

Inspection of a good school: Congleton High School

Box Lane, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 4NS

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 February 2023

Outcome

Congleton High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Congleton High School is a warm, welcoming place to learn and work. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. Pupils, staff and leaders embrace the vision for the school community. They strive to 'achieve success together'. From Years 7 to 13, pupils respect each other and are considerate of each other's differences. Pupils feel happy and safe. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong.

Pupils typically achieve well in a range of subjects. This means that they are well prepared for their next steps by the time they leave the school in Year 11 and Year 13. Subject leaders and teachers have developed well-thought-out curriculums across most subjects. This ensures that pupils build their learning from topic to topic.

Pupils learn effectively about issues they may face as they grow older. They learn about healthy relationships, consent and the dangers of the internet. Pupils' knowledge of how to recognise and deal with sexual harassment, abuse and other forms of harmful behaviours is strong.

Pupils are polite, courteous and enjoy speaking with visitors to the school. They behave well in lessons and around school, which results in a calm and purposeful environment.

Pupils benefit from an abundance of enrichment activities, including the eco-club, debating society and clubs to allow pupils to compete in sports events and develop their music skills. Pupils across different year groups are keenly preparing for the summer production of 'Annie'.

Pupils are confident that leaders and staff will listen to their concerns. They trust staff to sort out any issues they may have. Any incidents of bullying are resolved quickly and effectively.

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

Leaders, governors and trustees have put in place a broad, balanced and carefully considered curriculum. Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are typically successful in their learning. The majority of pupils study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects, including languages. In addition, pupils in all key stages can learn a range of vocational courses. The curriculum is shaped well to meet pupils' needs, interests and aspirations.

In subjects across key stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form, leaders have strengthened the curriculum so that pupils' learning builds on what they have learned previously. Subject leaders have carefully considered what pupils should learn and the order that the subject content should be taught.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. In many subjects, they use this expertise to help pupils remember and apply the essential knowledge and skills they have been taught. Teachers choose appropriate activities so that pupils practise and revisit what they already know. However, in a small number of subjects in key stage 3 and 4, teachers sometimes do not design activities that help pupils to remember their learning. This means that pupils' learning is less secure, and pupils cannot explain what they have learned.

Teachers use a range of assessment methods effectively to check pupils' understanding. They use assessment information well to tackle misconceptions so that pupils are ready for new learning.

Staff are keen to embrace new ideas and develop their skills. Morale is high. Staff appreciate leaders' strategies to consider their workload and well-being.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND effectively. Leaders provide staff with detailed training and information so that they can help all pupils to have full access to the curriculum and achieve well.

Reading is a high priority. Leaders make sure that those pupils who struggle to read are quickly identified and provided with extra support. This helps them to catch up. Leaders have invested heavily in the whole-school reading strategy, which is supported by an increasingly successful library. However, leaders' plans to improve pupils' love of reading and to extend pupils' vocabulary are not fully implemented across the school.

Pupils typically behave well in lessons and around the school. Leaders are quick to intervene if their high expectations of behaviour are not met.

Leaders place as much emphasis on pupils' personal development as they do on their academic achievement. All pupils benefit from highly effective wider development lessons, which are supported by assemblies and form time discussions. Pupils across all year groups benefit from an extensive range of leadership opportunities. Sixth-form students run charity events and take responsibility for keeping their school clean. Sixth-form student leaders play a significant role in the overall leadership of their provision. Pupils

and students tackle discrimination through groups such as the LGBTQ+ group. The school's careers programme is highly effective. Almost all pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 progress to employment, education or training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that the protection of pupils from risk and potential harm is at the forefront of their work. The experienced safeguarding team is supported by staff who are knowledgeable and alert to any issues pupils may face. Staff receive appropriate training and frequent updates.

Good relationships between pupils and adults mean that staff pick up on concerns or changes in behaviour quickly. Clear reporting and recording systems are in place. Pupils have many opportunities in the curriculum to learn how to stay safe.

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 provide pupils with enough opportunities to practise, revisit and consolidate their learning. This means that some pupils' learning is not embedded, and they struggle to remember key knowledge and skills. In these subjects, leaders should ensure that teachers provide appropriate activities to enable pupils to strengthen and deepen their learning.
- The ambitious reading strategy is not fully embedded and supported across subject areas. This means that, in some subjects, pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their reading skills and enjoyment of reading. Leaders should ensure that subject areas promote the benefits and enjoyment of reading so that pupils can further develop their reading fluency and increase the range of their vocabulary.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2014.

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	136655
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10256113
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	1,266
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	226
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Wooton
Interim Headteacher	Mike Warren
Website	www.congletonhigh.com
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- An interim headteacher has been in post since September 2022.
- Leaders make use of three registered alternative provision providers for a small number of pupils.
- Congleton High school is part of the Learning Alliance Multi Academy Trust.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

- 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 met with the interim headteacher, other senior leaders, trustees, the governing body, subject leaders and groups of staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector held a separate telephone call with the chair of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, history, languages and art and design. In these subjects, inspectors held meetings with subject leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and held discussions with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors held meetings with the leaders responsible for the school's safeguarding arrangements. They also scrutinised leaders' safeguarding records, including pre-employment checks for staff. Inspectors evaluated leaders' procedures for keeping pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about their well-being and workload. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils from different year groups. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's parent questionnaire, Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Gary Kelly, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paula Crawley	Ofsted Inspector
Elaine Parkinson	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023