

Inspection of Weatherhead High School

Breck Rd, Wallasey, Merseyside CH44 3HS

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 10 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Weatherhead High School is a happy and friendly learning community. Pupils, students in the sixth form and staff are proud to belong to this school. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils easily live up to these expectations. They are respectful towards staff and to each other. The atmosphere throughout the school is calm and orderly. Pupils self-regulate their behaviour well.

Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils and students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils and students achieve well.

Pupils and students enjoy taking part in a wealth of extra-curricular activities, such as rowing, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, PULSE club and coding. These activities help to broaden pupils' understanding of the world. Pupils and students relish the opportunity to take on leadership roles, including community sports leaders, reading buddies and numeracy ambassadors.

Pupils and students feel safe in school because leaders deal thoroughly with any reports of bullying. They spoke positively about the levels of support that staff give to them. Pupils and students reported that they have a trusted adult to whom they can turn if they have any worries or concerns.

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

Leaders, local governors and trustees expect all pupils and students to succeed. Leaders have designed a broad curriculum that is suitably ambitious for all pupils and students, including those with SEND. The English Baccalaureate suite of subjects is at the heart of the curriculum. For example, all pupils in key stage 4 study a modern foreign language. In the sixth form, students can choose to study a wide range of academic and vocational subjects.

Leaders have thought carefully about the knowledge that they want pupils and students to learn across key stages 3 to 5. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They use their expertise to explain new concepts to pupils and students clearly. This helps pupils and students to build a rich body of subject knowledge as they progress through the school.

The school's motto of 'resilience, respect, reach, reward' is exemplified in lessons through pupils' and students' eagerness to learn new things without fear of making a mistake. Teachers help pupils and students to practise their oracy skills and to use correct subject-specific terminology. In turn, this helps pupils and students to develop their wider knowledge and understanding.

Most teachers use assessment strategies well to identify gaps in pupils' and students' learning, and to adapt their delivery of the curriculum accordingly. This enables teachers to address any misconceptions that pupils and students may have swiftly. However, in a minority of subjects, teachers' use of assessment strategies is less effective. Some teachers move on to new learning before pupils' and students' knowledge is secure. This hinders how well some pupils and students learn.

Leaders have effective procedures in place for identifying pupils with SEND. They share detailed information about these pupils' needs with staff. This is so that teachers can skilfully adapt their delivery of the curriculum to support pupils' and students' learning in lessons. As a result, pupils and students with SEND learn well. Pupils with SEND are fully included in wider school life. They enjoy taking part in many extra-curricular activities.

Leaders place a strong emphasis on reading. They quickly identify pupils who find reading difficult. Well-trained staff help these pupils to catch up quickly so that they can access the wider curriculum. Pupils understand that they need to be able to read well to learn well.

In the sixth form, leaders have invested in materials to develop students' academic reading to help prepare them for future study. Across the school, staff promote reading for pleasure through activities such as author visits and 'Harry Potter' evenings. Pupils and students spoke enthusiastically about the books that they read.

Pupils behave well in classrooms. They show positive attitudes to learning. Learning is rarely disrupted. However, despite leaders' efforts to improve attendance, there is a minority of pupils and students, including some who are disadvantaged, who are not attending school regularly enough.

Pupils' and students' academic progress is underpinned by high-quality personal development opportunities, such as volunteering and leadership roles. Pupils and students benefit from listening to expert external speakers who support the delivery of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Most pupils and students have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. Leaders provide pupils and students with opportunities to be active citizens. For example, pupils in key stage 3 visit residents in a local nursing home.

Leaders ensure that pupils and students receive impartial careers information, advice and guidance. For example, they host an annual careers fair, which enables pupils and students to learn about the different choices available to them for their future lives. Pupils and students also benefit from the opportunities that they have to engage with local employers. Many students move on to aspirational destinations after leaving school.

Most staff feel that leaders are considerate of their workload. Leaders are taking steps to reduce staff's workload further. The local governing body and trustees are highly committed to the school. They support and challenge leaders well to improve the quality of education that pupils and students receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff and governors receive regular, up-to-date safeguarding training. Staff are vigilant. They know how to spot the signs of abuse and know what to do if they are concerned that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders act swiftly on any concerns that staff raise about a pupil's welfare.

Leaders work effectively with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families get timely and appropriate support.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn about local risks in the community through the PSHE education curriculum. Pupils and students learn about sexual harassment and why it is wrong. They learn how to keep themselves safe when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a minority of subjects, teachers sometimes do not address pupils' and students' misconceptions before moving on to new learning. This hinders how well some pupils and students learn. Leaders should ensure that teachers identify and address misconceptions effectively so that pupils and students build their knowledge well over time.
- A minority of pupils and students do not attend school as well as they should. These pupils and students miss important learning, which has a detrimental impact on their achievement. Leaders should ensure that they support these pupils to improve their rates of attendance.

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	137815
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10242474
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,588
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	361
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jane Owens
Headteacher	Annmarie Whelan
Website	https://weatherheadhigh.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 December 2012

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Peninsula Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Leaders make use of three registered, and 11 unregistered, alternative providers for some pupils.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, curriculum leaders, staff, governors and trustees. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to many pupils and students about their experience of school life and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' and students' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including the school's single central record. Inspectors met with leaders, trustees, governors, staff and pupils to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in the school. An inspector held telephone conversations with representatives from alternative providers.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, leaders' behaviour and attendance records and self-evaluation documents, and minutes of meetings held by those responsible for governance.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, geography, mathematics, science, history, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke to curriculum leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils and students about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' and students' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Jenny Jones, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Phil Lloyd	Ofsted Inspector
Rebecca Sharples	His Majesty's Inspector
Vicky Atherton	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Cox	Ofsted Inspector
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