

Inspection of a good school: Great Sankey High School

Barrow Hall Lane, Great Sankey, Warrington, Cheshire WA5 3AA

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

Great Sankey High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, spoke positively about their time at Great Sankey High School. Relationships between pupils and staff are respectful and caring. Pupils said that bullying is not tolerated and, that when it does happen, it is dealt with well. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and happy in school.

Recently, leaders have transformed the culture in school by raising staff's expectations of pupils' behaviour. The vast majority of pupils strive to live up to these expectations. There are clear and consistent routines in place which contribute to the calm atmosphere in classrooms.

Leaders expect pupils to succeed. Pupils, including those in the sixth form, benefit from a well-thought-out curriculum. Pupils, including those with SEND, achieve well.

Leaders provide pupils with a range of wide and diverse experiences to enhance their learning of the curriculum. For example, pupils spoke excitedly about the upcoming trips to Galway and Belfast, as part of a combined leadership programme.

Leaders foster pupils' community spirit. For instance, pupils described how they took part in a recent commemorative service for the victims of the Warrington bombing. This helped pupils to collectively remember members of their community who died.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum from key stage 3 to the sixth form. In most subjects, leaders have created well-organised curriculums that support staff to design learning well. This helps pupils to focus on the knowledge that is important for future study. Over time, pupils benefit from many opportunities to deepen their learning. Pupils successfully build a rich body of subject knowledge as a result.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use their expertise to deliver the curriculum consistently well. Teachers provide clear explanations and helpful examples so that pupils can acquire new knowledge easily. Added to this, teachers ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to practise and consolidate earlier learning. Most pupils, and students in the sixth form, learn well.

For the most part, teachers skilfully use assessment strategies to check how well pupils have learned curriculum content. Many teachers use this information well to make sure that any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are addressed quickly. However, on occasion, some teachers do not identify pupils' misconceptions swiftly enough. This means that some pupils develop gaps in their learning.

Leaders identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly and accurately. Staff are suitably trained to support these pupils well. The well-designed curriculum also helps pupils with SEND to learn successfully.

Leaders have placed reading at the core of all learning. Skilled staff quickly identify and support those pupils who are behind with their reading knowledge. This helps these pupils to catch up quickly and ensures that they can fully access the wider curriculum.

Leaders' recent improvements to the behaviour system have helped to secure a purposeful environment in lessons where pupils can learn without disruption. Teachers feel well supported by leaders to deal with any poor behaviour quickly and effectively. However, there is still a small minority of pupils who do not rise to leaders' high expectations of their conduct during social times.

Pupils benefit from taking part in many different activities, trips and experiences. For example, those sixth-form students studying geography have visited Iceland. Year 7 pupils attend a residential where they camp, participate in team building challenges and learn how to cook outdoors. Added to this, leaders provide a wealth of opportunities for pupils to have an active voice in the school, for instance through the junior leadership, school leadership, and college presidential teams. Pupils participate in a wide variety of clubs including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Relationships between leaders, staff and pupils are positive. Staff feel listened to by leaders and feel well supported to further develop their teaching expertise. Staff value leaders' consideration of their workload and well-being.

Governors and trustees have a clear, strategic oversight of the school and are aware of the strengths and leaders' priorities for further development. They support and challenge leaders effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular and up-to-date safeguarding training. Staff are equipped well to spot any concerns that they have about a pupil's welfare. They report these concerns diligently.

The safeguarding and pastoral teams are knowledgeable and experienced. Leaders keep detailed safeguarding records and use them to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders work closely with external agencies to secure timely and appropriate support for pupils and their families when necessary.

Pupils know who to speak to if they have any concerns. They are confident that staff will listen to them and look after them well.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, some teachers do not identify pupils' misconceptions quickly enough. As a result, from time to time, some pupils develop gaps in their learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment information effectively to quickly identify and address any gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- Some aspects of leaders' work to improve pupils' behaviour are relatively new. A small number of pupils do not behave as well as they should during social times. Leaders should ensure that staff implement behaviour strategies equally well outside of lessons so that these pupils are supported to improve their behaviour.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2017.

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	139152
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10240162
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	2,118
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Bent
Headteacher	Gary Evans
Website	www.greatsankey.org
Date of previous inspection	20 and 21 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders use one registered and one unregistered alternative provider for a small number of pupils.
- 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 that 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 leaders, staff and pupils. Inspectors also spoke with members of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, and members of the trust board, including the chair of trustees.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, history, science, performing arts, and art and design. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning, looked at samples of pupils' work and met with teachers.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from Years 7 to 11, and with students in the sixth form. Inspectors also observed pupils' movements around school.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding procedures and the checks made on staff. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the culture of safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, the school self-evaluation documents, the curriculum, minutes from meetings of the governors and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors considered the views of the parents and carers who responded to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Phill Walmsley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Gil Bourgade	Ofsted Inspector
Joe Barker	Ofsted Inspector

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