

Inspection of Westhoughton High School

Bolton Road, Westhoughton, Bolton, Lancashire BL5 3BZ

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy coming to school. They said that they feel safe. Pupils work hard to support their local community. They have opportunities to raise funds and support local charities. This helps them to empathise with others who are less fortunate than themselves.

Some pupils involve themselves with extra-curricular clubs and enjoy the range of activities on offer. This includes the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, many sports clubs, world cinema club and the Friday swimming club, which is open for all year groups.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' achievement. However, pupils' academic experience during their time in school is mixed. This is because, in some subjects, the curriculum has not been well designed to ensure that pupils learn all that they should. Some pupils, and particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils are generally respectful to each other. Most pupils behave as leaders expect. However, some pupils exhibit poor behaviour around the school site, particularly at social times and between lessons. This upsets other pupils. Pupils said that unkind remarks and bullying do sometimes happen. Staff are aware of these issues and act quickly when it is reported.

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

Leaders have ensured that pupils have a broad choice of subjects to study. Leaders also provide pupils with appropriate support and guidance, so that they choose subjects that match their talents. Even so, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is because the curriculum is not well organised in some subjects.

Leaders have not clearly identified what is the most important content to be taught or the most appropriate order in which to teach it in. This prevents pupils from building their knowledge securely over time.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. However, leaders have not ensured that teachers use this subject knowledge well enough to help pupils to learn. Teachers do not think carefully enough about the best activities or teaching approaches needed to deliver new subject content. As a result, pupils do not learn all that they should, or they develop gaps in their learning.

Teachers' assessment strategies do not enable them to know if pupils have learned the intended curriculum. Assessment information is not used as well as it might be to reshape future teaching. As a result, some pupils' misconceptions are not addressed.

Leaders identify those pupils with SEND effectively and they ensure that teachers understand pupils' different needs. However, leaders have not made sure that staff

are trained to use suitable resources or to provide effective support for pupils with SEND so that they can access the same learning as their peers.

There are clear processes in place to support those pupils who find reading difficult, particularly for those pupils at the earlier stages of learning to read. For example, staff use phonics programmes appropriately so that these pupils quickly gain the knowledge that they need to be fluent readers.

The curriculums that underpin pupils' personal development have been carefully designed. Pupils learn about important issues such as consent, healthy relationships and online safety. Pupils receive appropriate careers advice and guidance. Pupils in Year 10 have the opportunity to complete work experience so that they can further develop their understanding of the world of work.

Some pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. This means that they miss important learning. Leaders have recently introduced specific actions to improve pupils' attendance. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.

Most pupils behave well, but the conduct of others falls short of what is expected by leaders and staff. When this happens, pupils' learning in lessons is interrupted and their social times are disrupted by the unkind behaviour of others. Some teachers do not use the school's systems for managing behaviour well enough.

Governors understand the school well. They have the appropriate knowledge and skills to hold leaders to account. However, they have not ensured that improvements have taken place quickly enough to raise pupils' achievement.

Teachers value the training that they receive. They said that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Parents and carers have mixed views about the school. Some are happy with the education that their children receive, while others are less positive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective

The school's safeguarding team offers effective support to help pupils to stay safe in school and to support their varied needs. Leaders respond to the local context. They are knowledgeable about the wider risks that pupils may face in the community. Leaders make sure that all staff know how to spot indicators of harm. Staff are provided with appropriate and frequent training.

Leaders have clear systems and processes in place for recording concerns. Staff use these procedures confidently. Leaders make appropriate and timely referrals to external agencies so that pupils can get the help that they need.

Pupils are helped to keep themselves safe, for example when working online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they might. This is because leaders have not ensured that staff are trained to use suitable resources and provide additional support for these pupils. Leaders should provide training to staff so that pupils with SEND can access the same learning as their peers and achieve well.
- Pupils' attendance is not high enough, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Levels of persistent absence are too high. This means that some pupils are missing essential learning. Leaders should improve their work to ensure that all pupils are in school regularly.
- At times, pupils' behaviour and attitudes around school are poor. Unkind remarks and bullying can sometimes take place, making some pupils feel uncomfortable. Leaders should ensure that the structures and systems in place for managing and monitoring behaviour are understood and consistently implemented, with appropriate staff training provided, so that behaviour across the school improves.
- In some curriculum areas, leaders have not identified the important knowledge that pupils need to know. This prevents pupils from developing a secure understanding in some subjects. Leaders should make sure that all subjects have well-designed curriculums so that pupils can know and remember more and achieve well.
- The delivery of the curriculum is too variable. Some pupils do not learn the intended curriculum well enough. This is because some teachers do not choose appropriate activities, nor do they use effective approaches to check pupils' understanding. This means that pupils' subject knowledge is not secure. Leaders should ensure that teachers are suitably equipped to deliver the curriculum.

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	105252
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10240115
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,336
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Joanne Murphy
Headteacher	Neil Coe
Website	www.westhoughton-high.org
Dates of previous inspection	16 and 17 November 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders use one unregistered and five registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator and a representative of the local

authority. Inspectors also held meetings with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, subject leaders and members of staff.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, English, science, art and design, physical education and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and reviewed samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to those responsible for reading across the school.
- Inspectors met with several groups of pupils. They talked about the quality of education in the school, as well as other aspects of school life. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally around the school.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of documentation and policies, including leaders' improvement plans, the school's self-evaluation and the school's website.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of leaders' recruitment checks on staff and spoke to leaders responsible for safeguarding.
- Inspectors visited form time and held telephone conversations with those staff who work with the small number of pupils that attend alternative providers.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils and staff as well as the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

Dawn Platt, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector
Joe Barker	Ofsted Inspector
Sharon Asquith	Ofsted Inspector
Kevin Sexton	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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