West Kirby School and College

Address: Meols Drive, West Kirby, Wirral, Merseyside, CH48 5DH

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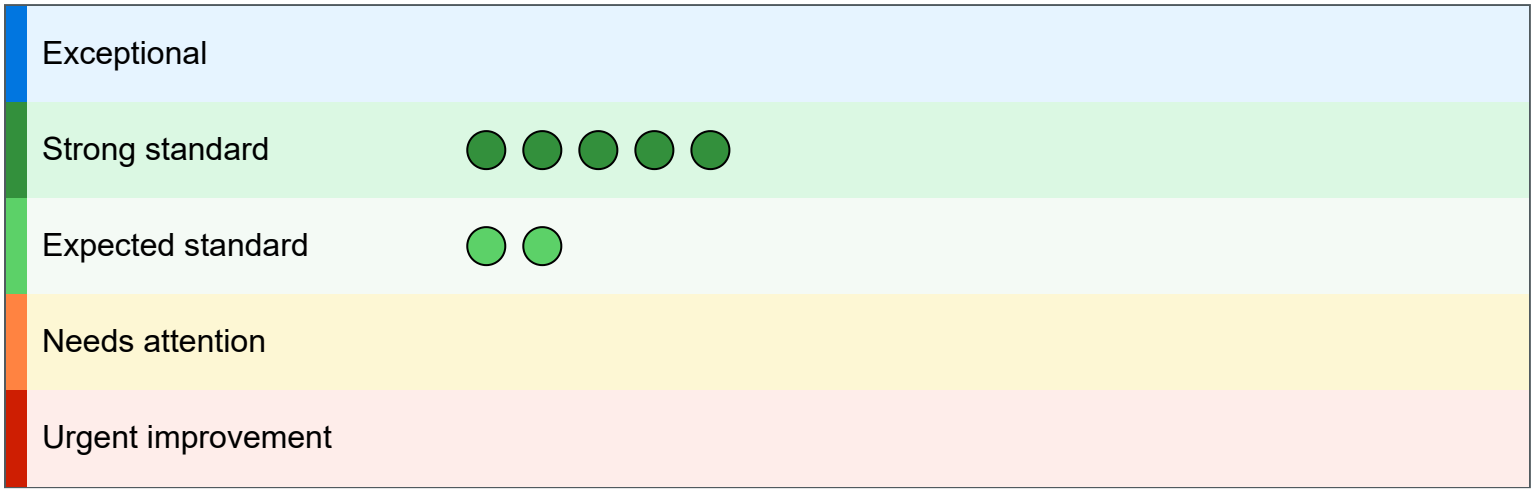

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Leaders know pupils well and keep a close eye on attendance. They quickly identify concerns and put support in place when it is needed. As a result, attendance has improved and now is in line with national averages for comparative schools. Many pupils have made significant improvements in their attendance since joining the school. Leaders have successfully reduced persistent absence, including for disadvantaged pupils. This means that more pupils attend school regularly and benefit from their learning.

Pupils' behaviour improves after they join the school. Leaders put effective support in place to help pupils manage their behaviour and emotions. This has reduced the need for suspensions. Pupils learn in a calm and inclusive environment where discriminatory language is not accepted. Leaders deal with incidents effectively when they occur. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning, which helps create a purposeful atmosphere across the school. Leaders manage bullying concerns well, although they recognise they need to communicate actions more clearly to pupils.

Inclusion

Strong standard

All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Leaders do not rely solely on these plans. They use their own assessment tools to identify each pupil's precise needs when they join the school. This enables staff to put the right support in place from the outset. As a result, pupils settle quickly and get the right support needed to be ready to learn.

Leaders review pupils' needs regularly and respond swiftly when new or emerging needs arise. Staff know pupils, parents and carers well. They also understand the local community and use this knowledge to shape the support they provide. Targeted interventions help pupils overcome barriers to learning, engage successfully in lessons and take part fully in school life.

Staff benefit from ongoing training and draw on the expertise of on-site therapeutic and pastoral teams. This ensures that support for pupils is closely matched to their academic, social and emotional needs. Transition arrangements are carefully planned. Those who are known, or have previously been known to social care, receive tailored support that helps them feel safe, secure and included.

Leaders use pupil premium funding strategically. Resources are directed effectively towards pupils' academic and social development. This helps to reduce any barriers to learning and enable pupils to make most of the opportunities available to them.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

All leaders in school drive improvement forward at pace. They have a razor sharp focus on what the school's many strengths are. Equally, they are focused on where continued improvements need to be made. These improvements are so that pupils in all areas of the

school's work receive a transformational education. Every decision that leaders, governors or trustees take are made with pupils and students at the centre. They have a strong core belief that the pupils who attend the school should receive the very best academic and social education they can in order to become an active member of wider society. In many areas of the school's work, they succeed. In those areas which are not quite as strong, improvements happen at pace to bring them up to the same standard as other areas of the school's work.

Underpinning this are strong governance arrangements. Trustees and governors have robust procedures in place to both support and challenge school leaders. They use their wealth of knowledge and expertise to ensure that they have a clear, thorough and detailed oversight of school's effectiveness. They ask pertinent questions and attend relevant training to fulfil their statutory duties.

Leaders, governors and trustees prioritise staff professional learning. Staff value the professional learning they receive in order to help them carry out their role as effectively as they can. They appreciate that training is regular, allows them to come back to previous training and learn new things that they can apply in their classroom. This ensures that leaders are building an expert staff team. Leaders pay the same attention to the workload and wellbeing of staff, which is valued by the full team.

Leaders, trustees and governors work well with parents and carers. Many parents are very supportive of the school. They value the contribution that the school makes for their child's education.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Personal development and wellbeing is a significant strength of the school and is woven into every aspect of pupils' experiences. The school's ambitious approach helps pupils develop into confident, resilient and responsible young people who are well prepared for adulthood. Pupils are encouraged to understand and celebrate their strengths, take pride in their achievements and develop a positive sense of identity. Strong relationships with staff create a culture in which pupils feel valued, listened to and supported. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and increasingly independent as they move through the school.

Pupil voice is central to the school's work. Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to contribute to school life and wider community. Pupils take on leadership responsibilities, including as Ambassadors for Anti-Bullying, and representing the views of their peers. Pupil empowerment projects enable pupils to support worthwhile causes across the local area and develop a strong sense of social responsibility. Past pupils play an important role in school life, sharing their experiences and achievements to inspire current pupils and demonstrate what can be achieved beyond school. These opportunities help pupils to develop leadership skills, raise aspirations and understand the positive contribution they can make to society.

The school places a strong emphasis on wellbeing and preparation for adulthood. Regular wellbeing afternoons support pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing, helping them to develop strategies to manage challenges and build resilience. A rich programme of outdoor learning, life skills activities and STEM opportunities broadens pupils' experiences and

encourages curiosity about the world around them. Participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award develops teamwork, perseverance and independence.

Careers education is highly effective and prepares pupils well for their next steps. Pupils receive high-quality careers information and guidance, meet with careers advisors and visit local colleges to explore future opportunities. These experiences help pupils make informed choices about their futures. Combined with the school's strong focus on personal development, they ensure that pupils leave as confident, ambitious and well-rounded young people who are exceptionally well prepared for further education, employment and adult life.

Post-16 provision

Strong standard

The post-16 provision delivers exceptionally strong outcomes and prepares students very well for successful adult lives. Students benefit from an ambitious and highly personalised curriculum that builds effectively on their prior learning and supports them to achieve their individual aspirations. There is a clear focus on developing independence, confidence and the practical skills needed for life beyond school. As a result, students leave post-16 well equipped for further education, training, employment and greater participation in their communities.

Students make strong progress across all areas of learning. High expectations and effective teaching ensure that they continue to develop their communication, literacy and numeracy skills alongside the personal and social skills needed for adulthood. Students become increasingly independent and learn to make informed decisions about their futures. Where appropriate, they gain qualifications that support their next steps and provide a solid foundation for continued learning.

A particular strength of the provision is the extensive range of opportunities that enable students to apply their learning in meaningful contexts. Students engage in community projects, workplace experience and activities that develop employability skills and increase their understanding of the wider world. These experiences help students build confidence, resilience and a sense of responsibility. Enrichment opportunities including educational visits, residential experiences make a significant contribution to students' personal growth and preparation for adulthood.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

The school supports pupils to progress successfully from their starting points. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their education, health and care (EHC) plan targets are met through a curriculum that helps them build secure knowledge and skills across subjects. Pupils with gaps in their foundational knowledge receive timely support so that they can successfully build their learning from where they started. At times, these gaps are not narrowed as quickly as they could be because assessment systems are not as clear, particularly in key stage 3.

Pupils achieve well academically and gain a range of formal qualifications, including GCSEs across a range of subjects. Pupils' achievement extends beyond the academic. Pupils develop a range of social skills that help them become more confident, independent and able to advocate for themselves. They strengthen their communication skills, learn to manage their emotions with increasing success and are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

Pupils move well through key stages and adapt well to the increasing demands of subject-specific learning. Sustained destinations after key stage 4 demonstrate the positive impact of the school's work. Pupils leave with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need for their future.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

High aspirations sit at the heart of the curriculum. Leaders across the school have a clear understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching that pupils receive. They have identified the right priorities for continued improvement and are taking action to strengthen both. Pupils benefit from a broad and ambitious curriculum that encourages them to achieve well. The curriculum is carefully organised so that pupils build knowledge and skills over time. This prepares them to study a range of qualifications, including GCSEs and vocational courses. Outcomes from pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans are woven through the planned and wider curriculum.

Typically, teachers deliver the intended curriculum successfully. Teaching is effective, with some examples of highly effective practice. Where teaching is more effective, teachers use assessment information well so they have a secure understanding of pupils' current achievement. In these lessons, teachers know exactly what pupils need next. They adapt learning carefully so that pupils can access the curriculum and achieve success. There is some variation in a small number of subjects and year groups. In these areas, teaching is not as sharply focussed on pupils' next steps. However overall, pupils continue to receive appropriate support and make progress through the curriculum.

Leaders place a strong emphasis on securing pupils' foundational knowledge, particularly in reading. Staff identify gaps quickly and provide timely support. This helps pupils strengthen their understanding and access more challenging learning successfully.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils thrive at West Kirby School and College. Many arrive after a disrupted experience to their early education. Staff welcome them warmly and help them to quickly feel part of the school community. As a result, pupils feel safe, valued and included. Every member of staff lives out the school's motto 'Changing Children's Lives.'

Pupils play an active role in school life. They access a wide and varied range of opportunities that develop confidence and independence. These include working in the school bakery and taking part in carefully planned work experience in post-16. Staff create these opportunities so that pupils feel part of a strong and supportive community.

Relationships between staff and pupils are at the heart of the school's success. Staff provide expert support, encouragement and guidance. This helps pupils overcome barriers and achieve their goals. Pupils respond positively to this support. Many develop effective relationships with their peers. This culture of care also helps pupils feel that they belong.

Pupils achieve well from their individual starting points. They make positive progress in both their academic learning and social skills. Many leave with a range of qualifications, including GCSEs and vocational awards. Pupils also develop the communication skills needed to interact confidently with different people. Staff meet pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan targets effectively. This supports highly positive academic and personal outcomes.

Pupils enjoy their learning. They attend regularly, arrive on time and are ready to learn. Teachers often provide secure teaching that meets pupils' individual needs. However, some variation exists between subjects and year groups. When bullying occurs, some pupils feel that it is not dealt with quickly enough. Leaders give bullying the attention it requires and take prompt action when concerns arise.

The school's inclusive culture is a significant strength. It runs through every aspect of the provision. Staff meet pupils' needs well and reduce barriers to learning effectively. The school's wider offer prepares pupils well for adulthood. Pupils develop important life skills through residential visits, community work and charity projects. This broadens their horizons and strengthen their social development.

Next steps

- Leaders and governors should continue to refine and embed their identified priorities for improvement in order to drive a transformational impact for all pupils.
- Leaders should ensure high quality implementation of the curriculum across all phases and areas, so that pupils achieve consistently well.
- Leaders should ensure, particularly in key stage 3, assessment information is used more successfully so gaps narrow quickly over time.

About this inspection

The school is part of the West Kirby Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO) Sian Thomas, and overseen by a board of trustees chaired by Julie Merry.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteachers and other senior leaders in school. The lead inspector met with the board of trustees, the school board and governors.

He also met with the chief executive officer.

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.

All pupils who attend this school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school primarily caters for pupils with autism and/or social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Richard Hicks

Lead inspector:
Stuart Perkins, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Gary Anders, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from different sources. More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 7 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

110

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

School capacity

115

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

38.64%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

100.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder, SEMH - Social, Emotional and Mental Health

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school
2023 leavers (revised)	92%
2022 leavers (revised)	100%
2021 leavers (revised)	77%

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	14.1%
2023/24 (3 term)	14.9%
2022/23 (3 term)	15.9%

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	36.5%
2023/24 (3 term)	40.5%
2022/23 (3 term)	51.2%

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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