

Inspection of Longdendale High School

Spring Street, Hollingworth, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 8LW

Inspection dates: 11–12 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils experience disruptive behaviour in lessons and around the school. This means that pupils do not learn as much as they should. By the time they leave Year 11, pupils make much less progress than pupils in other schools.

Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are mixed. Pupils get a much better deal in some subjects than in others. In English, art and drama pupils reach high standards because the curriculum is ambitious, and teachers are skilled. In other subjects, a weak curriculum and lots of staff changes have stopped pupils from achieving well. Current pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge.

Most of the pupils that we spoke with said that they feel safe. A small number of pupils told us that leaders do not deal effectively with bullying. As a result, some pupils do not report their concerns to adults.

Many pupils are not proud of their school. They have lost faith in the ability of school leaders to maintain high standards of behaviour.

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

Leaders at all levels, including trustees and governors, recognise that standards at the end of Year 11 have declined in recent years. Pupils achieve poorly year on year. Examination results at the end of Year 11 are weak. This is the case in mathematics, science, geography, history and languages. It is especially true for disadvantaged pupils, who make significantly less progress than other pupils nationally.

Leaders' efforts to improve the quality of education are beginning to pay off. Significant changes to the curriculum mean that pupils study a broad range of subjects throughout key stage 3. Within each subject, clear plans ensure that all pupils learn the same topics in the same order. This helps to ensure consistency between classes and promotes equal opportunities. That said, past weaknesses have left many pupils with gaps in their knowledge and skills.

Middle leaders, many of whom have been recently appointed, possess good subject knowledge. They have introduced new systems which are beginning to help pupils to remember what they have learned.

Despite these improvements, there are still many subjects in which pupils do not achieve well, such as mathematics, science, history and languages. There have often been staffing changes in these subjects which have left pupils being taught by temporary teachers and non-specialists. Frequently, learning in these subjects is disrupted by poor behaviour. This particularly affects younger pupils.

Some pupils display anti-social behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime. A small number of pupils use offensive language towards adults and towards each other.

While leaders acknowledge the need to improve behaviour, they have not successfully tackled it. As a result, many pupils have lost faith in leaders' ability to maintain effective discipline. Some teachers also feel that they are not supported by leaders in managing pupils' behaviour.

Pupils receive effective careers information, advice and guidance. They experience a wide range of learning opportunities about further education and the world of work. More pupils than before choose to remain in education or further training once they leave the school.

The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator accurately identifies the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, support for pupils with SEND is improving. Leaders have taken action to ensure that pupils with SEND learn the same things as other pupils in the school.

Pupils are expected to learn about religion and world views through the 'life skills' curriculum. However, plans for 'life skills' are not fully developed which means that some pupils do not have a good awareness of major religions. Pupils said that some parts of 'life skills' gives them helpful information, for example about sex and relationships.

Standards of writing are not as high as they should be because pupils do not take pride in their work. They make basic errors in spelling and grammar. Many pupils do not read widely. Some pupils told us that they have not read a book since primary school.

Governors have been too reliant on what senior leaders tell them. They have not challenged leaders to improve behaviour and the quality of education. They do not hold senior leaders to account well enough for their decisions and actions. The support from the trust has not been effective enough in helping leaders to tackle weaknesses.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders responsible for safeguarding are knowledgeable and skilled. The records they keep are clear and accurate.

Leaders work well with external agencies to provide specialist support for pupils. Support for pupils' mental health and well-being is especially strong. Pupils and staff are able to access support from trained counsellors.

Leaders pay close attention to racist and homophobic incidents. These are monitored carefully. Even so, leaders acknowledge that there is more work to do to understand the experiences of pupils from minority groups.

The school website contains useful information on mental health and staying safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Weaknesses in the past curriculum have not served pupils well. In recent years, by the end of Year 11, pupils have made much less progress than pupils in other schools. Although the curriculum is improving, current pupils have too many gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills to ensure they will be successful in their GCSE examinations. Leaders must take action to amend the current curriculum so that teachers systematically help pupils to overcome lost learning so that they leave school well prepared for their next stage.
- Disadvantaged pupils make significantly less progress than others nationally. This means that they leave the school without the grades they are capable of achieving. Leaders should ensure that the delivery of the curriculum enables these pupils to make the progress of which they are capable so that they are well placed to succeed.
- Across the school, new curriculum plans are ensuring that all pupils learn the same things. However, the delivery of the new plans is variable, especially in mathematics, science, history and languages. Often this is because leaders have struggled to recruit and retain staff in these subjects. Leaders must ensure that staff are well-trained and able to deliver the planned curriculum.
- Leaders and teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour well. In too many lessons, pupils' poor behaviour disrupts learning. As a result, pupils have lost faith in leaders' ability to maintain effective standards of discipline. Leaders should establish high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They should ensure that staff apply these systems consistently. They must support teachers to manage pupils' behaviour so that school is calm, orderly and a positive place in which to learn.
- Some pupils do not show appropriate levels of respect to their peers, teachers and/or leaders. They use offensive and discriminatory language. While instances of bullying are rare, some pupils do not believe they are dealt with effectively. This means that they do not always report concerns to members of staff. Leaders must ensure that the use of offensive language and bullying is tackled effectively.
- Standards of reading and writing are poor. Many pupils' books are poorly presented and frequently contain basic spelling errors. Many pupils do not read for pleasure and do not believe that the school promotes reading. This prevents pupils from developing their understanding of the world and presenting their ideas clearly. Leaders must support teachers in insisting on high standards of writing and do more to ensure that pupils develop a desire to read for pleasure.
- Governors and trustees have failed in their duty to address the decline in the standards of behaviour at the school. As a result, pupils do not learn as well as they should. Furthermore, leaders have lost the faith of many pupils and their

parents and carers. Trust leaders must take swift action to ensure that leaders quickly improve standards of behaviour.

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	144579
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10135114
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	873
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Tracey Saltsman
Headteacher	Andrea Jones
Website	http://www.longdendalehighschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school places a small number of pupils with two alternative education providers. The providers used by the school are Works4U and BodyTech Repair Centre.
- Longdendale High School converted to become an academy on 1 July 2017. When its predecessor school, which was also called Longdendale High School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall. The school is part of AspirePlus Educational Trust.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- We met with senior leaders and middle leaders to discuss the school’s work and the approach to the curriculum, behaviour and personal development.
- We had telephone conversations with the chair of the local governing body and the chair of the trust. We also spoke to the chief executive of the trust throughout the inspection.
- We checked the school’s systems for vetting staff and we reviewed the single central record.
- We spoke to a range of staff, including recently and newly qualified teachers, who shared their views about the school. We also asked about their workload and what the school is doing to help members of staff cope with it.
- We reviewed minutes of governors’ meetings and school policies.
- We reviewed Ofsted’s online surveys for staff and parents to gauge opinions about the school. We spoke with a large number of pupils throughout the inspection.
- We undertook deep dives into the following subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, art and drama. This involved joint lesson visits with subject leaders, meeting with teachers and pupils, and discussions with leaders about curriculum planning and approaches to assessment. We also reviewed pupils’ work.
- We carried out further lesson visits in addition to the deep dives to ascertain the school’s approach to the curriculum as a whole.

Inspection team

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