

Inspection of Meols Cop High School

Meols Cop Road, Southport, Merseyside PR8 6JS

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 February 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

This school was last inspected 11 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then 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.

What is it like to attend this school?

Meols Cop is a school where pupils are inspired to be successful in all that they do. The school's core values of 'brokering aspirations' are evident in everything that happens. Leaders and staff have created an inclusive environment where all pupils benefit from a broad and ambitious curriculum. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils are proud to be part of the school community. They understand and live up to leaders' high expectations of learning and conduct. They are motivated to work hard and enjoy positive working relationships with staff. They enjoy contributing to lessons, and most pupils demonstrate that they have gained a detailed knowledge of the curriculum. Typically, pupils achieve well.

Pupils feel happy and safe at the school. They are encouraged to take care of each other and to become part of the Meols Cop 'tribe'. They appreciate the care that the school's pastoral team gives them. Leaders take bullying and name-calling seriously. If it occurs, they respond quickly and effectively.

Pupils benefit from a vast array of activities that prepare them well for their next steps. Leaders are ambitious for pupils and the wider Southport community. They work collaboratively with local colleges and employers to ensure that careers information for pupils is locally relevant and personalised. Pupils have access to a rich set of experiences, including a wide range of clubs, trips and visits. For example, they spoke enthusiastically about working with local sport partnerships, a dance club and a choir.

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

Leaders provide a curriculum that successfully prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. They make sure that pupils study a broad range of subjects. All pupils, including those with SEND, study the whole curriculum. This prepares them well for the choices they make at key stage 4. Leaders are increasingly successful in encouraging pupils to take the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

In each subject, leaders have identified the precise building blocks of knowledge that pupils will acquire. Subject leaders work closely with local primary schools so that the curriculum builds on what pupils already know. In mathematics, for example, work on decimal multiplication builds from the primary curriculum. Leaders have adapted the curriculum because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In science, for example, there is a stronger focus on practical work for older pupils.

Leaders bring useful examples of research to the attention of teachers. This helps teachers to design and order learning so that pupils develop a secure understanding of key concepts. Teachers draw on their subject knowledge to help pupils make links across different subjects. For example, in music, pupils learn about the origins of

blues and jazz. They connect this knowledge with what they have learned in history about enslaved people.

Typically, teachers identify and address any gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly and with accuracy. That said, in a small number of subjects, teachers do not accurately pinpoint the precise gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means that they are less certain about what learning pupils should revisit. In these subjects, pupils struggle to remember essential key knowledge and do not always use subject-specific vocabulary correctly.

In key stage 3, leaders have established effective systems to identify pupils who find reading difficult. Support for weaker readers is in place. However, at key stage 4, it is not well developed. Leaders are not aware of older readers who cannot read with fluency and confidence. These pupils do not receive sufficient help to catch up with their peers. This prevents them from experiencing all that the school curriculum has to offer.

Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are identified quickly and accurately. Pupils receive support that is matched precisely to their needs. Those who attend the specially resourced provisions benefit from effective support from highly skilled staff. These pupils follow a curriculum that is as ambitious as that of their peers. Pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils are fully involved in all aspects of school life.

Behaviour in lessons is calm and purposeful. The majority of pupils are engaged in learning and keen to do well. Staff adopt a consistent approach to inappropriate behaviour, so lessons are rarely disturbed. Teachers help pupils to learn from poor behaviour.

The provision for pupils' wider personal development is strong. Pupils learn about a range of important issues, such as healthy relationships and personal safety. All pupils learn about diversity, equality and challenging stereotypes. External speakers enhance pupils' preparation for life in modern Britain.

Pupils take part in a wide range of popular activities outside the classroom. They choose from clubs such as chess club and boxing club. There are opportunities for pupils to take leading roles, for example through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils receive high-quality careers information, advice, guidance and support. Leaders ensure that pupils are wholly prepared for their next steps.

Many of the staff and the governors have close links with the local community. This contributes to their strong commitment to the school. Teachers feel listened to and well supported. They are appreciative of the wide range of professional development opportunities that leaders provide.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of vigilance. They are acutely aware of the challenges in the local community and respond well to these. They have developed robust systems that help pupils over time. They work well with a range of external agencies to ensure that the right support is in place for vulnerable pupils and their families.

Staff understand the clear procedures for reporting concerns about a pupil's welfare. All staff receive regular safeguarding training.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They are taught about risks, such as sexual harassment, and know why it is wrong. They know whom they can speak to if they are feeling worried or anxious.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, teachers do not use assessment well enough to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means that they sometimes do not know what subject content pupils need to revisit and practise before moving on. Leaders should ensure that assessment strategies give teachers enough information about what pupils need to revisit and practise before moving on.
- Leaders do not systematically identify weaker readers in key stage 4. This means that some pupils do not receive the additional reading support that they need in order to catch up with their peers. Leaders should ensure that teachers identify pupils in key stage 4 who are falling behind and help them to read fluently, accurately and with good comprehension.

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	104956
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10242467
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	901
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Colin Davies
Headteacher	Ian Parry
Website	www.meolscophighschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 and 3 October 2012, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Leaders use two registered alternative providers for a very small number of pupils.
- The school has two specially resourced provisions, funded by the local authority, for pupils with specific learning difficulties. One enhanced resource provision is for pupils aged 11 to 16 with dyslexia. This specially resourced provision can cater for 12 pupils. At the time of inspection, there were 12 pupils on roll. The second enhanced resource provision is for pupils aged 11 to 16 with autism spectrum disorder. This specially resourced provision can cater for eight pupils. At the time of inspection, there were eight pupils on roll.

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 headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and other members of staff. They also spoke with members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, 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 single central record. They met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, mathematics, music, modern foreign languages and geography. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Kate Bowker, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Derek Yarwood	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Gibbs	Ofsted Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector

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