questioned its effectiveness because pupils know they can get away with not attending detentions.
- Pupils generally behave well around school. During breaktime and lunchtime their behaviour is calm and mature. They socialise well and most show respect for each other and the staff on duty. They are polite and friendly to visitors and are also very loyal to their school.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- In the year before converting to academy status, and in the two years since, the progress made by Year 11 pupils leaving the school has been well below the national average. The data for 2018 shows that from an already very low position, there was a further deterioration in pupils' progress rate. By the end of Year 11, pupils underachieved considerably, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are exceptionally poor. Substantial differences exist between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils across the country with the same starting points. These differences increased from 2017 to 2018. Over half the pupils in the 2018 Year 11 cohort were disadvantaged and only 6% of these attained a strong pass in English and mathematics.
- The progress of the most able pupils also gives cause for concern. The lack of appropriate challenge for these pupils means they do not make good progress and attain the high grades of which they are capable. In 2018, they attained, on average, over a grade lower in their GCSE subjects than other pupils across the country with the same starting points.
- There is no strategic overview of the provision for pupils with SEND and their academic needs are not being met effectively. Consequently, these pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable during their time in the school.
- Evidence gathered throughout the inspection does not support what the school's internal assessment data is telling leaders about the progress that the current Year 11 pupils are making. Some pupils are making better progress in some subjects. However, this is in no way consistent and is highly dependent on which member of staff is teaching them. In science, mathematics and English in particular, the curriculum and quality of teaching are not strong enough to enable pupils to make significantly better progress than in recent years. This is also the case in Years 7 to 10.

- In English, the progress of some pupils, particularly in key stage 3, is being severely hampered by staffing issues. This means they are taught by temporary and non-specialist teachers.
- The proportion of Year 11 pupils who progressed to further education, training or employment increased significantly from 2017 to 2018. It is now in line with the national average. However, poor outcomes for pupils limit their choices of post-16 and post-18 study.

School details

Unique reference number	142798
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10056529

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	807
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Helen Stevenson
Executive Principal	Jamie Jardine
Telephone number	0151 477 8680
Website	www.prescotschool.org.uk
Email address	info@prescotschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized academy. It is part of The Heath Family (NW) multi-academy trust.
- The trust has recently restructured the leadership of the school. From September 2018 the school has been led by an executive principal and a head of school.
- In September 2018, the governing body was reconstituted and a new chair of the governing body was appointed. Trustees delegate the responsibility to the governors to monitor the school development plan and the safety, welfare and educational progress of all pupils.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- Most pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is broadly in line with the national average.

- Fifteen pupils attend off-site education at Acorn, Evolve or Active TT.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subjects, including joint observations with leaders. They looked at pupils' work during their observations. They also carried out a work scrutiny with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils. They also talked with others informally during breaktimes and lunchtimes. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders and class teachers. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair, the CEO of the trust and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 18 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 14 free-text responses.
- Inspectors took account of the 39 responses to the online staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupils' online questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and development plan and information about the school's performance.

Inspection team

Anne Seneviratne, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dawn Farrent	Ofsted Inspector
Dympna Woods	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted 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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