

Inspection of Sir William Stanier School

Coronation Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 4EB

Inspection dates:	26 and 27 November 2024
The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Elizabeth Robinson. This school is part of The Learning Partnership Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Dan Thomas, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Wootton.

What is it like to attend this school?

Over time, pupils have been failed by the poor-quality of education that they have received. The school does not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have not successfully learned the knowledge that they need to achieve well. As a result, they are ill-prepared for their next steps in education, training or employment.

Pupils have felt unsettled by the frequent changes in school leadership in recent years. This instability has led to unclear expectations of pupils and staff and inconsistencies in how well school systems are followed. It has further compounded pupils' weak educational experience. However, pupils recognise that some recent changes are making a positive difference. They have welcomed the school's raised expectations of pupils' behaviour, punctuality and attendance.

Typically, pupils behave well. However, there is a small core of pupils who do not display positive attitudes to learning or respect for their teachers and peers. At times, staff do not manage this behaviour consistently well. Consequently, pupils' learning is sometimes disrupted.

Some pupils take advantage of the clubs on offer. For instance, they enjoy debate, comic and drumming clubs. Pupils are gearing up for a performance in a local care home. This helps them to understand the part that they can play in their local community. Some pupils enjoy taking part in sporting opportunities such as netball and football. However, a significant number of pupils do not attend any clubs because they cannot find ones that suit their interests.

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

The school has been through a period of turbulence. Over time, instability in leadership has hampered the school's progress in tackling the weaknesses in pupils' education. This has been compounded by weak governance in the past.

More recently, this situation has started to change for the better. Since joining the trust, governance has been strengthened. The trust board and the local governing body use their expertise increasingly well to garner an accurate understanding of the school's weaknesses. Trustees and governors now offer appropriate challenge.

The trust has clarified leaders' roles and responsibilities to establish clearer lines of accountability. This has already resulted in some improvements across the school. For example, pupils' behaviour is more positive, the number of suspensions from school has decreased, attendance rates have risen and the introduction of centralised resources have reduced staff's workload. Staff morale has improved. Staff have confidence in leadership and a desire to bring about positive change. All of this work has set a solid foundation on which to bring about the much-needed improvement to the quality of pupils' education.

The school's curriculum is ordered in a logical way. It outlines the important knowledge that pupils should learn. Most teachers have secure subject knowledge. However, they lack the expertise to deliver the curriculum effectively. As a result, many pupils do not learn what they should across the curriculum.

The learning activities that many teachers use are deeply flawed. They do not allow teachers to identify and address pupils' misconceptions. In addition, teachers do not routinely check that pupils are secure in what they have learned. This widens the gaps in pupils' learning even further.

In most subjects, pupils do not build their knowledge securely. Despite pupils being increasingly well informed of different careers, they leave Year 11 without the qualifications that they need to help them fulfil their future aspirations.

The school does not identify or assess the needs of pupils with SEND well enough. Some teachers lack the expertise to be able to adapt learning effectively. There are many pupils whose additional needs go unmet. These pupils do not achieve well.

The school has not prioritised reading. Almost half of the school's key stage 3 population struggles to read. Moreover, the school does not identify the gaps in older pupils' reading knowledge. The school has not ensured that effective support is put in place to help these pupils to read with confidence, fluency and accuracy. This is a considerable barrier to pupils' learning. It severely hinders pupils from accessing the curriculum.

The school has made inroads into improving pupils' behaviour. In the main, pupils behave sensibly around the school. However, at times, some pupils are disengaged and apathetic. Too often, this goes unchallenged because staff do not apply the school's behaviour policy consistently well. Consequently, some lessons are disrupted by pupils not behaving appropriately.

The school has implemented some effective strategies to raise pupils' attendance. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased. That said, the school does not know exactly which strategies are having the most impact on improving attendance rates. There are still some pupils, in particular disadvantaged pupils, who do not attend school frequently enough.

The offer for pupils' personal development lacks some cohesion. As such, there is little thought put into the purpose of trips and visits. Opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills are limited. Pupils' understanding of important information to prepare them for life in modern Britain is uneven. For example, they typically have a secure knowledge of fundamental British values, and they have an age-appropriate understanding of relationships, including consent. However, the school has not given pupils sufficient opportunities to learn about different cultures and religions. This means that pupils are not prepared as well as they should be for life in modern Britain.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not ensure that teachers deliver the curriculum effectively. For instance, teachers do not design activities that sufficiently match the aims of the curriculum. This prevents pupils from securing a deep understanding in each subject that they study. The school must ensure that it supports and develops teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills so that they can implement the curriculum as intended. This is so that pupils can achieve well.
- The school's systems for checking pupils' learning are not implemented effectively. This means that misconceptions are not rectified and gaps in pupils' knowledge are not remedied. Consequently, pupils do not develop a secure foundation of knowledge on which they can build their learning. The school should ensure that it supports staff to use assessment strategies consistently well to help pupils to know more and remember more of the curriculum.
- The school has not provided suitable support to address the gaps that pupils have in their reading knowledge. As a result, reading remains a huge barrier to learning for many pupils in the school. This prevents them from achieving well. The school should ensure that reading is prioritised and that there is suitable support in place for pupils so that they develop into confident and fluent readers.
- The school does not identify pupils' additional needs well. Furthermore, teachers do not have the knowledge and skills that they need to successfully adapt learning for pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils with SEND do not achieve well. The school must ensure that the additional needs of pupils with SEND are identified early and met consistently well.
- A minority of pupils do not behave as well as they should. They display negative attitudes to learning and their disruptive behaviour interrupts the learning of other pupils. This affects how well some pupils learn in lessons. The school should ensure that staff apply the behaviour management systems consistently well so that learning is not disrupted.
- The school does not have a precise understanding of which strategies are helping to improve pupils' attendance. Consequently, attendance of some pupils remains low, including disadvantaged pupils. The school should ensure that it builds on the most effective strategies to reduce absence rates.
- The school does not provide pupils with adequate opportunities to develop an understanding of some aspects of the wider world. As a result, pupils do not gain a sufficient understanding of different faiths and cultures. The school must ensure that the programme to promote pupils' personal development is designed carefully so that pupils are better prepared for life in modern Britain.

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	139953
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10314038
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	693
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Wootton
CEO of the trust	Dan Thomas
Headteacher	Elizabeth Robinson
Website	www.sirwilliamstanier.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 October 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined The Learning Partnership Academies Trust in September 2023.
- There have been four headteachers since the previous inspection. The current headteacher has been in post since November 2024.
- The school makes use of one registered and two unregistered alternative provisions for a small number of pupils.
- 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). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, CEO, deputy CEO, senior leaders and other members of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority, the chair of trustees and the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, food technology, art and design, geography and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in other subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including governor meeting minutes, the school's self-evaluation, and development plans and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at break and lunchtimes.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Jenny Jones, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Scott Maclean	Ofsted Inspector
Amina Modan	His Majesty's Inspector
Gary Kelly	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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