

Inspection of Hillside High School

Breeze Hill, Bootle, Merseyside L20 9NU

Inspection dates: 29–30 June 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a caring school where pupils respect one another. Pupils are accepting of each other's differences. Pupils appreciate that they can celebrate diversity in all aspects of school life. They feel happy and safe at school. Pupils said that staff do not tolerate any form of bullying or derogatory behaviour. If it does occur, it is dealt with quickly.

Pupils are polite. They welcome visitors to their school with pride. In the main, pupils at this school behave well. In lessons they try hard. Most pupils display positive attitudes to learning.

Pupils benefit from a well-balanced personal development curriculum. They said that the careers advice that they receive helps them to achieve their ambitions. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged, have many opportunities to contribute positively to school life through music, the arts and sport.

Teachers have increasingly high expectations of pupils. The quality of education for all pupils is improving. However, some pupils are not progressing through the curriculum as well as they should. This is because, until recently, pupils did not benefit from a sufficiently ambitious curriculum. In recent years, pupils at key stage 4, especially those who are disadvantaged, have not achieved well.

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

Leaders have taken the right actions to ensure that pupils have access to an appropriate curriculum. All pupils at key stage 3 now study a broad range of subjects in line with the national curriculum. At key stage 4, the number of pupils following the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects is increasing.

Leaders are aspirational for all pupils at this school. The quality of education for current pupils is better than it has been in the past. Pupils at key stage 3, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, are increasingly well prepared for key stage 4. However, pupils in key stage 4 do not remember their learning as well as they should. This is because these pupils experienced a poorly planned curriculum in key stage 3.

Although the foundations for the new curriculum are firmly in place, leaders are still in the process of defining exactly what is to be taught. In some subjects, leaders and teachers have thought carefully about the content that pupils should learn and how to deliver new concepts and ideas. Where this is the case, pupils learn in depth and their knowledge of subjects is rich. In other subjects, teachers are not clear about the precise knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember. Added to this, some teachers are not as confident in how best to put the new curriculum plans into action. In these subjects, some teachers do not check carefully what

pupils know and remember of the curriculum because they have not identified the core knowledge that pupils must learn. As a result, the quality of pupils' learning across subjects is uneven.

The leadership of SEND is strong. Teachers use information increasingly well to make suitable adaptations to the curriculum for pupils with SEND. Pupils with SEND produce good-quality work. Staff support pupils with SEND to go on to appropriate education, employment and training, post-16.

Leaders have prioritised reading. Pupils said that the focus on vocabulary is building their confidence to become stronger readers. However, the weakest readers are not catching up as quickly as they should. This is because, due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), teachers have not put into practice the training that they have had to support the weakest readers.

Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and during social times. In the main, pupils said that behaviour in lessons does not disrupt learning.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders' efforts to improve pupils' attendance were gathering momentum. More pupils were attending school regularly. Nonetheless, the attendance rates of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND remain lower than those of their peers in school.

Leaders have prioritised support for pupils' well-being. For example, pupils learn how to eat healthily and how to look after their mental health through the well-planned personal development curriculum. Pupils said that this is helping them to keep safe and well. Leaders have ensured that pupils in Year 11 who are vulnerable continue to receive appropriate support.

Trustees and governors have invested heavily in the leadership of the curriculum. Teachers are beginning to use research effectively to develop their own practice. Staff feel valued. Their morale is high. The staff at Hillside High School have the best interests of pupils at heart.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture of safeguarding is strong. All staff take pupils' welfare seriously. Leaders ensure that all staff are trained to be alert to the signs of harm that pupils may face. Staff know how to report these concerns.

Staff have built effective relationships with the families of vulnerable pupils. Staff work well with external agencies to make sure that these pupils get the help that they need.

Leaders have prioritised teaching pupils about how to stay safe online. Pupils understand the risks that they face when using the internet or social media sites.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are in the process of training staff in how to deliver new curriculum plans. In some subjects, teachers are not as confident as they should be in implementing those plans. This is leading to unevenness in the delivery of the curriculum across and within subjects because some teachers lack subject-specific pedagogical knowledge. Consequently, pupils do not make as much progress through the curriculum as they should. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive ongoing subject-specific training that enables them to implement their curriculum plans effectively.
- In some subjects, leaders have not thought deeply enough about the knowledge that they want pupils to learn and the order in which they should learn it. As a result, pupils do not remember as much of the curriculum as they should. Leaders should ensure that teachers are secure in the precise knowledge that they intend pupils to know and remember.
- Leaders have prioritised reading. However, teachers are not supporting the weakest readers to catch up quickly enough. Consequently, the weakest readers struggle to access some of the curriculum content. Leaders must ensure that teachers put into place the training that they have had to support the weakest readers, so that they can read with fluency and accuracy.
- Leaders have implemented many strategies to encourage better attendance. However, some pupils who are disadvantaged and/or with SEND do not attend as regularly as they should. This prevents them from making the best possible progress through the curriculum. Leaders should build on this work to improve the attendance of all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND.

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	141693
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10184627
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	640
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Michael Cunliffe
Principal	Amanda Ryan
Website	www.hillsidehigh.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils, at Harmonize Academy, Alder Centre for Education and The Inclusion Network.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the principal, the senior leadership team, middle leaders and a range of teaching and support staff. An inspector spoke with representatives of

the multi-academy trust and five members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history and Spanish. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils and teachers.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from Year 7 to Year 10. Inspectors also observed breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, the school development plans, self-evaluation documents, curriculum plans and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding procedures and the checks made on staff. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding in school. An inspector also checked the arrangements for pupils attending alternative provision.
- At the time of this inspection, Year 11 pupils were no longer attending school. Pastoral leaders continue to support pupils in Year 11 who are vulnerable.
- Inspectors considered and the 31 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff. Inspectors also checked the views of the 40 parents in their responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. This included the 31 comments received via the free-text facility.

Inspection team

Rachel Goodwin, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Claire Hollister	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Pennington	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector

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