

Inspection of an outstanding school: The County High School, Leftwich

Granville Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 8EZ

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 April 2022

Outcome

The County High School, Leftwich continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a friendly and welcoming school. Leaders and staff have very high expectations of pupils' achievement. Pupils benefit greatly from a broad, ambitious and exciting curriculum. They achieve highly and are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils are proud of their school. They are clear about the high standards of conduct that leaders expect. They behave very well. Pupils are polite and well mannered. Classrooms are calm places to learn. Pupils have extremely positive relationships with their teachers. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and to one another. They enjoy contributing to lessons. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in school. They reported that bullying is not common. If it does occur, they said they trust staff to deal with it quickly. Pupils who find it harder to manage their feelings get effective support.

Pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. These include visits, such as to the theatre and science fairs. Leaders connect trips and visits with the curriculum so that pupils deepen their learning. Pupils enjoy participating in music ensembles, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and a variety of sports, including table tennis, hockey and rugby. Pupils relish taking on a variety of responsibilities, including volunteering in the library, helping younger pupils to read and being prefects.

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

Leaders, together with members of the local governing body, trustees and staff, are committed to ensuring that every pupil is given every possible opportunity to succeed both academically and personally. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is highly ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very high proportion of pupils study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

Leaders have thought very carefully about what knowledge they want pupils to know. They make use of the most up-to-date research to inform the design of subject

curriculums. Pupils are taught content in a logical order. Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to help pupils to revisit their prior learning and build their understanding over time. Teachers use assessment strategies effectively, to check what pupils know and to spot any misunderstandings. Pupils make substantial gains in their knowledge over their time at the school.

Reading has a high profile throughout the school. Pupils have regular opportunities to develop their reading across the school. Pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read receive effective support to develop their phonics knowledge from trained staff. This helps these pupils to catch up quickly. Pupils learn how to debate and present their ideas. This helps them to develop their confidence and extend their vocabulary.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND swiftly. Teachers and support staff use information about pupils with SEND very well in order to adapt the delivery of the curriculum and provide appropriate support. Pupils with SEND are cared for both pastorally and academically. They access the same curriculum as their peers and achieve well.

Pupils display very high standards of conduct during lesson changeovers and on the school grounds at breaktimes. They move around the school sensibly and in a mature way. Pupils are courteous and respectful to visitors. They are punctual to lessons and have highly positive attitudes to learning.

The personal development curriculum is very well designed. It contributes significantly to preparing pupils for life beyond school. Leaders ensure that all pupils learn about healthy relationships, including consent. Pupils have many opportunities to understand and respect differences between people through the curriculum and visitors to the school.

The curriculum is enhanced very well by a wide range of after-school clubs and activities, ranging from sports clubs to dance, eco-society and the LGBTQ club. Pupils receive high-quality careers advice. Older pupils praised the support that they receive to write their curriculum vitae and applications to local colleges and apprenticeships. Local employers provide insights into the world of work and help pupils hone their interview skills. Almost all pupils go on to education, training and employment.

Staff feel valued and their morale is high. They really enjoy working at the school. Staff are highly appreciative of the efforts leaders make to help them manage their workload.

The chief executive officer (CEO) together with members of the local governing body and trustees are highly effective. They are supportive of leaders and hold them to account very well. Members of the local governing body and trustees have a very secure understanding of the school. They ensure that the decisions they make about the curriculum are always in the best interest of pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders promote a strong culture of safety and vigilance throughout the school. Staff receive comprehensive training on safeguarding. They know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare or safety. Leaders take prompt action in the light of any concerns. They know pupils and their families well. Leaders work very effectively with other agencies, including the local authority and police, to protect any pupils who might be at risk.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe from risks, such as sexual harassment, sexual violence and online abuse through the 'education for life' programme. Pupils know who to go to if they have concerns or worries.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 school to be outstanding in March 2016.

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	138743
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10206173
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	1014
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Redley
Principal	Matthew Snelson
Website	www.leftwichhigh.com
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 March 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher was appointed on 1 September 2019. He was previously deputy headteacher at the school.
- The school joined the Sir John Brunner Foundation multi-academy trust in September 2019.
- The number of pupils on the school's roll is rising.
- School leaders use four registered alternative providers for a very small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- 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 spoke with the principal, other senior leaders, subject leaders, staff and the CEO of the Sir John Brunner Foundation multi-academy trust, members of the local governing body, two trustees and with a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors spoke to many pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the school's single central record. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to check how effective safeguarding is in the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in art and design, English and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the responses to the pupils' and staff's surveys.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Amanda Downing

Her Majesty's Inspector

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