

Alsop High School Technology & Applied Learning Specialist College

Queen's Drive, Liverpool, Merseyside L4 6SH

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and governors have failed to provide a good standard of education for too long. They do not demonstrate the capacity to improve this school.
- Leaders and teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Too many pupils in key stage 4 underachieve significantly in a range of subjects, including mathematics and science.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make particularly weak progress.
- Leaders do not provide teachers with precise information about the needs of those pupils with SEND.
- Students in the sixth form make poor progress on academic courses.
- Teaching does not routinely check that pupils' knowledge is secure, nor does it address the gaps in pupils' learning in key stage 4.
- Many teachers do not address the endemic weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills.
- The curriculum does not provide pupils with the knowledge that they need for future learning.
- Pupils' behaviour has deteriorated. The proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period of time is increasing. This is especially the case for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- Some teachers do not effectively apply the agreed systems to manage pupils' behaviour.
- Too many pupils continue to be absent from school on a regular basis.
- Some pupils submit work that is incomplete or poor in quality.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are cared for well at this school. They benefit from strong pastoral support.
- In some subjects, such as modern foreign languages and computing, pupils benefit from stronger teaching.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress on applied courses.
- Pupils feel safe and they learn how to keep themselves safe.

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?

- Improve rapidly the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - leaders at every level have high expectations of what pupils can achieve academically
 - leaders provide teachers with precise information about the individual barriers to learning faced by those pupils with SEND
 - the curriculum equips pupils with the knowledge and skills that they require to respond confidently to future learning.
- Bring about rapid improvements to the quality of teaching, so that pupils make good progress across a range of subjects, particularly in mathematics and science, by ensuring that teachers:
 - identify and address the gaps in pupils' learning, particularly those pupils in key stage 4
 - make sure that pupils' knowledge is secure before they move on to more difficult tasks
 - support pupils to overcome the weaknesses in their literacy skills
 - plan learning that effectively meets the needs of pupils with SEND
 - expect the best from pupils and insist that pupils submit work that is high in quality.
- Improve pupils' personal development and behaviour by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently apply the systems to manage pupils' behaviour to reduce incidents of poor behaviour
 - leaders improve pupils' rates of attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND.
- Improve the quality of teaching in the sixth form for those students who choose to study academic courses.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Senior leaders recognise that they have not provided pupils with a good standard of education for some time. However, some leaders have failed to accept the school's endemic weaknesses quickly enough.
- There is no doubt that leaders want the best for pupils. However, there is an unjustified acceptance by some leaders that pupils who attend this school are unable to achieve the same academic standards as their peers nationally. This has resulted in too many teachers and leaders having low expectations of the pupils who attend this school.
- Leaders have implemented several strategies to improve the school. However, too many have been unsuccessful. Leaders are overly focused on the actions that they have taken. They pay insufficient attention to how effective their actions have been.
- Weaknesses at every level of leadership have hampered the pace of improvement. For example, despite being an area for improvement at the previous inspection, pupils' rates of absence have only just started to improve recently. Furthermore, some aspects of the school have declined; for example, standards of behaviour, the quality of teaching in the sixth form and pupils' achievement in science and humanities.
- Leaders have been unable to prevent the decline in pupils' behaviour. Many teachers do not apply the school's behaviour system consistently. Some staff have lost confidence in leaders' systems. They do not feel that senior leaders will support them to manage pupils' poor behaviour effectively.
- Middle leaders have been keen to learn from external support. Signs of capacity at middle leadership level are beginning to emerge. For example, some effective middle leaders are beginning to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching in key stage 3. However, the improvements secured in the quality of teaching across the school are too little and too late for many pupils, especially for those in key stage 4.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a broad curriculum offer. This has been carefully designed with local employment opportunities in mind. However, weaknesses in leaders' curriculum planning exist within subjects. The curriculum does not routinely provide pupils with the knowledge and skills that they need for future learning.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development appropriately. Pupils' attitudes to each other and their understanding of differences mean that they are adequately prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils with SEND benefit from a wide range of nurturing pastoral support. However, leaders have been unable to secure enough improvements in the quality of teaching for this group of pupils. The information that leaders provide teachers regarding pupils' specific needs is lacking in quality and detail. Pupils with SEND are more likely to be excluded from school for a fixed period of time. They are more likely to be absent from school than their peers. This compounds their weak progress in a number of subjects.
- For the last three years, disadvantaged pupils have continued to make weaker progress than other pupils nationally, especially in English and mathematics. In fact, the gap has

widened over time. Leaders have not used additional pupil premium funding effectively to support this group of pupils. Following a recent review of this area, leaders have changed their approach to supporting disadvantaged pupils. However, there is limited evidence to show that leaders' revised use of this funding is making enough difference to disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4. For instance, in Year 11, the improvements secured in mathematics and science are extremely limited. This is because of weaknesses in the quality of teaching that these pupils have experienced. This has left them with large gaps in their learning and a huge amount of ground to make up.

- Leaders use catch-up funding effectively to support those pupils with weak literacy and numeracy skills in key stage 3. For example, leaders use assessment information to identify and address the gaps in individual pupils' literacy skills in Year 7 and Year 8. Leaders in this area regularly check that their actions make a difference. This is having a positive effect on the progress that this small group of pupils make.
- Leaders have secured improvements in the quality of careers education, information, advice and guidance that pupils receive. This is reflected in the higher proportion of pupils who now move onto further education, employment or training
- Given the weaknesses in leadership, especially in bringing about improvement in teaching and pupils' outcomes, the school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- Members of the governing body believed that outcomes for pupils were improving rapidly. This is because leaders provided governors with inaccurate and overly optimistic information about pupils' progress and attainment at key stage 4.
- In the past, the governing body have relied too heavily on leaders for information about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Governors did not take action to stem the decline in the school or to improve the effectiveness of governance soon enough.
- Following a marked decline in pupils' progress and attainment across many subjects at key stage 4, the governing body is now holding leaders to account more diligently for their actions.
- More recently, governors have secured a range of external support. Through this external support, governors reassure themselves that the information that they receive from leaders is accurate. While this is a positive step forward, it is recent and therefore the impact of greater challenge from governors in supporting school improvement is untried.
- Governors now have an accurate view of the school's weaknesses. For example, they are aware that many aspects of the school have worsened since the previous inspection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders' systems to check that adults are suitable to work with pupils are secure. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They understand the procedures that they must follow if they have concerns about a pupil.

- Staff are especially effective at ensuring that those pupils who may be at risk of harm are supported well. Strong links with a range of external agencies mean that vulnerable pupils benefit from highly appropriate and bespoke support and guidance.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching over time has not supported pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills sufficiently well to succeed. This has led to pupils making progress which, for the past three years, has remained significantly below that of other pupils nationally in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. As a result, many pupils have not achieved the high standards of which they were capable. This is still the case for pupils in key stage 4, who are continuing to underachieve in a range of subjects.
- In the past, leaders' assessment systems have been unreliable. Leaders have acted to ensure that teachers' assessment information is correct. However, work in pupils' books still raises questions about the reliability of teachers' assessments in some subjects.
- Weak assessment information means that teaching does not routinely address the often large gaps in pupils' knowledge or rectify common misconceptions. Consequently, pupils attempt more difficult activities before their basic understanding is secure.
- There are times when teachers do not consider the knowledge that pupils require when planning learning. Consequently, pupils are unable to attempt activities with confidence. Many pupils are over-reliant on their teachers for support.
- Some teachers do not insist upon positive attitudes to learning or expect the best of pupils.
- Teaching does not routinely address the weaknesses in pupils' literacy. Many errors in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar reoccur regularly in pupils' written work.
- Teachers do not have access to high-quality information about the needs of pupils with SEND. Consequently, teaching does not meet the needs of this group of pupils, nor does it help them to overcome the barriers to learning that they may face.
- Most teachers have a strong knowledge of their subject. They are enthusiastic and committed to ensuring that pupils enjoy their learning. Teachers have fostered positive relationships with pupils. Pupils appreciate the help that they receive from their teachers.
- In some subjects, teaching supports pupils to make good progress over time as, for instance, in modern foreign languages and computing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Although most pupils work hard and want to do well, there is a minority of pupils who do not demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning.

- Work in books shows that some pupils submit work that is of a poor quality or incomplete. Some pupils do not arrive punctually to their lessons.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They explained to inspectors that members of staff will listen to them if they have any worries. Vulnerable pupils benefit from a range of highly effective pastoral support. This is because staff have forged strong and effective links with external agencies and the local community.
- Pupils learn about how to stay safe. For example, pupils learn about the dangers of knife crime, gang culture and how to stay safe on the internet.
- Pupils receive a range of effective careers education, information, advice and guidance.
- Incidents of bullying are rare, and most pupils are confident that staff will deal with incidents of bullying effectively. However, a very small proportion of pupils, parents and carers have reservations about how well some staff will respond to their concerns.
- Pupils explained to inspectors that the school's inclusive culture allows them to be open about their sexual orientation or gender identity. Neither pupils or staff tolerate racist or homophobic language.
- There are effective arrangements in place to monitor the welfare and attendance of those pupils who attend alternative provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Standards of behaviour at the school have deteriorated since the previous inspection.
- Most pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly manner. However, some pupils do not behave sensibly on the corridors and stairwells.
- Some pupils do not adhere to school rules. For example, despite there being clear rules about the use of mobile phones in school, some pupils choose not to follow them. Some pupils were overheard by inspectors using inappropriate language.
- Many pupils do not attend school regularly. More recently, there have been tentative improvements in pupils' rates of attendance. However, rates of absence for all pupils remain above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND are more likely to be absent from school than their peers. There are signs that rates of absence for both these groups of pupils are starting to improve.
- The proportion of pupils who are excluded from school for a fixed period of time is increasing. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are more likely to be excluded than their peers.
- Pupils report that the standard of behaviour during learning is dependent upon their teacher and the pupils in their class. Pupils explained to inspectors how some teachers do not apply the systems to manage pupils' behaviour consistently.
- Many pupils are polite. They show respect for their peers, staff and kindly open doors for visitors to their school.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Leaders have failed to secure any convincing improvements to pupils' outcomes by the end of key stage 4. For the last three years, the progress made by pupils in English, mathematics and humanities has remained in the bottom 20% of all schools nationally. This is regardless of their starting points. Pupils with high starting points in Year 7 make especially weak progress.
- There were some tentative improvements in pupils' attainment at key stage 4 in 2018, for example, in English. Nonetheless, on average, pupils underachieved by over a grade in this subject compared to pupils nationally. In other subjects, pupils' attainment declined markedly. For example, in science, those pupils who left the school in 2018 made fewer gains in their learning than their peers who left the year before.
- Current pupils in key stage 4 make inadequate progress in mathematics and science. Many pupils have large gaps in their learning in these subjects. Teaching in mathematics and science in key stage 4 does not routinely address these issues.
- Pupils are making greater gains in their learning in English than they have done in the past. Nonetheless, current pupils in key stage 4 are too far behind to achieve the results of which they are capable in their GCSE examinations.
- Disadvantaged pupils who left the school in 2018 fared markedly worse than their peers. The progress that this group of pupils made in both English and mathematics was over a grade lower than other pupils nationally. Disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 make particularly weak progress in mathematics.
- Many pupils with SEND make weak progress. There is limited evidence to suggest that the progress made by this group of pupils has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers and teaching assistants do not have the information that they need to support these pupils effectively during learning.
- The proportion of pupils moving onto the next stage of education, employment or training has increased towards the national average. However, many pupils have not secured the basic knowledge that they need in English and mathematics.
- Pupils who arrive at the school in Year 7 with weak literacy and numeracy skills receive effective support to catch up. Nonetheless, this only makes a difference to a small group of pupils. Many pupils, particularly in key stage 4, are hampered in their learning because of their weak numeracy and literacy skills.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching in the sixth form has declined since the previous inspection. Although students on applied courses make good progress, those students who choose to study academic courses make far fewer gains in their learning.
- In academic subjects, including A-level qualifications, students' attainment was in the bottom 20% when compared to all schools nationally for the last two years. In contrast, in applied courses, the progress made by students who left the sixth form in 2018 was in line with national averages. Disadvantaged students who study A-level

qualifications in the sixth form have also underachieved considerably.

- Some teachers check that students' knowledge of key vocabulary is secure before challenging students to apply this to future learning. For example, students apply their knowledge confidently and make good progress in BTEC computing. However, in other subjects, students make weak progress over time because they are unable to draw on prior learning, for instance in A-level chemistry.
- Leaders recognise that the quality of teaching in the sixth form requires improvement. Following the decline in students' outcomes on academic courses, they have acted to improve the quality of teaching. Nonetheless, leaders have been unable to secure enough improvements in this area. Leaders expect students on academic courses in Year 13 to underachieve in many subjects.
- Staff who teach students in the sixth form have been able to benefit from appropriate training. This is having a positive effect on the quality of teaching in some subjects, for example, in history and English.
- Students who retake GCSEs in English and mathematics in the sixth form make progress that is in line with their peers nationally.
- Students in the sixth form benefit from an effective programme of pastoral care and support. Students appreciate the support that they receive to deal with issues relating mental health, stress and anxiety. There are good opportunities for students to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural education.
- Students in the sixth form have opportunities to develop their leadership skills. For example, students are involved in supporting younger pupils with their literacy and numeracy skills in Year 7.
- Students benefit from work experience opportunities. Leaders have acted to ensure that students' placements are closely linked to their plans for further study and employment.
- Leaders have established strong links to support pupils with their preparation for further study. Careers guidance is effective. Consequently, the proportion of students moving onto higher education, training or employment has increased since the previous inspection. More students move onto university courses, including Russell Group universities.
- Leaders have acted to increase the proportion of students who complete their programme of study on applied courses. However, the proportion who completed academic courses was below the national average in 2018.
- Leaders took appropriate action during this inspection to ensure that safeguarding arrangements in the sixth form are effective.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 104693 |
| Local authority | Liverpool |
| Inspection number | 10087806 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Community |
| 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 | 1577 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 278 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Marilyn Fielding |
| Headteacher | Mr Joe Mangan |
| Telephone number | 0151 235 1200 |
| Website | www.alsophighschool.org.uk |
| Email address | office@alsophigh.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 26–27 April 2017 |

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average secondary school. The school also includes 16 to 19 provision.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND who attend the school is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- A small proportion of pupils attend full- or part-time alternative provision at: Everton Free School; NexGen Academy; Rotunda Independent School for Excellence; CST (North West); New Heights High School; Academy International (Stride 4 ward);

Harmonize AP Free School; Star Specialised Learning Academy; Prudentia; Alder Hey Hospital School; Cornerstone Training and Aspire.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning and scrutinised pupils' work across subjects and year groups.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils during social times and between lessons. They also spoke formally with four groups of pupils from different year groups. An inspector spoke with a group of students who attend the sixth form.
- Inspectors considered 30 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. This included 26 written responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility. They also considered 37 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 15 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- The inspection team considered a variety of documentation. This included: leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plan, leaders' own information about the progress of current pupils and documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors met with: the headteacher and deputy headteachers; other senior leaders; sixth form leaders; a group of pastoral leaders; a group of subject leaders and two groups of teachers. They also spoke with other members of the school staff.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority and seven members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Emma Gregory, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| David Hampson | Ofsted Inspector |
| Philip Wood | Ofsted Inspector |
| Dympna Woods | Ofsted Inspector |
| Alyson Middlemass | 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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