

# Inspection of a good school: Rainford High Technology College

Higher Lane, Rainford, St Helens, Merseyside WA11 8NY

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Inspection dates:

14 and 15 September 2021

## Outcome

Rainford High Technology College continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff at Rainford High Technology College have high expectations for all pupils regardless of their background. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, hear, see and feel the school's values of 'everyone matters, everyone helps and everyone succeeds' in their daily lives.

Boys and girls told inspectors that they feel happy and safe at the school. The vast majority of pupils treat each other well and look after each other. Pupils trust staff and feel confident that staff will support them if they need it.

Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning. Students in the sixth form are confident and resilient learners. Most pupils behave well in lessons. Teachers manage behaviour effectively. This means that pupils enjoy learning in a calm environment with few interruptions.

Pupils also behave well around school. They are respectful and courteous to each other, staff and visitors. Pupils have good relationships with staff. They listen to the advice and guidance that staff give them and almost always respond positively.

Pupils told inspectors that they rarely experience unpleasant behaviours such as bullying, harassment or discrimination. If such incidents do occur, pupils are confident that staff will deal with them well.

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

Leaders ensure that all pupils, and students in the sixth form, benefit from an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum. They carefully consider pupils' best interests when selecting the qualifications that pupils can study. Increasingly, more pupils are studying a suitably aspirational range of academic and vocational subjects. Most pupils take positive next steps in their education, employment or training. Pupils achieve well.

Subject plans are ambitious. In most subjects, curriculum plans provide explicit detail about the knowledge that pupils will learn. Subject content is well-ordered, to allow pupils to build on previous knowledge. However, this clarity is missing in a small number of subjects. This hinders some teachers' understanding of what pupils know and remember over time.

Most teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this effectively to deliver appropriate activities that help pupils to learn well. Teachers present complex ideas clearly to students in the sixth form. Teachers support pupils well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers design and use assessment strategies skilfully. This gives them a clear picture of what pupils know and can remember of the taught curriculum. However, at times, teachers do not select the most appropriate activities to deliver subject content. This stops some pupils from building on what they know and can do.

Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are accurately identified and that these pupils are well supported. Staff make effective use of the training that they have received to support pupils with SEND in lessons. Staff also provide a range of high-quality additional support that ensures that most pupils with SEND, including those with complex needs, thrive and progress.

Most pupils read with confidence and this helps them to learn well in their subjects. This is because leaders have well-designed approaches to support all pupils with their reading. Staff provide precise support for pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read. All pupils enhance their appreciation of reading through regular, well-structured reading sessions.

Leaders and staff have maintained a positive culture of behaviour. Pupils said that they want to behave so that they can do well. The vast majority of pupils behave very well in lessons and around school. Pupils are typically calm and respectful. Teachers consistently challenge pupils' occasional poor behaviour. Pupils value the positive impact that this has on their experience at school.

Leaders have established a well-informed personal development programme that supports pupils' wider development. Most staff confidently deliver a carefully designed personal, social, health and relationship education (PSHRE) programme. Staff also ensure that pupils get effective careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). Most pupils spoke highly of these programmes. However, some staff are less confident in delivering some aspects of these programmes, such as sex and relationship education. Furthermore, leaders have correctly identified that the personal development programme does not completely meet current pupils' needs.

Leaders have created a cohesive and supportive culture for staff. Leaders carefully listen to staff. Leaders take positive actions to support the workload and well-being of staff. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support that leaders provide.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff prioritise pupils' safety and well-being above all else. Staff help pupils to develop responsibility for their own health and well-being, relationships and interactions with the wider world.

Staff are well trained to spot safeguarding concerns. They vigilantly use this training to record and share any concerns. Leaders carefully consider information about pupils' safety and well-being. They work effectively, alongside other safeguarding partners, to provide support for pupils who need it.

Leaders and trustees have suitable systems to identify and manage any allegations or safeguarding concerns about staff.

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

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

- There remains some variation in the quality of education across subjects. In a small number of subjects, curriculum plans lack precision about the specific knowledge that pupils will learn. Added to this, some teachers do not select the most appropriate activities to teach new concepts and topics. As a result, some pupils do not know and remember as much of the curriculum content as they should. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders and teachers are provided with the support that they need to develop the curriculum further.
- Some of the content of the personal development programme is in the early stages of development. Some staff are less confident in delivering aspects of PSHRE and CEIAG. This means that the personal development programme does not fully meet current pupils' needs. Leaders should ensure that the personal development curriculum is further strengthened to better meet pupils' needs and that staff are fully trained to confidently deliver the new content.

## 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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Rainford High Technology College, to be good on 17 and 18 March 2015.

## **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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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>	144327
<b>Local authority</b>	St Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	10204464
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1638
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	180
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Rupert Nichols
<b>Principal</b>	Ian Young
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.rainford.org.uk">http://www.rainford.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Rainford High Technology College is part of the Rainford Academies Trust.
- Rainford High Technology College converted to become an academy school in September 2017. When its predecessor school, Rainford High Technology College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Launchpad and Apple Cast Education.

## Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders. They met with representatives of the academy trust and representatives of St Helens local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history, geography and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals. They met with leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about the school's work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke with the leaders responsible for SEND and reading. They also visited a sample of lessons that provide specialist support for pupils who have additional needs.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school site. They also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups, including separate groups of boys and girls. They considered the responses of the 131 pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the 61 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors took account of the 220 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the 158 comments received through Ofsted's free-text facility. Inspectors also considered the views of parents and carers who contacted them during the inspection.

## **Inspection team**

Michael Pennington, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector
Nell Banfield	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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