

The Whitby High School

Sycamore Drive, Whitby, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH66 2NU

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' actions to bring about improvement have not had sufficient impact on the progress pupils make, particularly in English and history.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, some groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and most-able pupils, do not make good progress.
- The teaching of literacy is not effective in helping pupils to improve their writing skills.
- Pupils do not take pride in their work. Often, pupils' work is unfinished and poorly presented.
- A number of pupils are withdrawn from personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons at a key time in their development.
- The curriculum does not encourage a love of learning or a thirst for knowledge.
- The proportion of pupils that are regularly absent from school is reducing but is still too high.
- The progress of current pupils in 11 is no better than the 2018 published data. However, progress for current Year 10 is beginning to show some improvement.
- Girls do not make good progress in mathematics and science, while boys do not make good progress in English.
- In the sixth form, leaders' actions have not had enough impact on improving outcomes for academic courses.

The school has the following strengths

- The teaching of vocational subjects across the school, including in the sixth form, is a strength.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Pupils feel safe and know how to get help if needed.
- The PSHE curriculum together with a range of extra-curricular trips prepares most pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils behave well both in classrooms and around the school. They manage their own behaviour in unsupervised areas.
- Governors bring a range of skills to their roles. They know the areas that leaders need to improve.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is improving due to greater accuracy in the identification of pupils' specific needs.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for pupils particularly in English and history, by ensuring that teaching, learning and assessment:
 - systematically develops the technical accuracy and fluency of pupils' writing
 - inspires pupils to develop a thirst for knowledge
 - caters effectively for pupils' individual needs, so that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress and gender differences are eliminated
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that leaders:
 - take swift and decisive action to address areas of underperformance
 - develop the curriculum, particularly in key stage 3, with a less overt focus on preparing pupils for external qualifications.
- Improve pupils' personal development by ensuring that:
 - pupils are supported and challenged to develop consistently positive attitudes to learning
 - pupils who receive additional academic support are not regularly removed from PSHE lessons.
- Reduce the proportion of pupils that are regularly absent from school, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND.
- Improve teaching and learning in the sixth form so that students make greater progress on academic courses.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection there has been a decline in the school's overall effectiveness. Leaders have developed a clear vision for improvement and have started to act to address the decline. These actions have had some effect, for example there has been improvement in mathematics and science. However, much remains to be done.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong overall and leads to individualised training programmes for staff. The role of middle leaders has been developed to drive improvements in teaching and learning across the school. A process of accountability has been introduced so that teachers are now held to account for their pupils' learning. As a result, teaching is beginning to show signs of improvement, particularly in the vocational subjects, where pupils are making stronger gains in their learning.
- Leaders' actions have been effective in bringing about some improvement in pupils' outcomes, particularly since the disappointing results in 2016. However, current pupils in key stage 3 and 4 continue to underperform in some key areas. For example, in English and history, pupils continue to make markedly less progress than in other subjects. Boys make almost half a grade less progress than girls in English, while in mathematics and science girls make almost half a grade less progress than boys. Also disadvantaged pupils and the most able do not make enough progress.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) carefully monitors the progress of pupils with SEND. The SENCo follows up any areas where pupils fall behind and offers support. This careful attention to detail has ensured that pupils with SEND have made good progress from their starting points in most subjects for the last two years. Work in their books demonstrates that this is still the case.
- There are a number of vocational subjects in both key stage 4 and the sixth form. These subjects have been very successful, and pupils make good progress in these areas. For example, pupils studying engineering and travel and tourism make consistently good progress.
- The quality assurance process for teaching and learning is well considered and leads to individualised training for staff. Staff appreciate the opportunities for discussions on how pupils learn and what good teaching looks like. Although these new systems are beginning to show impact, some historically weaker aspects of teaching and learning persist. For example, there continues to be evidence that some teachers have low expectations of their pupils.
- Leaders' self-evaluation accurately identifies the key areas of concern. The whole-school focus on attendance has brought about considerable improvement over the past year. Overall attendance is now in line with the national average from previous years. The proportion of pupils that are frequently absent from school has reduced, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. However, leaders are aware that, despite these improvements, the proportion of pupils that are regularly absent from school is still too high, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND.

- Leaders have developed a curriculum around a broad range of subjects across key stage 3 and 4. Although leaders' vision is for a broad and balanced curriculum, teachers base learning around GCSE questions, even for pupils in Years 7 and 8. This inhibits the development of a broad knowledge base and pupils have little desire to extend their learning beyond the required curriculum as a result.
- Literacy is not well developed across the curriculum. Few examples of effective extended writing are seen in the pupils' work. There are many instances where teachers do not provide the support necessary to help pupils improve their work.
- The PSHE curriculum is the main driver for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is an emphasis on ensuring that pupils understand fundamental British values so that they are prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders are justifiably proud of the quality of their PSHE provision. Leaders enrich pupils' learning experience and personal development through providing a range of extra-curricular trips and activities. However, leaders remove a significant cohort of pupils from their PSHE lessons so they can attend academic intervention sessions. Consequently, not all pupils benefit fully from this rich experience.
- There is a comprehensive programme for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) across all key stages. Pupils benefit from independent advice about their future careers. There is a programme of visits to educational establishments as well as opportunities to speak to local employers. As a result, the vast majority of pupils go on to high-quality education or training after key stage 4 or sixth form.
- Parents and carers are positive about the school's pastoral systems and the communication that they receive from the school. They are particularly pleased about the range of extra-curricular experiences that are available to their children. Pupils are also happy about their experiences in school. They like their teachers and trust them, pupils feel safe.

Governance of the school

- Governors bring a wide range of skills to the governance of the school. They are very knowledgeable, particularly about education, and use this knowledge to assess critically the actions taken by leaders. However, this does not always lead to timely and appropriate action.
- They are supportive of the headteacher and regularly invite middle and senior leaders to meetings to ensure that they have a detailed understanding of the strengths and the areas for development within the school.
- Governors do ask difficult questions of leaders in order to hold them to account. However, some governors focus more on the day-to-day work of school improvement rather than the strategic role of governance. Consequently, they have not effectively held leaders to account for the continued underperformance of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. There are well-defined structures and processes that ensure that only adults who are safe to work with pupils are employed by the school. Staff are trained annually and there are frequent updates to ensure that staff are kept up to date with any changes. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil.
- Pupils told inspectors that they know how to keep themselves safe. They said that bullying did happen on occasion however, when it happens, teachers deal with it well. They explained that the 'Whitby app' helps pupils to report incidents safely and confidentially, so that any bullying concerns can be reported and dealt with promptly.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They understand about the dangers of grooming and how to stay safe when online. They say that leaders listen to their concerns and act accordingly. For example, at the request of the Year 7 council, there is now a quiet area for Year 7 pupils to gather and have lunch.
- Leaders work cooperatively with alternative providers to ensure that all safeguarding checks are in place and that pupils attend regularly. Attendance is closely monitored, and absence followed up promptly in line with the school policy. Frequent visits by leaders ensure that pupils are safe and making good progress.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Leaders have a clear vision of what they want teaching to look like and how to get there. In order to do this, leaders have reviewed lines of responsibility. Departments now have more independence and middle leaders are driving change in their subject areas. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress in some subject areas, but this is not true for all subjects.
- Leaders have introduced a sophisticated system to track the strengths in teaching and created a vibrant environment for teachers to share good practice and discuss improvements in their teaching. All teachers benefit from training that is personalised to their individual developmental needs.
- Leaders have refined the processes to support underperforming staff. These processes are appropriate, but it is too soon to show sustained impact. Improvements to teaching have not been as effective in some subjects, particularly in English and history, as others. Disadvantaged pupils continue to make less progress than other pupils in the school and there are differences between the progress of boys and girls in English, mathematics and science.
- There is a difference between leaders' vision for learning and what is happening in classrooms. Teachers start to prepare pupils for their external examinations as early as Year 7. Too much time is spent on answering exam-style questions. This approach does not provide pupils with enough opportunities to explore learning beyond the GCSE programmes of study. This is particularly true for pupils in Year 7, 8 and 9.
- The teaching of vocational subjects is a strength. In these subjects, teachers model new content well and question pupils effectively to help pupils to produce work of a consistently high quality. For example, the teaching of technology is highly effective. Pupils become absorbed in their learning and are keen to improve their work.

- In some subjects, particularly vocational subjects, teachers have higher expectations of pupils. This helps the most able pupils to make stronger gains in their learning. However, sometimes teachers do not provide pupils with the effective support that they need to access more demanding work. This leads to superficial learning and means that some key groups of pupils, such as boys and disadvantaged pupils, do not perform as well as they could.
- In other subjects, such as mathematics and science, some teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and girls. In these subjects, pupils are not encouraged to think deeply about their learning. For example, work in mathematics too often lacks challenge and pupils have limited opportunities to develop their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- Teachers do not consistently develop pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. Pupils are not supported effectively to develop their technical skills and their writing lacks fluency. Weaknesses in this area impact across the curriculum, but particularly in English and history.
- Not all teachers follow the school feedback policy. When teachers do follow the policy, pupils typically improve their work in response to constructive advice. Teachers pay close attention to what pupils can and cannot do. This helps them to address gaps in pupils' learning in future teaching.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils say that bullying does happen at times but that leaders sort it out quickly and effectively. They were able to talk about the different forms that bullying could take, including online bullying. They explained that there was always someone to tell and that the 'Whitby app' means that they can tell teachers confidentially.
- The PSHE curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. It helps pupils to become respectful and considerate to others. It provides advice to pupils on how to manage risk for themselves. The support for e-safety is particularly thorough and the work on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues is exemplary.
- Leaders promote British values well. During PSHE pupils learn about democracy, and this is then put into action by the pupil council. It was the active pupil council that brought about the 'Whitby app' and the Year 7 safe dining place. Leaders maintain strong links with the police and use them to deliver preventative information.
- Leaders develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through form time and the wider PSHE curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities, including environmental and charity work. Recently a number of pupils and staff engaged in a sponsored 'stay awake' to raise awareness of mental health issues and raise money for MIND.
- Leaders have developed a number of international links. The school is involved in a project that takes their pupils abroad to destinations across the world to study with

other pupils. For example, a group of pupils spent time in Holland working on the theme 'the right to education'. They considered the plight of children across the globe who have no opportunity to access education and attempted to devise possible solutions to their plight.

- Despite the high-quality PSHE curriculum, a significant number of pupils are regularly removed from PSHE lessons for additional academic intervention. Consequently, these pupils miss some opportunities to develop both personally and emotionally. This is particularly true for Year 7 pupils. Year 7 pupils that require extra literacy support are removed from PSHE during the first term of their secondary education and miss valuable support during this key period of transition.
- Pupils benefit from a very structured and highly effective CEIAG programme. This helps pupils from an early age to develop a strong awareness of the range of opportunities that are available to them when they leave school.
- Pupils' work over time and across a range of subjects shows that they often do not take pride in their work. Pupils do not demonstrate strong attitudes to learning. Work is often untidy and disorganised. Some work is incomplete. As a result, pupils do not practise what it means to be an effective learner.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are well behaved around the school and in classrooms. The nature of the outdoor areas means that there are occasions when pupils are unsupervised for a short period of time. When this is the case, pupils manage their own behaviour effectively and continue to behave responsibly. Very few instances of poor behaviour were seen by inspectors. When pupils do misbehave, staff act promptly to resolve the situation.
- Attendance has been broadly in line with national averages and is slightly improved for current pupils. However, the proportion of pupils that are frequently absent from school is too high. This is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND. Leaders have increased the number of pastoral staff working with pupils and their families to improve attendance and this is beginning to have a positive effect. The proportion of pupils who are frequently absent from school is now reducing, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- The proportion of pupils that are excluded from school for a fixed period has been broadly in line with national averages for the last few years. However, disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND are proportionately more likely to have been excluded for a fixed period. The appropriate identification of the precise needs of pupils with SEND ensures that teachers now cater more effectively for these pupils in the classroom. Leaders have also trained teachers in de-escalating behavioural incidents, helping to defuse them more swiftly. As a result, for the current year, the proportion of pupils that have been excluded for a fixed period has reduced markedly.
- Leaders use alternative provision effectively to support pupils' learning. Leaders oversee the personal development, behaviour and safety of pupils in alternative provision. They visit regularly to ensure that the activities and learning that is provided

by the alternative provision meet pupils needs. The pupils who attend alternative provision demonstrate improved engagement with their education.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over the last three years published performance data has shown that, by the end of Year 11, pupils have made significantly less progress in English and history than all pupils nationally. Progress has been consistently low for disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils across a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science and history.
- Leaders are keen to maintain an academic focus within the curriculum and encourage pupils to enter the full suite of English baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects. The published performance data shows that the proportion of pupils entering and attaining a pass in the EBacc suite of qualifications has increased steadily each year since the last inspection. Consequently, the proportion of pupils that attain a standard pass in the full suite of EBacc qualifications is above the national average. This is also true for the proportion that attain the higher pass in the EBacc subjects.
- The proportion of pupils that gain a GCSE standard pass in both English and mathematics is slightly below the national average. The proportion that gain a strong pass in both English and mathematics is well below the national average. This is due to the particularly poor attainment at the higher standard in the English GCSE. The proportion of pupils that go on to study level 3 qualifications is just below national averages as a result. Very few move onto level 3 providers beyond the school's own sixth form.
- In mathematics and science, girls made almost half a grade less progress than boys. In English this trend was reversed, and boys made almost half a grade progress less than girls. Leaders have started to provide girls with opportunities to engage with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) activities. However, pupils' work typically reinforces the pre-existing gender differences; boys' work is of a lower standard than girls in English and girls' work is of a lower standard than boys in mathematics and science.
- Disadvantaged pupils and most-able pupils have made progress that is typically below national average across a range of subjects, including mathematics, science and history. Pupils' work demonstrates that disadvantaged pupils currently on roll are not making significantly better progress. The curriculum is potentially more challenging. However, it is not helping pupils to make better progress as some teachers do not provide pupils with the appropriate support to meet these higher expectations.
- The SENCo has helped teachers to come to a better understanding of the individual needs of pupils with SEND. However, the SENCo has not considered what progress should look like across the different subject areas for those pupils that have SEND. Consequently, pupils' work shows that learning for pupils with SEND varies with the subjects that they take. Although their progress overall is good, pupils with SEND continue to make less progress in English and history than in other subjects.
- Information presented by leaders indicated that there is considerable improvement for current pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. However, this was not fully supported by the work

seen in pupils' books. Pupils' work shows that, while there are areas of improvement and emerging strength, there remains considerable variation across subjects and groups of pupils.

- Pupils achieve well in information and communication technology, the arts and vocational subjects. Modern foreign languages continue to provide strong outcomes for pupils. However, only half the pupils in Year 9 choose to take this subject at GCSE level.
- The proportion of pupils that move onto further education or training after school is high. The proportion of pupils that achieve a standard grade in all subjects within the English Baccalaureate suite of qualifications is higher than the national average. These pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. However, the proportion of pupils that achieve a standard grade in both English and mathematics is below the national average. In part this is a result of the weaker progress that pupils make in their English GCSE course. Consequently, these pupils are restricted in the courses that they can take in the next stage of their education.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Sixth-form leaders have a clear vision for improvement. They know what they must do to bring about improvement. While plans are clear and some actions for improvement have been implemented, these have not translated into sustained improvement for students.
- Leaders in the sixth form have high expectations for their students. This is seen in improvements to the pastoral provision and enrichment activities. Students are encouraged to aim high in their career choices. However, these high expectations are not translated into high-quality examination results in all subject areas. The progress of students in the sixth form is almost a third of a grade below students nationally. Students' work shows little improvement on last year's outcomes. Leaders' predictions of improvement are overoptimistic.
- There are systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form. Teaching and learning in the vocational subjects that are included in the sixth-form curriculum are strong and students make good progress. However, leaders' aspirations have not had sufficient impact on the progress of the majority of students who are working towards A-level qualifications. Progress in these subjects is much lower than for vocational subjects, particularly in English, history and government and politics.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it varies so much between subjects. In applied subjects and some academic subjects, teaching and assessment are effective and so support students in making good progress. This is the case, for example, in engineering and art. However, in other subjects, weaker teaching leads to superficial learning where students are not encouraged to think deeply and make the connections necessary to achieve the higher grades.
- The sixth-form study programme is changing. Leaders are aware that the interests and study paths of a number of pupils tend towards applied courses. The number of

available applied courses is increasing, and leaders plan to offer a curriculum that is more evenly balanced between applied and A-level courses by 2020. Current pupils make much stronger progress in applied courses than in A-level qualifications.

- Learners without GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics are well supported to improve their grade and most pupils are successful.
- There is a comprehensive enrichment programme for all sixth-form students. A planned programme of study covers current affairs, opportunities for charity work within the community, and visits to local universities.
- Good provision is made to develop students' personal, social and health education. Students benefit from learning about healthy sexual relationships, the dangers of drugs and driver awareness. These are delivered by knowledgeable external providers. Students enjoy good relationships with their teachers. They told inspectors that they feel safe and could talk to their teachers about issues if they needed to.
- Students spoke highly about the support that they receive from the head of sixth form and the sixth-form administrator. They value the guided-learning room which provides pupils with a supervised, quiet and focused learning environment. Students demonstrate strong attitudes to learning and their work is typically well organised.
- Leaders offer students high-quality careers advice and guidance. An independent careers advisor is available during careers days. During these days, students have time to talk to employers and further education providers as well as opportunities to visit universities and apprenticeship fairs. These help pupils to make appropriate decisions about their future career path. Students' destinations on leaving the sixth form allow them to make progress towards their future career. The vast majority move on to university or higher apprenticeships, although some choose to move into employment.
- Work experience is provided for all students and a wide range of placements are available, particularly for those students on vocational courses. Disadvantaged students benefit from leaders' partnerships with social mobility organisations that help disadvantaged pupils to gain a high-quality placement for work experience.
- Sixth-form students enjoy their learning, and this is evidenced by high levels of attendance. However, pupils are not always punctual to their lessons. Punctuality is showing signs of improvement because of stronger monitoring systems.
- Retention rates over the past three years have been below the national average, especially for students embarking on applied courses. However, leaders can demonstrate that the low retention levels are the result of students leaving their courses to take up apprenticeship opportunities from local employers.

School details

Unique reference number	111429
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10087276

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1602
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Joint chairs	Mrs Carole Hibbert JP and Cllr Angela Claydon
Headteacher	Bryn Heeley
Telephone number	0151 355 8445
Website	www.whitbyhs.cheshire.sch.uk
Email address	whitby@whitbyhs.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 March 2015

Information about this school

- The Whitby High School is a larger-than-average secondary school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of pupils that are eligible for free school meals is slightly lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND and the proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan are both in line with national averages.

- The proportion of girls in the school is in line with national average.
- In key stage 4, a small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Wirral WRAP and the West Cheshire College.
- The school is governed by a local governing body.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a range of subjects, including joint observations with school leaders.
- Inspectors formally scrutinised pupils' work from Years 7, 8, 9 and 11, across a range of subjects alongside school leaders. They also looked at pupils' work when observing teaching and learning.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors spoke with a group of curriculum leaders and a group of teachers and a group of non-teaching staff.
- Inspectors also met formally with four groups of pupils from Years 7, 8, 9 and 11. Inspectors also spoke with pupils informally during social times.
- An inspector spoke with six members of the governing body, including the two co-chairs.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including school policies, safeguarding procedures, leaders' self-evaluation and leaders' school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the 181 responses to the pupil survey, the 67 responses to the online staff questionnaire, the 133 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 64 written responses from parents.

Inspection team

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