

Inspection of Bridgewater High School

Broomfields Road, Appleton, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 3AE

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 October 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Bridgewater High School as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Bridgewater High School is a welcoming and friendly school. Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement. In most subjects, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn well. This is because leaders' work to improve the curriculum has been successful.

Pupils are happy at school and enjoy learning. They feel safe and gain a strong appreciation of equality and diversity. Pupils know who to speak to if they have any concerns. Leaders and teachers deal well with any incidents of bullying.

Staff build strong relationships with pupils, including those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision). Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They listen attentively to their teachers and work well together. Pupils are typically kind and respectful towards one another.

Pupils value the extensive opportunities that are on offer. For example, there are lots of clubs, including sports, science and cookery. Pupils enjoy participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. They benefit from a range of trips and visits, such as to a residential field centre in North Wales. Pupils relish taking on leadership roles, including safeguarding and charity ambassadors. Pupils with SEND, including those in the specially resourced provision, are involved in all school activities.

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

The chief executive officer (CEO), local governors, trustees and leaders want the best for all pupils, including those with SEND. Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum. Pupils learn the full range of national curriculum subjects at key stages 3 and 4. However, the proportion of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects is low. Leaders have put measures in place to encourage more pupils to study modern foreign languages in key stage 4 to rectify this situation

Subject leaders have designed curriculums that clearly identify what pupils will learn in a logical order. This helps pupils to build on what they already know. Teachers use a range of assessment strategies increasingly well to check pupils' understanding and to address any errors and misconceptions. Teachers address any gaps in pupils' knowledge. This helps pupils to achieve well across the curriculum.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. This helps most of them to deliver subject curriculums well. Most teachers explain concepts clearly to pupils so that they can know and remember more. However, in a very small number of subjects, some teachers do not deliver the curriculum as well as they should. This prevents some pupils from learning more in those subjects.

Leaders have prioritised reading across the school. Pupils who find reading difficult receive extra support from well-trained staff. This helps these pupils to catch up quickly. Leaders encourage pupils to develop a love of reading through a range of

effective strategies, including during form time. Pupils enjoy reading. Most pupils become confident and fluent readers. Teachers place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' understanding of subject-specific vocabulary.

Pupils with SEND have their needs identified effectively. Leaders make sure that pupils in the specially resourced provision receive the specialist support that they need. Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers. However, a small number of pupils with SEND are not learning as well as they could in some subjects. This is because some teachers do not use the information that they hold effectively enough to support these pupils in class.

The school has a calm and orderly atmosphere. Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. Pupils follow clear routines when they enter classrooms. Most pupils said that they can learn without disruption. They socialise well together at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Leaders place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal development. They prioritise support for pupils' physical and mental health. Leaders ensure that all pupils receive appropriate relationships and sex education and health education. Pupils learn about the importance of respecting people from different religions and cultures. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils receive helpful information about careers advice and guidance, including apprenticeships. This helps all pupils, including those with SEND to make well-informed decisions about their next steps. Almost all pupils go on to education, training and employment when they leave Year 11.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel listened to. Staff value the training opportunities within school and from the trust. Staff appreciate leaders' efforts to reduce their workload and improve their well-being. Local governors and trustees support and challenge leaders in equal measure. They know the strengths of the school and what needs to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of vigilance at the school. Staff, local governors and trustees receive regular safeguarding training. Staff are alert to any signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. They know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. Leaders keep accurate records. They follow up on any concerns quickly with outside agencies to support pupils when needed.

Leaders are aware of possible risks that pupils might face outside school, including the dangers related to drug taking and gang-related crime. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in school and when out in the community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small minority of subjects, some teachers do not deliver the curriculum effectively enough. This prevents some pupils from learning as well as they should in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is delivered consistently well across all subjects so that pupils know more and remember more.
- Some staff do not use the information that they have about pupils with SEND to meet pupils' individual needs as well as they should. This hinders the progress that these pupils make. Leaders should continue to ensure that all teachers use information effectively for pupils with SEND so that these pupils achieve as well as they should.

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.

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	141598
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10242455
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	1,547
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Howard Platt
Principal	Keiron Powell
Website	www.bridgewaterhigh.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Bridgewater High School converted to become an academy school in December 2014. When its predecessor school, Bridgewater High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school joined The Challenge Academy Trust, a multi-academy trust, in September 2018.
- The current principal and headteacher took up their posts in September 2022.
- The lower school and upper school are approximately one mile apart.
- The school hosts a specially resourced provision, on behalf of the local authority, for up to 25 pupils. A specially resourced provision exists on each site. The designated special educational needs are autism spectrum disorder.
- The sixth-form provision closed in August 2018.
- Leaders make use of two registered alternative provisions for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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, the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and staff. Inspectors spoke with the CEO of The Challenge Academy Trust, local governors and trustees. An inspector held telephone conversations 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 checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including the school's single central record. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to check how effective safeguarding is in the school. An inspector held telephone calls with representatives from alternative provisions.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in computing, English, geography, mathematics 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 staff survey and pupil survey.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lee Peachey	Ofsted Inspector
Dawn Platt	Ofsted Inspector
Niamh Howlett	His Majesty's Inspector
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