

Inspection of a good school: Culcheth High School

Warrington Road, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 5HH

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 November 2022

Outcome

Culcheth High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of this inclusive community. The school values are 'respect, honesty and excellence'. Pupils live up to these values by working hard and respecting each other's differences. They enjoy good, honest relationships with senior staff and teachers. Pupils' behaviour matches the high expectations of their teachers. In lessons, pupils listen, join in enthusiastically when invited by their teacher and concentrate thoroughly on their work.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe when they are in school. They are confident that they can approach staff for help if they have a problem. They say they enjoy coming to school because teachers take an interest in them as individuals. Pupils are confident that if any bullying were to happen, teachers would sort it out quickly.

Pupils study a well-designed and ambitious curriculum. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), progress well through the curriculum.

Pupils benefit from strong provision for personal development. They gain the knowledge they need to live safe and happy lives. Staff provide many extra-curricular opportunities. Many pupils are keen to take these opportunities to participate in sports teams and to learn about the wider world.

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

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that all pupils have access to a suitably broad and ambitious curriculum. Since the last inspection, leaders have significantly strengthened the support for pupils with SEND, allowing those pupils to meet the ambitions of the curriculum more successfully.

Subject leaders have designed curriculums well. They have thought carefully about the order in which they want pupils to learn key knowledge. Pupils build up their knowledge in a logical way. Curriculum design is particularly effective in some subjects. This is

because there are highly ambitious opportunities for pupils to deepen their learning and meet their teachers' high expectations for them to do well. Leaders know where the curriculum needs to be developed further and are in the process of making improvements.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. This helps them to deliver subject curriculums well across the school. Teachers explain topics clearly to pupils. In lessons, they typically choose activities that stimulate pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Teachers make sure they recap important learning. However, in a small number of subjects, teachers are not checking effectively that pupils are making connections between their current learning and topics they have learned previously. As a result, this prevents some pupils from learning more and remembering more in these subjects.

Pupils behave well around the large school site. Lessons take place without disruption. Pupils' typically positive attitudes to learning help them to learn well. Leaders study patterns of behaviour and act swiftly if they identify any problems.

Since the last inspection, leaders have made many improvements to the way they identify the needs of pupils with SEND. The changes made allow them to accurately pinpoint the specific issues that pupils face in their learning. Staff have benefited from training in SEND issues and confidently use information from leaders to support pupils with SEND to learn well. This helps pupils with SEND to progress through the same ambitious subject curriculums as their peers.

Recently, leaders have put effective systems in place to identify pupils whose reading knowledge is weak when they join the school. These systems enable leaders to identify the problems that individuals face with reading. Most pupils become more confident readers because of the support they receive. Leaders have developed some imaginative strategies to encourage reading for pleasure. These strategies are beginning to encourage younger pupils to read more widely and often.

Pupils told inspectors that they find their personal development lessons interesting and relevant to their needs. Leaders show a strong commitment to ensuring this aspect of the curriculum provides pupils with the knowledge they need to be well prepared for life beyond school. Pupils learn about relationships, sex and health matters and equality issues. They also find out about more practical issues, such as financial budgeting.

Pupils receive age-appropriate careers education, information, advice and guidance. All pupils receive independent advice about future careers and learn about wider opportunities through a well-designed curriculum.

Leaders have taken workload issues into account in a number of ways, and staff appreciate leaders' efforts. There is a strong sense of staff, leaders and governors sharing a common purpose to promote the well-being of everyone within the community. Governors know the school very well. They hold leaders to account and use their wide-ranging knowledge and skills to support the further development of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture across the school. Leaders are very well informed about a wide range of safeguarding issues. They ensure that safeguarding training for staff is thorough. As a result, staff know how to identify the signs that may indicate 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 know how to keep safe either online or in the local community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, teachers are not checking effectively that pupils are connecting new learning with topics that they have learned in the past. As a result, this prevents some pupils from learning and remembering more in these subjects.

Leaders should ensure that in all subjects, and across all year groups, teachers check explicitly that pupils can make connections between current and prior learning so that pupils know and remember more.

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 April 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	111430
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10226238
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	N/A
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,184
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	N/A
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mahesh Patel
Headteacher	Christopher Hunt
Website	http://culchethhigh.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	3 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at one alternative registered provider.

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 held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders.
- The lead inspector met with governors and spoke to the school improvement partner and a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals to the local authority. Inspectors spoke with staff about how they keep pupils safe. Inspectors also asked the pupils how they keep themselves safe and what to do if they have concerns.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and students from all year groups and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of the parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text responses.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history, art and physical education. Inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Timothy Gartside, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Steven Caldecott	Ofsted Inspector
Tuesday Humby	Ofsted Inspector

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