

Great Sankey High School

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

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new executive headteacher and head of school provide vision and direction. They have brought much-needed unity, stability and purpose to the school community.
- Senior leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that pupils receive a first-rate education.
- Leaders create a respectful, purposeful community which celebrates diversity. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Personal development and welfare is a strength of the school.
- Pastoral leadership and the leadership of the pupil premium funding are highly effective in supporting disadvantaged pupils and pupils who are looked after in overcoming successfully any barriers they face.
- Leaders have ensured that the school has a broad and balanced curriculum. As a result, attainment is rising for all pupils, including for disadvantaged pupils and boys.
- Behaviour around the school is calm and orderly. Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Pupils are smart and come to school ready to learn.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils say that they feel safe and are well looked after. They say that bullying is very rare and that staff deal with it effectively.
- The provision in the sixth form is good. Students enjoy being members of Barrow Hall College. They appreciate the support offered by staff.
- High-quality careers information, advice and guidance mean that pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education, training or employment.
- Attendance is high overall for pupils. Pupils enjoy coming to school. However, the attendance of pupils who are entitled to free school meals remains a focus for leaders.
- The rates of persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils are still too high.
- Most teaching is good. However, the teaching of lower-attaining pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is more variable.
- The majority of teachers have high expectations of pupils but some do not implement the school's policy of correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Leaders undertake effective actions to improve the school. However, some actions are not thoroughly analysed for their impact on pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - teachers more accurately meet the varying needs of pupils, particularly the lower-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - teachers focus on improving pupils' spelling and literacy skills in line with the school's assessment policy.
- Continue to improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders evaluate thoroughly the impact of their actions on pupils' achievement and wider progress.
- Improve the attendance of the pupils who are entitled to free school meals and decrease the numbers of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent from school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher and head of school have galvanised the school community since their recent appointments. Leadership has undergone significant changes over a considerable period of time. The executive headteacher and head of school have brought much-needed stability and vision to the school.
- Governors and leaders at all levels are committed to bringing about improvements at Great Sankey High School. They have high expectations of staff and pupils and are dedicated to providing the highest-quality education for all pupils.
- Leaders and governors have overseen a period of variability in outcomes for pupils. They have rightly prioritised making significant improvements for disadvantaged pupils. The provisional examination results for 2017 indicate that attainment has improved considerably for this group of pupils.
- The progress of groups of pupils, both in the sixth form and in the main school, is variable across year groups and subjects. These variations are decreasing as the focus on high-quality teaching, bespoke training and robust appraisal procedures is beginning to have a positive impact.
- Leaders create a respectful, purposeful learning community. Members of staff typically have high expectations of pupils and work extremely hard to support pupils and help them to succeed.
- Leaders are committed to improving the life chances of disadvantaged pupils. Staff know who these pupils are and are aware of the barriers they need to overcome. Leadership of the pupil premium strategy is passionate and supports both the child and the family. As a result, attainment for these pupils is beginning to improve considerably.
- Leaders and governors ensure that additional funding received for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is targeted appropriately. As a result, personalised support is put in place to improve provision and outcomes for these groups of pupils.
- Catch-up funding is used effectively in Year 7 so that the small number of pupils with low attainment on entry soon begin to catch up with their peers in reading and mathematics.
- Performance management and professional development are effective. Teachers attend training appropriate to their needs. Newly qualified teachers are appreciative of the support and training they receive from leaders.
- Middle leaders know the priorities of the school. They are focused on ensuring high-quality teaching that meets the needs of different groups of pupils more accurately and consistently.
- The curriculum is well led. It is broad and balanced with a clear rationale underpinning it. Links with primary schools are strong and support the curriculum and the smooth transition of pupils into secondary school.

- Pupils are encouraged to join a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils speak positively about the opportunities on offer and enjoy taking part in them.
- Leadership of behaviour is highly effective. Personalised learning plans have had a positive impact on reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions.
- British values and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are well developed through the curriculum and assemblies. Pupils are taught to respect and value others, including those who are different from themselves. Leaders are successful in promoting diversity. Personal development and well-being is a strength of the school.
- Leaders are successfully dealing with areas of weaker teaching. However, some teaching is not of a consistently high standard as the needs of some pupils are not being met. Leaders are aware of the inconsistencies. As a result, meeting the needs of pupils and ensuring high-quality teaching for all groups are school improvement priorities for this academic year.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well planned. The leader of special needs is passionate about ensuring that pupils are fully involved in every aspect of school life, from the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme to careers activities. There are some occasions, however, when support for pupils is not as comprehensive as planned. As a result, some pupils have difficulty understanding concepts or what to do next in their learning and their progress slows as a result.
- Leaders are accurate in judging the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom, but their evaluation of the school's effectiveness is overgenerous. New rigorous systems introduced by leaders to counter the variable progress of pupils over time are beginning to have a positive impact. As a result, attainment is improving for groups of pupils and the variations in the quality of teaching and learning are decreasing.
- The impact of the actions of leaders is not always clear. Leaders focus keenly on provision but some leaders are not as effective in demonstrating the impact their actions have had on the progress of pupils, and groups of pupils, across subjects and year groups.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school very well. They are committed and dedicated. They bring a wide range of skills and expertise to their roles.
- Governors are well informed and shape the strategic direction of the school with the executive headteacher. They are passionate about improving provision and the life chances of all pupils.
- Governors hold the executive headteacher, headteacher and other leaders to account using the information given to them by leaders. They are clear about the spending of the pupil premium funding and challenge leaders to demonstrate the impact of this funding.
- Governors do not rigorously challenge leaders about the attendance of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, which remains stubbornly and significantly below the national average.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding which runs throughout the school. Leaders, staff and governors are aware of the role they play in ensuring that pupils feel safe in the school. Staff and governors undertake regular training which enables them to identify signs of potential abuse or pupils in crisis.
- Referrals to other agencies are timely and leaders follow up referrals tenaciously. Leaders maintain excellent working relationships with a range of agencies to ensure that the needs of pupils are met. Leaders carry out pre-employment checks and statutory requirements are met.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they know whom to go to if they have any concerns. Staff teach pupils how to stay safe. They also have additional time during focus days to learn more about their personal safety and well-being. As a result, pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves and others safe, particularly online.
- All members of the school community, including parents and carers, work closely together to provide a safe climate for learning throughout the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is well structured and there are clear learning routines in place. Pupils are clear about what they need to do in order to achieve.
- Inspection evidence shows that teaching overall is good. Pupils and teachers have positive relationships, underpinned by mutual respect.
- The majority of teaching is strong and effective, particularly for the most able pupils. These pupils often benefit from teaching which pushes them to achieve their best. Teachers use questioning skilfully to probe concepts and develop pupils' thinking.
- Pupils are keen to listen to each other and respond positively when working with their peers. Pupils' strong oracy skills are shown in the confident manner in which they articulate their learning. Pupils are adept at assessing the work of their peers.
- Leaders deploy additional adults well. When teachers plan carefully these interventions, they make a positive difference to the learning of pupils.
- Teachers set homework regularly and use it to extend learning. Teachers' good subject knowledge helps them to address misconceptions as they arise. On occasion though, teachers sometimes do not address pupils' understanding in a timely manner. This consequently leads to pupils losing concentration, which slows the learning of some pupils.
- Some teachers do not implement the school's assessment policy in terms of addressing misconceptions in basic literacy. In addition, teachers' generally high expectations of pupils' presentation of their work are too variable. As a result, the presentation of pupils' written work is variable in quality.
- Parents receive regular reports which inform them of the progress that their children make. Some reports use complicated subject-specific language and are difficult to

understand. Clear grades for attitudes to learning help parents, staff and pupils to see strengths and areas for improvement at a glance.

- While the quality of teaching is good overall, some middle-attaining and lower-ability pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, sometimes do not experience teaching which meets their needs. As a result, some low-level disruption occurs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are confident, mature and articulate. They are very proud of their school.
- Pupils feel extremely safe in the school. They are taught well how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Pupils have a very clear understanding of what constitutes bullying and are adamant that it occurs only rarely. Pupils say that they know whom to talk to if they have any concerns and that the rare instances of bullying are dealt with effectively by staff.
- Personal, health and social education lessons, assemblies and focus days equip pupils with the skills and knowledge to keep themselves safe. Pupils are keenly aware of the dangers of technology and social media. They are taught about topics such as emotional and mental health and personal finances.
- Strong systems are in place to support pupils who need guidance. Leaders' personalised approach to each pupil makes sure that individuals receive appropriate, targeted help quickly.
- The school is a 'Stonewall champion'. This celebrates the school's success in teaching pupils about those who are different from themselves. Pupils are tolerant, respect people who are different and say that racism and homophobia are virtually non-existent in the school.
- The number of pupils involved in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is impressive, particularly at the bronze level. Almost all Year 9 pupils take part in this scheme. This is a testament to leaders and staff, who are committed to inclusion and ensuring that all pupils benefit from high-quality extra-curricular provision. Staff who support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities work extremely hard to make sure that every pupil feels included and has a sense of belonging.
- Personal development and welfare are strengths of the school. The vast majority of parents feel that their children are well cared for and enjoy school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school. They are articulate and polite to each other, and to staff and visitors. In lessons, they listen to others' ideas attentively, demonstrating the respect that is seen across the school.

- Strong leadership of behaviour has resulted in decisive action being taken to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions. Leaders have introduced highly effective personalised behaviour-improvement plans which get to the root cause of pupils' difficulties and put strategies in place to address these. As a result, the number of exclusions is very low, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are mostly positive. However, some pupils do not consistently show pride in their work. Work seen in books during the inspection and over time show that occasionally work is poorly presented.
- Behaviour in lessons is generally good. Pupils act quickly when given instructions by teachers. However, some pupils indulge in chatter which is occasionally not addressed. This leads to some pupils not understanding what they need to do and so they fall behind. Pupils told inspectors that a number of lessons are disrupted by low-level talking and this was reinforced by inspection evidence and the school's own surveys of pupils' views.
- Attendance of pupils is high overall and has been above the national average for the past three years. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school is low and is well below the national average.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average but is improving slowly. There was a substantial fall in the attendance of this group of pupils in 2015/16 which was addressed in the last academic year. This means that the pattern over the last three years has been one of gradual improvement. The attendance of the small number of pupils entitled to free school meals remains stubbornly low. Leaders and governors have not dealt with this issue with sufficient urgency until now.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent from school remains too high.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress has been inconsistent over the past few years. Progress for pupils in 2015 was very positive. It dipped considerably in 2016 for all pupils but particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- Results from the 2017 public examinations indicate that pupils' attainment is stronger than that achieved in 2016 in a wide range of subjects, with an increase in pupils achieving the higher grades. The attainment of boys and disadvantaged pupils has improved this year.
- Current pupils make good progress in a range of subject areas and across year groups. Pupils who enter the school with high prior attainment make consistently good progress across many subjects, for example in English and religious education.
- Leaders ensure that all teachers are aware of the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the progress of these groups of pupils is slower as a result of some teaching not adequately meeting the needs of some pupils. Leaders and middle leaders prioritise the progress of these groups of pupils so that academic support for them is as personalised and effective as their pastoral support.

- Teaching assistants generally provide good-quality support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has no pupils who currently attend alternative provision.
- Staff promote a culture of reading across the school. Pupils read widely and often. Teachers and pupils make good use of the learning resource centre. Staff model reading to pupils and displays around the school celebrate the power of reading.
- Pupils benefit from a comprehensive programme of careers advice and guidance, from Year 7 up to and including Year 13. Pupils are taught through the curriculum, and through a wide range of other activities, about the many options available to them when they leave school. They are well prepared for the next stages in their education, with a high proportion of pupils staying on into the school's sixth form, Barrow Hall College. Other pupils gain suitable apprenticeships in highly regarded companies.
- The progress of pupils who arrive at the school with low or middle prior attainment do not make as rapid progress as their most-able peers. The school's tracking data and evidence seen on inspection indicate variations in progress for these groups of pupils. Leaders are aware of these inconsistencies. Robust plans are in place, through the school improvement plan, to ensure that progress continues to improve rapidly for these pupils.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Students feel safe and supported by the pastoral system, tutors and leaders. They enjoy the sixth form at Barrow Hall College and value its diversity and positive ethos.
- Enrichment is a strength of the sixth form. A wide range of leadership opportunities, from counselling courses to the Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award, encourages students to develop high-order personal skills and prepare them well for the wider world.
- High-quality careers advice ensures that the vast majority of students are clear about their next steps. Excellent guidance and support prepare students well for university. This support includes university summer schools and personalised support and guidance about personal statements from form tutors.
- Leaders are effective in ensuring that students who fall behind are supported both academically and pastorally. As a result, leaders and teachers quickly identify and address any student's underperformance.
- Leaders have redesigned attendance and absence procedures so that students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own attendance while the school still keeps parents informed. As a result, attendance has increased for Year 12 and Year 13 students and unauthorised absences have decreased significantly.
- Leaders ensure that the website for the sixth form is vibrant, up to date and informative. Clear information, advice and guidance are available on the website and the successes of students are celebrated. Leaders have high aspirations for students and these are reflected on the website and in the actions taken to promote students' progress.
- Outcomes for students improved in 2017. Provisional information provided by leaders shows that the progress made by Year 12 and Year 13 students has improved from 2016 so that students now make progress in line with national averages. Outcomes are

particularly positive for disadvantaged students and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- Leaders take decisive action to address any weaknesses at subject level. As a result of leaders' interventions, some subjects are no longer part of the curriculum and others, such as English literature, have improved results significantly.
- Students who join the sixth form without achieving a good pass in English or mathematics GCSE make very good progress in subsequently gaining these qualifications. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is appropriate and that students are taught by specialist teachers. As a result, the success rates in GCSE mathematics and English are higher than those seen nationally.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' expectations of the standard of work students produce are high. Teaching is effective when it stretches and challenges students to successfully complete high-level work in subjects such as English, modern foreign languages and history. On occasion, progress slows when teachers do not accurately assess the prior learning of students or when students take too long before embarking on the main content of the lesson.
- Students who join the sixth form having achieved the highest grades at GCSE do not make as rapid progress as their peers in some subjects. Leaders are aware of these variations and clear plans are in place to address these inconsistencies so that all students make consistently strong progress across the curriculum.
- Retention from Year 12 into Year 13 does not compare favourably to the national picture. However, leaders have a clear vision for the future in terms of redesigning the curriculum so that it better meets the needs of all pupils and provides a broad range of courses to attract and retain students. Leaders are confident that improved information, advice and guidance, coupled with an enhanced curriculum, will ensure that once students begin courses they will complete them and go on to appropriate destinations.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The sixth form meets the requirements for the 16 to 19 study programmes, including meaningful opportunities for students to gain valuable work experience.

School details

Unique reference number	139152
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10032814

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1875
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	310
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Andrew Bent
Executive Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Wright
Telephone number	01925 724118
Website	www.greatsankey.org
Email address	jon.wright@greatsankey.org
Date of previous inspection	4–5 May 2010

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is larger than the average secondary school for pupils from 11 to 18 years.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is lower than average. A number of pupils are supported through the Year 7 catch-up premium.

- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average but the proportion who have a statement of special education needs and/or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school's sixth-form provision is Barrow Hall College, which operates on site in a modern, purpose-built building.
- The school currently does not use alternative provision for any pupils.
- Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a new executive headteacher from January 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a wide range of subjects in different year groups, including the sixth form. Some observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons and registration periods.
- Inspectors met with pupils to listen to their views, both formally and informally.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, other senior leaders, middle leaders, newly qualified teachers, groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation that covered: information about pupils' attainment and progress; the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan; minutes of meetings of the governing body and records relating to pupils' attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaks, lunchtimes, in registration, in lessons and at the end of the school day. They scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and looked at a sample of their books.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in the 133 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

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Deborah Bailey	Ofsted Inspector
Annette Patterson	Ofsted Inspector
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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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