

Inspection of Rainhill High School

Warrington Road, Rainhill, Prescot, Merseyside L35 6NY

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 February 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Since the previous inspection, leaders and staff have raised their expectations of what pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, can achieve academically. Leaders' hopes and aspirations for pupils are reflected in ambitious subject curriculums. Current pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well in most subjects.

For the most part, pupils, and students in the sixth form, are respectful of their peers and their teachers. They act with kindness towards each other, and they said that they can be themselves. This helps most pupils to feel happy and safe in school.

Overall, teachers expect the best of pupils. Largely, pupils respond positively to rules and routines by behaving well, working hard and trying their best.

Most pupils feel that there is an adult in school that they can speak with if have any concerns. When incidents of bullying are reported, leaders deal with these incidents quickly and effectively. That said, a very small proportion of pupils and their parents and carers are not confident in leaders' systems to deal with bullying.

Older pupils appreciate the leadership opportunities on offer. For example, they were keen to explain how the student parliament plays an important role in supporting pupils' well-being. Pupils were enthusiastic about raising money for local charities and supporting community projects.

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

Leaders have ensured that all pupils, including students in the sixth form, benefit from a suitably ambitious curriculum. For example, leaders' changes to the key stage 3 curriculum mean that pupils learn subjects in sufficient depth. At the end of Year 9, pupils have a strong foundation of knowledge and skills on which they can build. An increasing proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, choose to study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects in key stage 4. Students in the sixth form can study a wide range of academic and vocational courses.

Those Year 11 pupils who left the school in summer 2022 did not benefit fully from leaders' improvements to the curriculum. As a result, some of these pupils did not achieve as well as they should have. However, leaders' improvements to the curriculum mean that published examination outcomes do not reflect how well current pupils learn over time.

Leaders are clear about the knowledge that pupils should learn and when this content should be delivered by teachers. Staff are informed well about the essential content that will be most useful for pupils' subsequent learning. For the most part, this helps teachers to design learning well. For example, teachers ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunity to revisit and consolidate important prior learning. This

helps pupils and students, including those students who attend the off-site provision, to build on what they know already and to make strong links with new content.

Mostly, subject leaders ensure that teachers are equipped suitably to deliver curriculums as intended. For instance, in mathematics, staff have benefited from subject-specific support to enhance their teaching skills and expertise. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and they provide pupils with clear explanations. That said, in a small number of subjects, some teachers do not have the confidence to deliver some aspects of the curriculum. This hinders some pupils' learning in these subjects.

Overall, teachers use assessment strategies skilfully to check that pupils' earlier learning is secure. Staff are proficient at identifying pupils' misconceptions and any learning that pupils may have forgotten. For the most part, teachers address pupils' misunderstandings quickly. When needed, teachers adapt their delivery of the curriculum to revisit those aspects of learning that some pupils may not have grasped fully first time around.

Leaders have acted to strengthen their systems to identify and support those pupils with SEND. Staff receive suitable training and guidance that equips them well to identify pupils' additional needs in a timely manner. Leaders ensure that teachers have sufficient information to support pupils with SEND to progress well through the curriculum.

Staff encourage pupils to read widely. As a result, an increasing proportion of pupils are reading for pleasure. For example, some pupils were keen to tell inspectors about the books that they had enjoyed recently. Those pupils who struggle to read when they arrive at the school receive the help that they need to catch up quickly.

While many pupils and students attend school regularly, a small proportion of pupils do not attend as often as they should. This is particularly the case for some disadvantaged pupils. These pupils miss out on important learning, and this prevents them from achieving as well as they should. Leaders have appropriate systems in place to support staff in managing pupils' behaviour. This means that pupils' learning is rarely disrupted by the behaviour of their peers.

Leaders have ensured that there is a coherent and age-appropriate programme to support pupils' wider development. Pupils benefit from a well-planned programme of careers advice and guidance. This ensures that they are fully informed about the options available to them at the next stage. Pupils learn about cultures and religions that are different to their own. They understand the importance of tolerance and being respectful to those who might be different to themselves.

Those responsible for governance bring to their roles a suitable range of knowledge and experience. They are informed well about most aspects of the quality of education for pupils. That said, members of the trust board have not held leaders to account sufficiently well for the quality of education for those students who attend the off-site, sixth-form provision.

Staff are proud to work at the school. The overwhelming majority of staff felt that leaders are supportive of their well-being and cognisant of their workload. In recent months, leaders have strengthened the systems they use to communicate with parents and carers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff benefit from regular and appropriate safeguarding training. Staff are alert to the signs that may indicate that a pupil is at risk of harm. Staff understand the procedures that they should follow if they have safeguarding concerns.

Leaders follow up on any concerns quickly and effectively. They work closely with external partners, such as the local authority, to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive timely help.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils in key stage 3 learn about the characteristics of healthy relationships. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 learn about contraception and how to look after their mental health. Students in the sixth form build on their understanding of consent and how to stay safe on a night out.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, some teachers lack the confidence to deliver some aspects of the curriculum as leaders intend. Over time, this hinders how well some pupils learn and remember the curriculum. In these subjects, leaders should ensure that teachers are supported well to gain the expertise that they need to deliver curriculums effectively.
- Some pupils and students do not attend school as regularly as they should. This is particularly the case for some disadvantaged pupils. These pupils miss out on important learning. They do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should continue to ensure that they support pupils and their families so that these pupils attend school regularly and access the full curriculum.
- Those responsible for governance do not have sufficient oversight of the quality of education for those students who attend the off-site, sixth-form provision. This prevents governors and trustees from holding leaders to account fully for the quality of education in the sixth form. Trustees and governors should ensure that they have the information that they need to check that students in the sixth form benefit from a high-quality education.

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	144326
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10270145
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,838
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	305
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Boyer
Headteacher	Josie Thorogood
Website	www.rainhillhighschool.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	4 and 5 February 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders use six registered alternative provisions for a small number of pupils.
- One hundred and seventy-nine students on roll in the sixth form are educated at the Fowler Education and Football Academy in Liverpool which is an off-site provision.

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 members of staff. The lead inspector met with three members of the local governing board, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the board of trustees and members.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, English, art and design, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils and students about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils’ and students’ work. Inspectors visited the off-site provision attended by some students in the sixth form. Inspectors also spoke with leaders about the curriculum and visited lessons in other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and students from Years 7 to 13 about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils’ behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school’s self-evaluation document, leaders’ improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils’ behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector spoke with three representatives of the local authority.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and scrutinised the single central record. Inspectors considered leaders’ safeguarding processes and procedures. Inspectors discussed matters relating to safeguarding with pupils, students in the sixth form and staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted’s online surveys for staff, pupils and students.

Inspection team

Emma Gregory, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Mark Cocker	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Wood	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Veitch	Ofsted Inspector
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