

Inspection of Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School

Selkirk Drive, Holmes Chapel, Crewe, Cheshire CW4 7DX

Inspection dates: 11–12 February 2020

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The previous 'outstanding' judgement reflected the school's overall effectiveness in October 2007, under the relevant inspection framework at that time.

The new judgement of 'good' reflects the current inspection framework as well as any changes at the school since the last inspection.

The school has not been inspected for 13 years, which is longer than the five-year maximum interval between inspections. Changes in school effectiveness may have happened at any point in that period. The long time between inspections is because the law changed in 2011; it made outstanding schools exempt from routine inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School, pupils and students are delightful. They are courteous, respectful and full of praise for the quality of education that the school provides.

The pupils and students we spoke to said that their teachers are ambitious for them. In key stages 4 and 5, pupils and students benefit from a well-planned curriculum. The curriculum is supplemented by a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

By the end of key stage 4, pupils achieve well. This includes disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education, employment or training.

Most students in the sixth form go on to higher education. Sixth-form students enjoy an effective programme of work-related learning. They achieve well on their A-level courses.

Underpinned by the school's respect charter, behaviour in lessons and around the site is good. Teachers forge positive relationships with pupils and students.

Pupils and students said that bullying is dealt with effectively and that they feel safe. They said that there is a full range of support from staff, including a very effective student services team. Discrimination is not tolerated.

There is an effective programme of relationships and sex education. Pupils value the school's personal, social, health and economic education programme (PSHE).

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

Outcomes for pupils at Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School are strong. By the end of key stage 4, pupils attain well across a wide range of subjects. Pupils' achievement is particularly strong in humanities, mathematics and English. Current pupils continue to be successful because the key stage 4 curriculum is very well planned.

Pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils achieve well across the school. A significant minority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View raised concerns about the quality of the school's offer for pupils with SEND. Inspectors looked deeply into this and found no major concerns. Teachers and leaders think carefully about the starting points and experiences of pupils with SEND. They regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum for these pupils.

In 2019, the externally published progress data for the school's sixth form indicated a decline. However, this data does not tell the full story. The decline relates to two subjects out of a total of 27 sixth-form courses on offer. Leaders have been swift to

address the concerns with the curriculum planning in these two subjects. Overall, pupils achieve well by the end of Year 13.

Leaders are in the process of reviewing and strengthening the curriculum at key stage 3. In some subjects, the key stage 3 curriculum is very well planned. Teachers have thought carefully about the knowledge that they want pupils to know and the order in which to teach that knowledge. They focus effectively on ensuring that pupils retain knowledge over time. However, in other subjects, leaders are still in the process of redesigning their key stage 3 curriculums. The curriculum aims in some subjects in key stage 3 are not as ambitious as they should be.

That said, there are some particularly noteworthy elements of the Year 9 curriculum. Part-way through the year, some subjects begin to offer well-planned units of work that start to prepare pupils effectively for the demands of their GCSE courses. Pupils value these opportunities because they act as a bridge between key stages 3 and 4.

The sixth-form curriculum is well planned. Students benefit from highly knowledgeable teachers who think carefully about how to teach their subjects. Teachers support students to develop the skills needed for the world of work. The school promotes high-quality apprenticeship opportunities effectively. Almost all pupils who enter the sixth-form without a standard pass in GCSE English and/or mathematics improve their grades. Students' attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning in the sixth form are good. This is because they value the curriculum offer and how well it is taught.

Pupils in the main school also behave well and attend school regularly. Pupils benefit from high-quality clubs and enrichment activities. There are many leadership opportunities. For example, the 'High Council' is a student body that is instrumental in school improvement. Assemblies and tutor time provide well-structured opportunities to think about key issues, such as our impact on the environment.

Leaders and governors are very effective in their roles. They know what needs to be done to improve the school further. Governors provide effective challenge to leaders. Staff appreciate the support that they get from leaders and governors, particularly in relation to their workload and well-being.

Overall, the school communicates well with parents and carers. Despite this, a significant number of parents think that leaders do not inform them about the aims of the school's curriculum effectively enough. Just under half of the 533 parents who responded to Ofsted's Parent View said that they did not always know what their child is learning. While the school has some relevant information on its website, communication about the curriculum is an area for improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding at Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School. They undertake all of the required checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They are knowledgeable about how to spot the signs of abuse and neglect.

The school works extremely well with other agencies. School leaders have been asked to support and train other agencies in crisis management and trauma. The school's policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding are robust.

Parents and carers are resoundingly positive about how the school keeps pupils safe. Pupils also told us that they are given the information that they need to stay safe online and keep healthy.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

The transition statements have been applied.

- The key stage 3 curriculum is in the process of being reviewed and strengthened. In some subjects, curriculum leaders are still in the process of refining what they want pupils to know and remember. The curriculum aims in these subjects are not as challenging as they should be. Consequently, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders must support and challenge curriculum leaders to implement highly effective curriculum plans right across key stage 3.
- Overall, parents feel that the school communicates effectively with them. However, a significant number of the 533 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, feel that the school does not explain sufficiently well the content of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that parents have access to all of the curriculum information that they need. This is so that they can support and challenge their children to excel.

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

Unique reference number	137449
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10122176
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1299
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	217
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Christina Burgess
Headteacher	Denis Oliver
Website	http://hccs.info/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School is a teaching school.
- The school operates the Cheshire East SCITT, which provides initial teacher education.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- We held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school and senior and middle leaders.
- We met with the governing body, whose members are the trustees of the school, and a representative of the local authority.

- We held meetings with the special educational needs coordinators, those responsible for safeguarding, those responsible for attendance and behaviour and those with oversight of pupils' personal development.
- We checked on safeguarding documentation, including the school's appointment checks on staff. We reviewed the school's self-evaluation and discussed leaders' priorities for further improvement.
- We considered letters from parents that inspectors received via the school during the inspection. We also considered correspondence that Ofsted received directly from parents.
- We spoke to groups of pupils in key stages 3 and 4, as well as students in key stage 5. We gathered their views on the school.
- We considered the 533 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- In considering the quality of education, we looked in depth at English, geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages, science and technology. We met with those responsible for each curriculum area, visited a wide range of lessons, met with teachers and pupils from the lessons visited and reviewed pupils' work. We also considered the curriculum provision in a range of other subjects.

Inspection team

Jonathan Smart, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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