

Inspection of a good school: Woodchurch High School

Carr Bridge Road, Woodchurch, Wirral, Merseyside CH49 7NG

Inspection dates: 11–12 February 2020

Outcome

Woodchurch High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Woodchurch High School is a place where everyone is welcomed with open arms. The school is highly regarded in the local community. Some of the pupils with whom we spoke said that they feel honoured and proud to be a part of the school.

Pupils said that they feel safe and happy in school. Pupils are supportive of one another. They said that bullying is rare. If it does happen, it is dealt with effectively.

Pupils said that their teachers expect the best of them. They said that standards of behaviour are high. This is because teachers manage behaviour effectively in lessons and at social times. Pupils take pride in their work. Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. Many pupils told us that the best thing about the school is the support that they get from adults. Pupils enjoy learning at this school.

Pupils learn a lot about tolerance and how to be respectful of others because leaders champion the right to be different. Pupils told us that they appreciate the school's focus on equality for all.

Parents and carers praised the array of wider opportunities on offer, such as sports clubs and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils embrace serving the local community as young leaders. For example, they participate in charity work. At this school there is something for everyone.

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

Leaders and teachers are ambitious for pupils at Woodchurch High School. By the end of key stage 4, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve well across the curriculum. They are successful in many of their GCSE examinations. Current pupils also achieve well across the curriculum. Leaders ensure that the curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stages of their education, employment or training.

More than a quarter of all pupils at Woodchurch High School have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND achieve well, including those in the specialist resource base. This is because there is a strong focus on ensuring that the curriculum meets their needs. Leaders' successes with pupils with SEND make this school the school of choice for many parents.

Pupils with SEND, who enter the school with below-average reading ages, are given effective support to catch up. However, not all pupils with SEND learn a modern foreign language because they are withdrawn for catch-up lessons. Leaders are determined that pupils with SEND should learn a modern foreign language. They are in the process of adapting the curriculum to make this happen.

When making decisions about the changes required to the curriculum, leaders put pupils' best interests at the heart of their planning. For example, leaders recognised that the previous key stage 3 curriculum did not allow pupils to learn about topics and concepts in sufficient depth. Leaders understood that although pupils achieved well, changes to the curriculum were required. They are well on the journey to implementing the new key stage 3 curriculum. Now, in many subjects, teachers think more carefully about what to teach and the order in which to teach the content. Teachers plan activities to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Leaders are acting swiftly to make sure that this happens in all subjects.

Leaders' investment in curriculum development has had a positive effect on staff development. Teachers are passionate about teaching. They have strong subject knowledge.

Since the last inspection, leaders have worked hard to ensure that pupils improve their vocabulary and reading skills. Now, all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, use more ambitious vocabulary. This builds their confidence and helps their learning, particularly in key stage 4. Teachers plan effective ways to help pupils to remember key vocabulary and subject-specific terminology.

Leaders promote equality of opportunity well. Pupils choose freely from a range of academic and vocational courses at key stage 4. With the exception of those pupils with SEND who do not currently study a modern foreign language at key stage 3, the curriculum is suitably ambitious. For example, the number of pupils taking the English Baccalaureate is above average. Pupils also benefit from effective careers guidance.

Leaders have created a caring school which prioritises pupils' mental and emotional well-being. Pupils have a wealth of people to talk with, including counsellors and mentors. They are encouraged to share worries. For example, pupils described the letter box where they can post their concerns.

Pupils behave well around school and they are respectful. The environment is calm and welcoming. Through the effective personal, social, health and economic curriculum, pupils learn how to be considerate of people of different culture, gender or sexuality.

The local authority views the school as a 'beacon of practice'. Leaders identify and address weaknesses rapidly. Many parents said that communication is exceptional. Staff feel well supported. They said that leaders value their well-being. They are proud to work in such a caring environment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are vigilant. All staff are well trained and understand their role in safeguarding. They know how to spot if a pupil is in difficulty. Systems and procedures are clear. Concerns are reported in a timely manner and they are dealt with swiftly. All pupils feel safe and know who to go to if they have any concerns.

Leaders work effectively with a wide range of external agencies to protect pupils. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from harm, including in relation to local issues, such as drugs and child sexual exploitation. They are taught how to protect themselves from the dangers of the internet and social media.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Currently, leaders are in the process of implementing a new key stage 3 curriculum. While extensive curriculum development work has been done already, some curriculum areas are still not as well planned as they should be. This means that pupils do not learn the depth of knowledge that they should in those subjects. Leaders should ensure that the key stage 3 curriculum across all subject areas is carefully planned and sequenced. This is so that all pupils have the opportunities to experience a depth of learning to form an even more solid foundation for further study. It is for this reason that the transition arrangements were used to confirm that the school remains good.
- Presently, some pupils with SEND are withdrawn from modern foreign languages lessons to enhance their literacy and reading skills. Leaders recognise that the implication of withdrawing these pupils from some lessons means that they do not experience the joys of learning a modern foreign language. Leaders are tackling this already. Leaders should make sure that pupils with SEND have the opportunity to study a modern foreign language.

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 school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, 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 convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged Woodchurch High School to be good on 11–12 July 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information 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	138853
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10122051
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1437
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Mr T Smith
Headteacher	Rebekah Phillips
Website	www.woodchurchhigh.com
Date of previous inspection	27 April 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Woodchurch High School converted to become an academy on 1 October 2012. When its predecessor school, Woodchurch High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Woodchurch High School is a Church of England academy and is part of the Diocese of Chester. The school's last section 48 inspection was in June 2016.
- The school has a resource base for pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This is accessed by 20 pupils from Years 7 to 11.
- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils at Cornerstone Vocational Training, Everton Free School, IMPACT, LIVAVA, Reaseheath College, Utopia and WRAP.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, we met with the headteacher, the senior leadership team, middle leaders and a range of teaching and support staff. We also spoke with a representative of the Diocese of Chester, four members of the governing body including

the chair of governors, the school improvement partner and a local authority representative.

- We met with pupils in key stages 3 and 4.
- We reviewed a range of documentation, including curriculum plans, behaviour and attendance records, bullying logs and safeguarding documents. We checked arrangements for pupils attending alternative provision and we spoke with a representative of an alternative provider.
- We visited the specialist resource provision and checked how leaders use pupil profiles to adapt the curriculum for pupils with SEND.
- We considered the 195 responses to Ofsted’s pupil questionnaire and 109 responses to Ofsted’s online survey for staff. We also checked the views of the 226 parents in their responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, including the comments received via the free-text facility.
- We carried out deep dives into English, mathematics, geography and art. We met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, looked at pupils’ work and spoke with pupils and teachers. We also considered other subjects such as modern foreign languages, science and religious studies.

Inspection team

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