

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Wilmslow High School

Holly Road, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 1LZ

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 January 2025

Outcome

Wilmslow High School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils are inspired to be successful in all that they do. The school's core value of 'be more' is evident in everything that happens. Pupils feel happy, safe and valued in this friendly school. They are proud of the school's inclusive culture, where all are welcome, regardless of background or need.

The school is ambitious for what pupils can, and will, achieve academically. All pupils study a broad and balanced curriculum. Students in the sixth form pursue subjects that prepare them well for their next steps in education, employment and training. Whether pupils leave at 16 or continue their studies to 18, many pupils achieve well.

Pupils want to succeed. The majority of pupils consistently meet the school's high expectations for behaviour. Pupils understand the clear routines that ensure they are ready to learn throughout the day. They are polite, well-mannered and welcome visitors warmly.

The school provides many opportunities that spark pupils' interests and talents. Pupils relish the array of clubs on offer, including jazz band, hockey and debate club. Pupils learn to build leadership skills and help others. For example, the model United Nations group actively promotes pupils' understanding of global citizenship.

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

The school's curriculum is meticulously designed to incorporate the knowledge, skills and wider experiences that the pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), need to be successful. The school has thought precisely about the building blocks of knowledge that will help pupils to know and remember more.

The school brings useful examples of research to the attention of teachers. This helps teachers to design and order learning so that pupils develop a secure understanding of key concepts. Teachers present information clearly and logically. Pupils who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision) benefit from carefully crafted activities that break down learning into manageable chunks. Increasingly, teachers provide pupils with work that encourages them to recall and apply what they have learned.

Mostly, teachers check what pupils know and can do in lessons. However, this is not consistent across the school. This means that, in some subjects, teachers are not clear about the gaps that pupils have in their learning. Additionally, some teachers do not identify pupils' misconceptions and misunderstandings effectively, particularly for those pupils with lower rates of attendance. This limits teachers' ability to support these pupils well.

Reading is now prioritised across the school. The school's 'we're all reading' initiative has encouraged pupils to read more widely and for pleasure. More recently, the school has strengthened systems to identify those who are struggling with reading. Clear pathways of support for pupils who may find reading more difficult ensure that they get the help that they need to catch up.

The school has developed strong support for pupils with SEND. It accurately identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND at the earliest opportunity. Staff are well informed about the needs of these pupils and adapt lessons accordingly. These pupils, including those who attend the specially resourced provision, take part in all aspects of school life.

The school is taking action to improve pupils' attendance. There is a wealth of support available to pupils, which has led to some improvement in attendance. Nevertheless, the school recognises that improving pupils' attendance remains a key priority, especially for those pupils who are disadvantaged and for some pupils with SEND. In lessons, pupils are focused and engaged in their work. Pupils are proud to be recognised for their efforts through rewards and prizes. Sixth-form students are role models for younger pupils.

Experiences to promote pupils' wider development are wide-ranging. Vulnerable pupils are supported well to get involved in these aspects of the school. Pupils develop a strong understanding of how to keep healthy and safe, including age-appropriate advice about sex and relationships. Sixth-form students benefit from personal safety workshops, including about drink spiking and festival safety. The school provides information, advice and guidance that prepare pupils well for study and work beyond school. Sixth-form students are knowledgeable about university and apprenticeship pathways. Across all year groups, pupils have the opportunity to engage with meaningful experiences of the world of work. Pupils are well prepared for life growing up in modern Britain.

Leaders have made realistic evaluations of the school's work and its effectiveness. In recent times, the governing body has further strengthened its capacity to provide effective

support and challenge to school leaders. Staff recognise that the school is mindful of their workload and well-being. Most staff feel listened to and are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not ensured that assessment is consistent and coherent across all subjects. This means that for some subjects, teachers are not clear about pupils' gaps in knowledge. The school should ensure that a whole-school approach to assessment supports swift identification of pupils' gaps so that pupils can make rapid progress towards curriculum goals.
- Some pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and some with SEND, do not attend school regularly enough. This further exacerbates the gaps in these pupils' learning. The school should ensure that these pupils are supported to improve their rates of attendance. In addition, the school should identify and close any gaps in their learning as a result of missing too much school.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in May 2019.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	111443
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10348077
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2,216
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	451
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jim Caulkett
Headteacher	Christina Kane
Website	www.wilmslowhigh.com
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.
- The school has two specially resourced provisions. There is a specially resourced provision for pupils aged 11 to 16 with hearing impairments, which is funded by the local authority. This provision can cater for up to eight pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were seven pupils on roll. In addition, there is a specially resourced provision for pupils aged 11 to 16 with autism spectrum disorder. This provision can cater for up to 14 pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were 14 pupils on roll.
- The school makes use of an off-site facility, run in conjunction with two other local schools, to support a small number of pupils at risk of permanent exclusion.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider for a very small number of pupils.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The inspectors also met representatives from the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons across all key stages, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the provision for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents provided by the school, including the school's self-evaluation, published information about pupils' performance and minutes of governors' meetings.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including free-text responses. They also took account of the responses to the staff and pupil surveys and gathered the views of parents, staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Inspection team

Kate Bowker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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