

Inspection of Ellesmere Port Catholic High School

Capenhurst Lane, Whitby, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 7AQ

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 June 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' experience at this school has improved considerably over the last two years. Leaders and staff want the best for all pupils. They place as much emphasis on pupils' personal development as they do on academic achievement. Most pupils are confident and well-mannered. They behave well, attend school regularly and have good attitudes to learning.

Pupils have access to an appropriate range of subjects. They now study most subjects in enough depth. However, pupils encounter a mixed experience when learning different subjects. This is because some subjects are less well planned than others. There remains too much variability in how well subjects are delivered.

Pupils benefit from strong support from staff. As a result, pupils feel safe and know that they are well cared for in school. They trust adults to help them if they have problems. For example, although bullying is rare, pupils know that staff will treat any incidents seriously.

The school's growing sixth form provides students with many opportunities to develop employability skills. Students play a full part in the life of the school.

Pupils support many local charities and community organisations. They are keen to serve the local community in Ellesmere Port. For example, the school provided food for local families during the recent national lockdowns.

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

This school has improved considerably, in all areas, since the previous inspection. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are determined that the school should continue to improve. They are committed to the school's mission that pupils should 'have life and have it to the full'. They know the school's strengths and shortcomings well. They have successfully addressed the weaknesses that were identified when the school was last inspected.

The school's staff form a strong team, committed to pupils' education and well-being. Most agree that the school is well led. They believe that leaders treat them with respect. They appreciate leaders' work to ensure that their workload is reasonable.

Senior leaders and subject leaders have worked effectively in order to improve how subjects are planned and taught. Pupils now study a broad range of subjects in Years 7 to 9. In most subjects, learning is well planned. It builds from year to year and teachers take into account pupils' needs and abilities. This is not the case in some subjects, especially for lower-ability pupils. This means that some pupils struggle to understand the content they are learning. As a result, they do not remember what they have been taught.

Leaders have provided teachers with training about the characteristics of effective teaching in different subjects. Subject departments apply this training so that teachers know what it means to teach their subject effectively. However, the way in which teachers put this training into practice is variable.

The remaining weaknesses in how subjects are planned and taught are much less evident in the sixth form. Here, all subjects are planned appropriately and delivered well. This means that students learn effectively.

Leaders' work to promote pupils' personal development is strong. There is a well-planned personal development programme. It includes specific lessons, assemblies and themes that span subjects. Pupils learn what it means to be a citizen in modern Britain. They learn to respect people who are different from themselves. They learn how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders promote the personal development of sixth formers particularly well. For example, all students undertake work experience. Wherever possible, placements are matched to students' career aspirations. Students play a full part in the life of the school. They mentor some younger pupils and help others to improve their reading. As a result, students gain valuable life and employability skills.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well in school. Leaders assess their needs accurately and put in place a wide range of effective support. In some subjects and classes, learning is less well planned for lower-ability pupils. When this is the case, pupils with SEND are affected less because of the extra support that staff provide.

Most pupils enjoy school and attend very regularly. Many pupils told inspectors how glad they were to be back following the recent partial closure of the school. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and most enjoy learning. The school is calm and orderly throughout the day. The conduct of sixth formers is exemplary. They provide excellent role models for younger pupils.

Staff work hard to support pupils who struggle to behave appropriately. They provide a great deal of extra help to ensure that all pupils can learn. A small number of pupils study away from the school at an alternative provider. Pupils attend for 12 weeks and then return to school. This provision is proving successful in re-engaging pupils with their learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong culture of care for pupils and for keeping them safe. Comprehensive and regular training mean that staff are alert to the signs that pupils might be at risk or need extra help. Leaders deal with concerns quickly. The pastoral team ensures that pupils get the support that they need, whether from within school

or from outside agencies. Parents and carers who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and staff who responded to their inspection survey agreed that pupils are safe and well cared for in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have sought to ensure that the curriculum is well suited to pupils of different abilities. Much of this work is proving successful. However, in some subjects, the curriculum is not well enough adapted for lower-ability pupils. Consequently, these pupils do not understand what they are being taught. They do not learn the subject content and cannot remember what they have learned previously. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans are suitably adapted so that these pupils can make the progress that they should through the planned curriculum.
- Teachers appreciate the investment the school has made in providing training. In many departments, teachers have taken generic training about aspects of pedagogy and applied these to their delivery of the subject curriculums. However, this is not true for all subject departments. This means that there is variability in how well the planned curriculum is delivered. Leaders should ensure that all teachers use appropriate and effective approaches to teaching their subject to ensure that pupils are able to learn the content of the curriculum effectively.

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 [here](#).

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	111451
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10184640
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
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	917
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe Coucill
Headteacher	Caroline Vile
Website	www.epchs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 September 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There are more pupils on the school's roll since the previous inspection. The school is at full capacity in lower years and the sixth form is poised to grow further in September 2021.
- The school is within the Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury and its most recent section 48 inspection took place in October 2015. The next one is scheduled to take place in the 2022 spring term.
- A small number of pupils study away from the school at one of three alternative providers. These are IMPACT, Wirral WRAP and Ancora House School.
- At the time of the inspection, pupils in Year 11 and students in Year 13 were not in attendance.

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.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, governors, including the chair of the governing board, representatives of the local authority and the diocese, and representatives from the teaching school alliance that has been supporting the school.
- Inspectors considered safeguarding by meeting with the designated safeguarding leader and her deputy, scrutinising policies and records relating to child protection and examining the safeguarding checks made on staff before they join the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised several documents, including the school's self-evaluation, its improvement plan, minutes of governing board meetings and several policies.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime. They met more formally with groups of pupils in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 and with students in Year 12.
- Parents' views were taken into account by considering the 86 responses to Parent View, including the 77 written contributions.
- Inspectors considered the 64 responses from staff to their online inspection questionnaire.
- As part of this inspection, particular consideration was given to English, mathematics, science, history, geography, art, music and drama. In these subjects, inspectors met with curriculum leaders and staff, visited lessons and scrutinised curriculum plans.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jane Spilsbury	Her Majesty's Inspector
Liz Kelly	Ofsted Inspector
Rob Hackfath	Her Majesty's Inspector

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