

Wilmslow High School

Holly Road, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 1LZ

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and managers have acted quickly to address weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The school continues to improve and secure good outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have developed their support systems further to ensure that the majority of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make the progress they should across the school.
- Most teachers have a detailed understanding of the pupils they teach. Consequently, teaching often matches pupils' abilities at key stage 4. There is strong teaching in key stage 3 in many subjects. However, some teaching does not engage or challenge pupils, who said they could make better progress.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They wear their uniform with pride. They are articulate and most cooperate with one another respectfully.
- The school provides a wide range of extra opportunities for pupils to develop their personal and social skills and interests. The school is rightly proud of pupils' sporting achievements.
- The school's pastoral systems are very effective. Pupils have access to a range of support to help them manage their behaviour, emotions and mental health.
- Many aspects of the school's academic curriculum are well thought out and implemented.
- Most pupils attend school regularly. For the small minority who do not, the school employs a wide range of support to help pupils and their families.
- The vast majority of pupils, staff and parents are highly positive about the school. A minority express dissatisfaction on a range of issues. The school's current systems to capture the views and perceptions of its stakeholders do not provide accurate information about their concerns such as those raised during the inspection.
- The provision in the sixth form is strong. Students enjoy their courses and make good progress. Nearly all students go on to meaningful post-18 pathways.
- Governors are knowledgeable and experienced. They hold leaders to account and understand well the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management further by capturing the views and perceptions of pupils, parents and staff systematically and acting upon the findings.
- Ensure that weaker teaching at key stage 3 is improved quickly so that it consistently matches that of the best in the school and enables pupils to make consistently good progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have worked hard to implement effective systems to tackle weaknesses identified in the last inspection. Consequently, the proportion of good teaching across the school has increased. Pupils benefit from a rich and interesting curriculum in most subjects. Pupils make good progress from their different starting points at key stage 4 in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Leaders' work to support and improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND has been effective. The extended leadership group has been effective in implementing systems to help overcome pupils' individual barriers to learning. The school's data shows that the 'key group' system has led to improved progress and engagement of targeted pupils.
- The school evaluates meticulously the effectiveness of its use of pupil premium and catch-up spending. Strategies that are employed are based on well-considered academic research. Where little positive impact is made, leaders are swift to discontinue the strategy. Leaders understand well the factors preventing disadvantaged pupils from making the progress that they should.
- The school is rightly recognised locally for its excellent provision for pupils with hearing impairment and pupils with autism. The specialist resource centre is equipped well and teaching is sensitive and effective.
- The provision for pupils with SEND is carefully planned and government funding is spent wisely. SEND pupils, including pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, had made good progress at the end of key stage 4 in 2018 and SEND pupils continue to do so across a range of subjects and years.
- The leadership of teaching is strong. The opportunities for teachers to develop their skills are wide-ranging and focused on the school's priorities. Many teachers have benefited from the bespoke coaching opportunities and have received valuable feedback. The 'professional learning groups' meet regularly to share good practice and are highly regarded by teachers. New teaching strategies are deeply rooted in the latest academic research.
- Subject leaders have developed well what is taught in their subjects. They have spent time considering the rationale for teaching certain themes in each year. Their aim to engage pupils and help them to learn more deeply about their subject is becoming more and more successful. Pupils said that they are increasingly excited by their learning in a range of subjects.
- Pupils' behaviour is managed well. There are effective systems to monitor positive and inappropriate behaviour. The school uses inclusion bases and the skills of youth workers effectively to refocus pupils when they have breached school rules. The incidence of poor behaviour is small and reducing.
- The pastoral curriculum has been developed further since the last inspection. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) curriculum is well thought out. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is raised well through a

number of activities and workshops delivered during focused 'wider curriculum' weeks, form-time and assemblies.

- Pupils have opportunities to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities to develop their sporting, artistic and musical skills. The 'wider curriculum' offer fulfils its aims of developing the whole child. Other activities for pupils ensure that they develop a sense of responsibility towards their community and society. The school's vision to be at the 'heart of the community' is fulfilled well through extensive partnership work.
- The school has made astute decisions to provide the right courses for targeted pupils through its alternative curriculum provision. Leaders monitor pupils' progress and welfare at these settings well.
- Leaders have developed a number of business partnerships which have strengthened the delivery of careers education, information, advice and guidance across the school. The Aspire High Programme, which uses former students and a range of employers to deliver talks to pupils, is highly regarded by pupils.
- The vast majority of pupils, parents and staff are supportive of leaders and the school in general. However, interviews with some pupils and responses to Ofsted online surveys revealed that a small proportion of these stakeholders are dissatisfied with aspects of the school. While leaders do collect some feedback from parents and pupils, these do not reflect the concerns raised during the inspection, especially by pupils in key stage 3. Subject leaders acknowledge that pupils' perceptions of their learning in class, for example, are not captured systematically. Consequently, leaders have not dealt with these concerns as promptly as they could.

Governance of the school

- Governors keep good oversight of the school. They have held leaders to account for the progress in tackling the previous inspection's areas for improvement. They are clear about the school's priorities and strengths.
- The chair and other members of the governing body are skilled and knowledgeable. They have developed their understanding of performance information at the end of key stages 4 and 5 and strengthened their critical evaluation of the impact of the school's provision. Governors support and contribute to the school's vision and aims, especially to make the school at the 'heart of the community'. Their local connections and parental links are valuable.
- Governors have challenged leaders well to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. They have supported the innovative approaches to tackle targeted pupils' barriers to learning.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding leader has ensured that systems to support pupils' welfare and safety are robust. He keeps staff up to date with safeguarding matters with regular safeguarding bulletins.

- The staff who support pupils' welfare, such as those from the inclusion team, staff in student services and the well-being hub, provide wrap-around care for vulnerable pupils. Bullying incidents are taken seriously and dealt with robustly.
- Leaders have ensured that the school's pastoral curriculum helps pupils to keep safe, including online. Pupils represented their school in a recent safeguarding conference locally. The school has provided pupils with access to a specialist website to give self-help support, such as cognitive therapy programmes.
- Overwhelmingly, pupils, staff and parents say that the school is a safe place.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is consistently good at key stage 4 in a range of subjects including English and mathematics. Teachers have strengthened their knowledge and understanding of the new GCSE courses and assessment requirements. The quality of teaching in work-related subjects is improving quickly.
- Teachers across the school show good subject knowledge. At key stage 3, many teachers show a deep passion for their subject which helps to motivate pupils who are keen to do well in lessons taught by these teachers. Pupils rush to show their homework and do extra reading around the subject.
- Teachers keep accurate records of pupils' individual needs and previous assessments in class charts. This system has improved teachers' planning and choice of resources. Consequently, the most able, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND make good progress, especially at key stage 4.
- Teachers assess pupils' knowledge and skills in a range of ways. They use standardised tests as well as assessment tasks as part of their programme of study. These provide an accurate view of pupils' progress, including gaps in their learning.
- The school's 'high intensity teaching' (HIT) groups provide a unique and effective approach to tackle pupils' weaknesses in English and mathematics. The teaching to support pupils' literacy skills is skilfully focused and pupils catch up quickly. The numeracy programme is a more recent introduction but is showing positive impact already.
- Teachers make good use of the 'catch-up base' and 'breakfast forms' to help pupils keep up with missed work due to absences. Many disadvantaged pupils have benefited from the extra support and study time provided by staff and sixth-form students.
- The most effective teaching challenges pupils to think deeply about the subject. Teachers' expectations are high and the activities lead to pupils' increased knowledge and understanding. These features are consistently true in English and humanities subjects across the school.
- Teacher help pupils to consider spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of their subject. In religious education and sociology lessons, for example, teachers regularly encourage debate and discussion about spiritual and moral issues. Pupils studying geography in Year 7 discussed the stereotypes conveyed in the media about Africa in an attempt to bust myths.

- Teaching to improve targeted pupils' reading skills is effective. Regular small-group sessions and individual tutoring have strengthened pupils' phonic knowledge and skills.
- Some teaching at key stage 3 is characterised by weak planning and an uninteresting use of resources. As a result, there is variability in pupils' work effort and progress. Some pupils in Years 7 and 8 reported their dissatisfaction with their learning and progress in some classes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The PSHEE curriculum is well thought out and appropriate for each year group. Pupils receive regular guidance to support their personal development in form time, assemblies and dedicated focus weeks called 'wider curriculum'.
- Pupils engage with a variety of community and social projects. For example, the 'ROC (Redeeming Our Communities) Wilmslow' group meets with local representatives from key organisations and services to discuss local issues. The Eco Group led a successful campaign to reduce plastic use across the school. Members of these groups told inspectors they were 'inspired to make a difference'.
- Pupils are supported well to manage their behaviour and mental health. The well-being hub and student services are excellent points of contact for pupils and are highly valued by them.
- Pupils are very accepting of difference. There are few prejudiced-based behaviour incidents.
- The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils enjoy a range of sports, such as tennis, cricket, basketball and football. Trampolining club is very popular and the Saturday sports competitions are well supported. The school encourages healthy competition and high standards. The school has achieved national success in trampolining, rugby and tennis. Pupils also enjoy music and dance clubs.
- Pupils get involved in a wide range of charity fundraising campaigns and raise money through food and product sales on Fridays.
- The debating society has helped pupils understand the various points of view about a range of issues such as Brexit. In so doing, the school promotes British values.
- Pupils, especially at key stages 4 and 5, receive good-quality careers guidance. The range of work experience pupils undertake is wide-ranging. The school encourages pupils to develop their work skills, including their enterprise skills and financial awareness.
- There are a number of school trips available to pupils and financial assistance is provided where necessary. These include 'maths camp', biology and geography field trips.

- The school monitors pupils' participation in all the opportunities available to ensure equal opportunities for everyone. However, some younger pupils interviewed said that they did not know about all the extra-curricular provision available to them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Exclusion rates have fallen. Leaders have effectively tackled previously higher than average rates by implementing a range of support systems and employing youth workers to help pupils improve their behaviour. The inclusion bases are used effectively to withdraw those pupils who persistently break school rules.
- Pupils are smartly dressed and conduct themselves sensibly around the school. In class, pupils are mostly cooperative and attentive. When teaching is not interesting or engaging, some pupils, especially boys, lose interest and are easily distracted.
- Pupils' attendance is improving quickly. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are still disproportionately represented in absence figures but for most, there are legitimate health and medical reasons. For others, their attendance is improving quickly now because of the effective work of the student manager. The school works effectively with hard-to-reach families.
- There are few incidents of bullying. These incidents are dealt with seriously and parents are involved. Pupils say that they feel confident staff with deal with these issues.
- Pupils attending off-site alternative provision have improved their behaviour and attitudes. Vulnerable pupils receive a range of multi-agency support.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils at the end of key stage 4 made above-average progress in 2018. Almost all groups of pupils, including pupils with SEND, low-attaining pupils and the most able compared favourably to their peers nationally in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- In 2018, in English, mathematics, science, humanities and modern foreign languages, a high proportion of Year 11 pupils gained a strong pass at GCSE.
- Reliable school assessments show that pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to make good progress in English, mathematics and science, and in other subjects such as design and technology, drama, art and physical education. Weakness in some vocational subjects identified last year have been addressed by leaders and pupils are improving their knowledge and understanding quickly now.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 4 continues to lag behind other pupils in school and nationally. It is improving quickly due to the support given and the effective work to address individual pupils' needs. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils' overall attainment is rising year on year.

- The school has worked hard to strengthen the aspirations and ambitions of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. As a result, the proportion of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate subjects is increasing.
- Pupils with SEND, including those in the school's specialist provision, make good progress across the school. Pupils' academic, social and emotional progress is tracked meticulously. Support agencies and professionals work well with staff to improve targeted pupils' outcomes and meet their needs.
- Boys' progress compares well with boys nationally and is improving quickly towards that of girls in the school. Strategies to adapt the curriculum to appeal to boys and promote male role models are making a positive difference.
- Pupils at key stage 3 make good progress in many subjects. However, teaching is not consistently strong in all classes and this has hindered some pupils' progress, especially that of boys. Progress in Year 8 is not as strong as other year groups. This is because of the number of pupils with complex and high levels of additional needs. Leaders are acting quickly to tackle weaker teaching, but there is still more work to be done.
- Low-attaining pupils improve their basic skills well because of the well-thought-out strategies to support their learning.
- Pupils read regularly and often. The library is stocked well and regularly used.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. There are very few pupils not in education, employment and training at the end of key stages 4 and 5. Pupils educated at off-site alternative provision achieve qualifications which allow them to take up meaningful post-16 pathways.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Students have made good progress in most subjects by the end of key stage 5. The vast majority of students study A levels and most reach their target grades. Any underperformance is tackled quickly by sixth-form leaders.
- Students studying applied subjects consistently make exceptional progress and most attain highly.
- Disadvantaged students are provided with additional support and their progress is monitored closely. These students are making better progress than in previous years.
- Current students continue to make good progress in most subjects and they enjoy their studies. Teaching is strong. Teachers' high expectations and good subject knowledge mean that students are prepared well for examinations.
- Students retaking GCSE English or mathematics improve their grade.
- Leaders in the sixth form monitor students' progress and welfare concerns diligently and take prompt action. As a result, students who fall behind tend to catch up quickly.
- Most students complete the courses they started, indicating effective study programmes and advice and guidance prior to joining the sixth form.

- Students participate in meaningful work experience. They are supported well in their career aspirations and ambitions. The school's business partnerships help students understand the available apprenticeship and employment opportunities open to them.
- Most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, take up level 3 degree courses at university and a good proportion undertake courses at Russell Group universities.
- Leaders have devised a range of opportunities for students to develop their personal and social skills. Students help younger pupils in the main school with their reading and support local community work. The PSHEE programme helps them to keep safe and develop social and personal responsibilities.
- Attendance in the sixth form is improving and is better in Year 12 compared to Year 13. Leaders' carefully devised personal support plans are helping those students who had a previously poor record of attendance to reduce their absence rates.

School details

Unique reference number	111443
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10087875

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
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	1992
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	416
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Bennett
Headteacher	Dr James Pullé
Telephone number	01625 526191
Website	www.wilmslowhigh.com
Email address	reception@wilmslowhigh.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 May 2018

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than the national average, including the proportion with an EHC plan.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The school has specialist resourced provision for hearing impaired pupils and for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.

- The school uses a range of off-site provision to educate 13 pupils: The Arc in Stockport, Broadstone School in Stockport and Macclesfield College.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all faculty areas and in all key stages. Inspectors also examined pupils' workbooks and spoke to pupils in lessons. Most observations of learning were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of school leaders, including the headteacher and senior leaders, subject leaders of English, mathematics, science, humanities, modern foreign languages and sixth form, the SEND coordinator, the designated safeguarding leader and inclusion leader, the administrator of the single central register, pastoral and curriculum leaders.
- The lead inspector also met with three members of the local governing body, including the chair, and the local authority school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors spoke formally with a selection of pupils from each key stage, including students in the sixth form.
- Inspectors reviewed 352 responses to the Ofsted online parent surveys and free texts, 140 staff responses and 341 pupil responses to the online questionnaire including the free-text facility.

Inspection team

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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