

Inspection of a good school: Whitworth Community High School

Hall Fold, Whitworth, Rossendale, Lancashire OL12 8TS

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 March 2023

Outcome

Whitworth Community High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a welcoming school. Pupils enjoy warm relationships with staff who know them well and keep them safe.

Pupils know that staff have high expectations of their conduct. Most pupils behave well and treat each other with respect. Pupils trust leaders and staff to help them if they have any concerns. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with well.

Leaders have ensured that the school's motto of 'climbing higher' underpins the work of the school. They have designed opportunities and experiences that widen pupils' horizons. They expect pupils to achieve well. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education or training.

Pupils enjoy the many opportunities that leaders give them to contribute to school life. They are proud to represent the school, for example in sporting or creative activities, as mental health ambassadors or as prefects.

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

Leaders have thought carefully about the curriculum from the start of Year 7 to the end of Year 11. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), study a broad and ambitious curriculum in key stage 3. Pupils make well-informed choices about what they will study in key stage 4 from a wide range of subjects.

Subject leaders have identified clearly the knowledge that they want pupils to learn. This knowledge is taught in well-ordered steps. The curriculum is designed to ensure that pupils revisit and practise key knowledge and skills. As a result, pupils remember what they have learned and make secure progress through the curriculum.

Teachers know their subjects well and present information clearly. They check pupils' understanding carefully and address any misconceptions or gaps in knowledge promptly.

At the end of key stage 4, most pupils achieve well in national examinations. The exception to this, last year, was in Spanish. Leaders are taking effective steps to improve pupils' achievement in this subject.

Consistent routines help pupils to settle quickly in lessons. Pupils are mostly attentive and eager to learn. In the corridors and around the school, they are sensible and cooperative.

Leaders prioritise reading. Pupils enjoy reading with adults in form time. In lessons, pupils are taught important vocabulary. Some pupils arrive at the school struggling to read. Leaders make sure that pupils in key stage 3 receive appropriate help to enable them to read more fluently. However, a small number of older pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge are not getting the specialist help that they need.

Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND are identified at an early stage. They provide staff with appropriate information to enable teachers to meet the needs of these pupils in lessons. As a result, pupils with SEND learn well.

Leaders have designed a high-quality programme to support pupils' wider development. Pupils value the opportunities that teachers give them to learn about and debate a wide range of issues. These help pupils develop their social and moral awareness. Pupils are also knowledgeable about matters such as healthy relationships, the value of diversity and their responsibilities as citizens. Pupils make good use of a rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities. They benefit from high-quality advice and guidance about careers.

Governors are committed to ensuring the school is the best it can be. They are knowledgeable about the school and hold leaders to account. Leaders and governors think carefully about staff's workload and care about staff's well-being. Staff feel well supported and are proud to work at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained and vigilant. As a result, concerns are picked up and reported quickly.

Leaders ensure that pupils get the support that they need. Where appropriate, they will make referrals to outside agencies to secure the right help for pupils who are at risk of harm.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. They know when and how to seek help.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The support for older readers who have gaps in their reading knowledge is not as effective as it could be. This means these pupils are not catching up quickly enough. Leaders should ensure that support is provided to older pupils based on their reading needs so that they become more confident, fluent readers.

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 December 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 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	119753
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10256120
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	663
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Christine Wright
Headteacher	Gillian Middlemas
Website	www.wchs.co
Date of previous inspection	1 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use the services of any alternative providers.
- 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 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, including the designated safeguarding leader and the special educational needs coordinator, middle leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at

curriculum documentation, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The lead inspector also reviewed the curriculum and spoke to leaders about some other subjects. She visited a sample of lessons in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors met with the leaders responsible for safeguarding. They reviewed a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding, including the school's pre-employment checks on staff. They spoke to staff and pupils about wider aspects of safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during breaktimes, lunchtimes, in corridors and during lessons. They spoke with pupils about bullying, behaviour and leaders' expectations of their behaviour. Inspectors also discussed the programme to support pupils' wider personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Stephanie Gill, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Derek Yarwood

Ofsted Inspector

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