

Inspection of a good school: West Hill School

Thompson Cross, Stamford Street, Stalybridge Cheshire SK15 1LX

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 November 2021

Outcome

West Hill School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of this tight-knit community. They live by the principles of respect, responsibility and readiness to learn. Pupils told inspectors that these principles help to make the school a happy place where they feel safe to flourish.

Pupils are confident to be themselves. They understand and celebrate each other's differences. Pupils benefit from strong relationships with one another and with staff. No form of discrimination is tolerated. Pupils told inspectors that when things go wrong, staff resolve any incidents, including of bullying, quickly and effectively.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils take these expectations seriously. They behave well. Pupils act sensibly and courteously towards one another during social times. In lessons, pupils listen, ask questions, join in and concentrate thoroughly on their work.

Leaders and trustees are ambitious for all pupils. They expect pupils to achieve well. Leaders ensure that staff prepare pupils well for their future lives. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), progress well through the curriculum.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities. Leaders strive to capture the interests of every pupil, including those who are disadvantaged, with the variety of extra-curricular clubs and activities that they provide.

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

Leaders, including trustees, have ensured that all pupils, including those with SEND, access a suitably broad and ambitious curriculum. For example, leaders and trustees are successfully increasing the proportion of pupils who study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

Subject leaders have planned the curriculum well. They have thought carefully about the order in which curriculum content should be delivered. This is so that pupils can remember and build on the essential knowledge that they need to be successful in their future learning. Curriculum planning is particularly effective in some subjects. This is because there are highly ambitious opportunities for pupils to deepen their learning.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. This helps them to check pupils' learning effectively. Teachers are quick to identify and address pupils' misconceptions or missing knowledge. They support pupils to identify and to correct any errors that they make. This helps pupils to build up detailed subject knowledge over time.

Typically, teachers implement the curriculum well. They choose activities to deliver the curriculum that stimulate pupils' curiosity. Teachers make sure that they recap important learning. This helps pupils to remember what they have learned previously. Pupils successfully apply this knowledge to new learning with accuracy and confidence.

Around the school, pupils are polite and well mannered. Lessons take place without disruption. Pupils have consistently positive attitudes to learning. This helps them to learn well.

Leaders accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers are adept at using the information that leaders provide to support pupils with SEND to learn well. This helps pupils with SEND to progress through the same ambitious subject curriculums as their peers.

Leaders' systems to identify pupils who are behind with their reading knowledge are forensic. They accurately pinpoint the knowledge that individual pupils need to make gains with their reading. Leaders provide effective support so that pupils who have fallen behind with their reading quickly become confident and fluent readers. That said, the current reading curriculum has not always borne success in encouraging pupils to read for pleasure. Some older pupils do not read as widely or as often as they should. At times, their disinterest in reading stops them from deepening their learning across a range of subjects.

Leaders have a well-planned personal development curriculum in place. Pupils receive appropriate relationships, sex and health education. Leaders listen to pupils' ideas about the types of activities that they might enjoy. They then plan these activities in their extra-curricular offer.

Leaders and trustees are aware of some shortcomings in the careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) that they provide to pupils. Some pupils told inspectors that the CEIAG that they receive is not always as helpful as it should be. Some pupils do not feel that they have had sufficient input about possible future employment opportunities. Leaders are in the process of strengthening the CEIAG programme so that it is better organised to give pupils the information that they need.

Staff appreciate how leaders and trustees protect them from excessive workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding at West Hill School. They ensure that safeguarding training is thorough, and that staff are up to date with the most recent training. As a result, staff know how to spot the signs that pupils are at risk of harm. Staff share their concerns in a timely manner. Leaders work well with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in the community and online. Pupils receive well-planned safeguarding training through their wider personal development curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The CEIAG programme is not sufficiently well-planned. It does not provide all pupils with a meaningful and high-quality programme of careers education. Some pupils do not receive all of the information that they need to enable them to make informed choices about future employment opportunities. Leaders should review and refine the CEIAG programme so that it systematically provides all pupils across the school with the relevant information that they need.
- Leaders' plans to foster a love of reading for all pupils are still in development. Consequently, some older pupils do not read as widely or often as they should. For a small number of pupils, this is hindering how well they deepen their subject knowledge across the curriculum. Leaders should roll out their plans to strengthen the reading curriculum and ensure that staff are trained to deliver it effectively so that all pupils benefit from reading regularly.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2016.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	137020
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10200373
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	845
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martha Davies
Headteacher	Andrew Owens
Website	www.westhillschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at two external providers.

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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the school improvement partner and with the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals to the local authority. They spoke with staff about how they keep pupils safe. Inspectors also spoke with pupils about how they learn to keep themselves safe and what to do if they have any concerns.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.

- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of the parents and carers who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online parents' survey. This included the free-text responses.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and science. Inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and samples of pupils' work from some other subjects.

Inspection team

Stephen Ruddy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Tim Long

Ofsted Inspector

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