Inspection of Woodchurch High School

Carr Bridge Road, Woodchurch, Wirral, Merseyside CH49 7NG

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 June 2025
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Martyn Canham. This school is part of a single-academy trust Woodchurch High School, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tony Smith.

What is it like to attend this school?

Every pupil, regardless of their differences, is valued at this school. Each one is encouraged to 'let their light shine'. The school is a hub of friendliness. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) thrive. The school has high expectations of pupils' achievement. This is evident in the strong progress that current pupils are making through the curriculum.

The school's values are woven seamlessly into day-to-day life. Staff create an environment in which pupils feel safe. This helps pupils to trust staff and feel happy in school. As a result, pupils are more willing to actively participate in their learning. For instance, they confidently answer questions or give opinions.

Pupils' behaviour is considerate of others. Calmness pervades the school. Pupils follow staff's instructions respectfully. They display positive attitudes in lessons. Pupils try their best and want to succeed.

The school affords pupils an exciting array of opportunities to enhance their wider development. There is an array of international trips, broadening pupils' understanding of different countries, such as Belgium and America. Pupils speak knowledgeably about the animals in the school farm, including about birthing lambs and hatching ducks. Leadership opportunities, from being members of the eco committee to prefects, abound. These allow pupils to rise up and take on the mantle of responsibility.

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

The school has taken decisive action to improve the quality of education that pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, receive. It has improved the curriculum design, enhanced staff's expertise, strengthened middle leadership and overhauled attendance processes. This had a positive impact on the progress that pupils made by the time they left school in 2024. Rates of progress broadly matched the national average in the published data.

In contrast, Year 11 pupils left school with attainment levels that were significantly below the national average. A legacy of weaker curriculum design and implementation, coupled with high absence rates, meant that these pupils did not have time to catch up before taking their examinations. However, current pupils, especially those who have reaped the benefits of curriculum improvement for a longer time, are achieving well.

Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. The school has clear processes in place to accurately identify any additional needs that pupils may have, including the needs of pupils with SEND. Pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND, are seamlessly integrated into the school. Teachers are aware of pupils' starting points when they join the school and they expertly adapt learning for pupils when needed. This helps all pupils, but especially those with SEND, to develop their understanding of subjects.

On occasion, there is some inconsistency in how well the curriculum is delivered. Some of the learning activities that teachers choose do not help pupils to retain knowledge over time. As a result, some pupils struggle to connect new ideas to prior learning. Typically, teachers check if pupils have understood subject content before they move on to new learning. However, in a small number of subjects, teachers do not conduct these checks as effectively as they could. This means that they are not aware of gaps in some pupils' learning. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

The school recognises that reading is a barrier for many pupils. Pupils who struggle to read well when they join the school receive effective support that helps them to read fluently and confidently.

The school has raised its expectations around pupils' behaviour. Staff apply the behaviour policy with consistency. This has led to a decrease in incidents of poor behaviour. Low attendance rates remain one of the school's greatest challenges. Poor attendance contributed significantly to the lower-than-average attainment outcomes in previous years. There are now effective procedures and an expert team in place to tackle this aspect. Although it is still early days, the school has halted the decline in pupils' attendance rates. There are some signs of an improving picture, such as a reduction in absence rates for disadvantaged pupils.

The personalised careers programme provides pupils with the information that they need to inform their next steps. Pupils learn about and respect diversity. They engage respectfully with others who have different beliefs. The school prioritises pupils' safety and educates them about making safe choices. For instance, pupils learn about the dangers of drug misuse or how to spot unhealthy or toxic relationships. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Governance has been strengthened. This means that there is greater oversight of the school's work. The school is held to account for its work to improve pupils' achievement.

The school's work to reduce workload has boosted staff's morale. Staff benefit from a meticulously structured programme of professional development. The school and the trustees are driven to serve the community. Every decision that is made has pupils at its heart.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, there is some inconsistency in how well the curriculum is delivered. Occasionally, some of the activities that teachers design do not enable pupils to remember their learning over time. The school should ensure that learning

activities match the ambition of the curriculum so that pupils develop a deep understanding of each subject that they study.

- At times, some teachers do not use the school's assessment strategies effectively. This means that some pupils have gaps in their learning that are not identified or addressed. The school should ensure that teachers are supported to check pupils' understanding of current and prior learning so that they 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138853
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10379977
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	1419
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tony Smith
Headteacher	Martyn Canham
Website	www.woodchurchhigh.com
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a single academy trust.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher took up post in January 2024.
- This Church of England school is part of the Diocese of Chester. The last section 48 inspection took place in June 2024. The next section 48 inspection is due before August 2029.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with autism. There are 18 pupils in the provision.
- The school uses two registered and four unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements

(quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives of the trust board, including the chair and vice-chair.
- An inspector held a telephone conversation with representatives of the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during social times and around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, science, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in some other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan, attendance and behaviour records.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Jenny Jones, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Ian Young	Ofsted Inspector
Tuesday Humby	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Kenyon	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector

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