

Inspection of Hope Academy

Ashton Road, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside WA12 0AQ

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 September 2021

Overall effectiveness Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff have high expectations of pupils. They ensure that the school's ethos of 'respect, courage and ambition' is the day-to-day experience for pupils at Hope Academy. Pupils from all backgrounds are welcome and treated equally and fairly.

Pupils and staff enjoy warm relationships. Their daily interactions are characterised with kindness, courtesy and respect. Without exception, the pupils whom inspectors spoke to said that this makes them feel happy at school.

Pupils treat each other well. They said that nasty comments or other unkind behaviours are infrequent. Pupils trust staff to deal with these occasional incidents of poor behaviour or bullying effectively. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. Their conduct in lessons is consistently good.

Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe. They use this to support each other. They are confident in turning to staff when they need help or support.

Although the quality of education that pupils receive is improving, it remains too varied. Pupils do not consistently benefit from activities that help them to know and remember more.

Pupils at Hope Academy extend their kindness beyond the school community. They willingly contribute to a range of local charities, including food banks and hospices.

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

Leaders and governors show great care for pupils at Hope Academy. Their plans and actions are consistently centred on the best interests of pupils. They do what they can to use the views of pupils, and parents and carers to help improve the school.

Leaders have refined the curriculum so that it is suitably broad. More pupils are following a well-balanced curriculum than was the case previously. Leaders have ensured that the current curriculum content is ambitious and well ordered. Increasingly, teachers are helping pupils to know and remember more. However, pupils' progress through the planned curriculum remains uneven within and across some subjects.

Some teachers present pupils with carefully organised subject content. In these cases, all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can securely recall what they know from previous learning. Subject content is sometimes presented less skilfully. Some pupils still learn successfully in these cases. However, other pupils do not consistently know or remember the intended subject matter as securely as they should.

Some teachers do not make good use of assessment strategies to get a clear enough picture of what pupils know and can do. Additionally, some teachers do not use assessment information effectively to decide what pupils should learn next. This means that gaps in pupils' learning sometimes go unnoticed or unsupported.

Staff ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are appropriately identified. Staff also work effectively with other partners to make sure that pupils receive the support that they need. However, pupils with SEND have a mixed experience during lessons. Some teachers confidently help these pupils to organise and remember new subject knowledge. Elsewhere, teachers lack the confidence or expertise to adapt the curriculum so that pupils can learn subject content. Consequently, these pupils make unequal gains in what they know and remember.

Staff successfully motivate pupils to behave well. Pupils enjoy a consistently calm and respectful environment. They can learn without interruption. Leaders manage the rare instances of poor behaviour effectively with a skilful blend of challenge and support.

Staff have the knowledge that they need to provide pupils with high-quality experiences that help them value themselves and others. Pupils spoke highly of the 'Inspire Programme', which supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Staff support all pupils with careers education, information, advice and guidance opportunities that are age appropriate. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide students in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. Pupils in all year groups are well informed about the full range of choices they can make about their future education, employment or training. They get appropriate first-hand information about the different types of courses that they can study in local schools and colleges.

The majority of pupils are confident and fluent readers. This helps them to engage well with their learning. Leaders have effective systems to identify pupils who need additional support with their reading. This includes pupils at the early stages of learning to read and pupils who speak English as an additional language. Staff provide well-targeted support for all pupils who need help to strengthen their reading abilities.

Leaders take staff's views and well-being seriously. Leaders are generous in the time that they allocate to staff's professional development. Staff are wholly positive about the support that leaders give to them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff ensure that pupils get a wide variety of well-planned activities to give them the information that they need to make safe decisions. Staff help pupils to understand the impact of their actions on the people in their lives.

Leaders keep staff well informed about safeguarding. Staff are knowledgeable about potential risks to pupils. They confidently spot and record concerns that they have about pupils.

Leaders work in close partnership with other agencies to ensure that pupils get the support and protection that they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers are less skilled in clearly presenting the important knowledge that pupils will learn. The activities that pupils complete are not consistently focused on the specific knowledge that they are meant to learn. Consequently, pupils make uneven progress. They are not equally secure about what they know and remember. Leaders should provide staff with the subject and pedagogical knowledge that they need to deliver the curriculum consistently well across subjects and year groups
- Some teachers do not select assessment strategies that provide a clear enough picture of what pupils know and remember. Sometimes, assessment information is not used effectively. As a result, the gaps that some pupils have in their learning go unnoticed or unsupported. Leaders should ensure that staff further develop their understanding of how to use assessment to help pupils learn the planned curriculum.
- Teachers are not equally skilled at adapting the curriculum or activities to ensure that all pupils with SEND get the support that they need. Some of these pupils do not gain and remember new knowledge as securely as they should. Leaders should ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge to be able to adapt the curriculum so that pupils with SEND can thrive.

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

Unique reference number	136421
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10199566
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,338
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Michael Boland
Principal	Marie Adams
Website	www.hopeacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 November 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Hope Academy is a single-academy trust. It is sponsored by Liverpool Hope University, the Church of England Diocese of Liverpool and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- A small number of pupils are educated at Launchpad, The Beacon School, The Key Stage Three Pupil Referral Unit, Harmonise and Haydock High School.
- The school's sixth-form provision closed with effect from September 2021. There have been no students on roll in the sixth form since July 2021.
- Hope Academy is a joint-faith academy. Its last section 48 inspection was in April 2018. It is next due to be inspected under section 48 in 2023.

Information about this inspection

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

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 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 principal and senior leaders. They met with representatives of the governing body, the local authority and the academy's sponsors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history and modern foreign languages. 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 visited lessons in a small number of other subjects.
- 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 leaders responsible for the curriculum, SEND and reading. They also looked at information about the 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.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the 77 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors took account of the 112 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the 73 comments received in Ofsted's free-text facility.

Inspection team

Michael Pennington, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stephanie Gill	Ofsted Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Veitch	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Edmondson	Ofsted Inspector

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