

# Inspection of a good school: Sir John Thursby Community College

Eastern Avenue, Burnley, Lancashire, BB10 2AT

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Inspection dates:

21–22 January 2020

## **Outcome**

Sir John Thursby Community College continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils do not learn as well as they could in key stage 3. This is because in some subjects there are gaps in the content that leaders have planned to teach. Teachers in these subjects have not identified the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn for life beyond school.

Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve at key stage 4. Pupils have the chance to study a wide range of subjects. Teachers encourage pupils to study a modern foreign language and either history or geography to GCSE level.

The pupils that we spoke to told us that they feel safe at school. They have good relationships with staff and they are well cared for. Pupils said that bullying is rare and that when it happens adults deal with it well.

Pupils behave well in most lessons. Teachers give pupils rewards for their good behaviour and the effort that they put into their work. Sometimes there is boisterous behaviour in corridors and social areas. When pupils misbehave, staff take action to sort the problem out.

Leaders want pupils to experience life and culture beyond school. Staff arrange lots of school trips for pupils. All pupils visit a museum, the theatre and a sporting event during their time at the school.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum at key stage 4. As well as English, mathematics and science, most pupils study a language and either history or geography. They are also able to choose from a wide range of other subjects, leading to either a GCSE or a vocational qualification.

Teachers plan shorter series of lessons well. In some subjects the curriculum is not coherently planned and sequenced over the longer term. This means that pupils do not build their knowledge and understanding well enough over time. As a result, they do not achieve as well as they might.

By the end of Year 11, published data shows that pupils make progress that is similar to others nationally. There is significant variability between subjects, however. Leaders have improved the curriculum plans in some subjects to help pupils achieve better. Plans in other subjects are at an earlier stage of development.

In some subjects at key stage 3, teachers' plans for the content that they will teach pupils are too limited. The curriculum plans do not match the breadth and ambition of the national curriculum. As a result, there are gaps in pupils' knowledge. For example, we found that pupils have limited knowledge of great artists and significant artistic movements.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They revisit knowledge that pupils have learned in the past to help pupils remember more. Teachers identify gaps in pupils' learning and help pupils to improve their work. These skills have more impact where there is a better planned curriculum. In some subjects, teachers use the end points expected in Year 11 when setting and assessing pupils' work in key stage 3. This narrows the range of knowledge and skills that pupils develop lower down the school.

Leaders' ambitions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are the same as for other pupils. Teachers help pupils with SEND to access the curriculum alongside their peers. Like other pupils, this group enjoy a better quality of education in key stage 4 than in key stage 3.

Pupils enjoy a range of opportunities to enrich their personal development. For example, all Year 9 pupils work to achieve the Arts Award. Leaders ensure that trips and cultural experiences are an essential part of school life.

Leaders have introduced three simple principles to guide pupils' behaviour: 'ready, respectful, safe'. Teachers told us that this has improved pupils' behaviour. Pupils said that they like the rewards that they earn. Older pupils, staff and leaders all told us that there is still work to be done to improve behaviour. This, in part, is because staff are not consistent in the way they approach weaker behaviour. Leaders are working to change this.

Senior leaders are determined to make the school better for pupils and staff. Staff told us that leaders have made a lot of changes to reduce teachers' workload. Staff enjoy working at this school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team is knowledgeable and well trained. Leaders put pupils' interests first. Staff are well trained to identify and respond to concerns. Staff use the school's referral system well. They pass on concerns, no matter how small.

The school has a team of workers to ensure that pupils and families get the support that they need. The team works closely with support agencies outside school. Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe, including online. Leaders understand the risks that exist in the local community. They act to protect pupils from them.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum at key stage 3 is ambitious enough. In some subjects this means that pupils do not develop the wide range of knowledge and skills that they need to succeed in life. Leaders should ensure that, in all subjects, pupils in key stage 3 study a curriculum that covers at least the range and depth of content that is outlined in the national curriculum.
- Teachers plan shorter series of lessons well. In some subjects the curriculum is not coherently planned and sequenced over the longer term. This means that pupils do not know and remember as much as they should. As a result, they do not achieve as well as they might. Leaders should ensure that all subject curriculums build pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills well over time.
- This year leaders introduced a new behaviour policy. It has already improved pupils' behaviour in lessons. Younger pupils told us that behaviour in classrooms is good. Older pupils, staff and leaders all told us that there is still work to be done to improve behaviour in all areas of the school. Leaders should ensure that staff consistently follow the new behaviour policy so that incidents of weaker behaviour are dealt with successfully.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Sir John Thursby Community College to be good on 14–15 June 2016.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134996
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10122055
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1123
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Ms Glenda Brindle (Acting Chair)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Rob Browning
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sirjohnthursby.lancs.sch.uk">www.sirjohnthursby.lancs.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14–15 June 2016

## Information about this school

- The school uses five alternative providers for some pupils in key stages 3 and 4. These providers are: Evolve Military College; The Alternative School; The Heights Blackburn; The Heights Burnley; and Coal Clough Academy.

## Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, we spoke with pupils about life at school and their work. We met with senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers, support staff and governors. We also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- We spoke to many pupils and observed interactions during social times. We visited form time.
- We observed the work of the school and scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including leaders' curriculum plans, the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans and bullying logs.
- We reviewed a range of information about safeguarding, including the school's records of checks undertaken for newly appointed staff and records of support provided to pupils.

- We took into account the four responses from parents and carers who had used the free-text facility on Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire. We also considered the 100 responses to a questionnaire for staff and the 22 responses to a questionnaire for pupils.
- We closely examined the school’s work in the following subjects: science, history, religious education, art and modern foreign languages. This involved meetings with subject leaders, visits to lessons, work scrutiny and discussions with teachers and groups of pupils from the lessons visited. Leaders joined us on our visits to lessons.

### **Inspection team**

Stephanie Gill, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Holmes	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Wood	Ofsted Inspector

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