

Litherland High School

Sterrix Lane, Litherland, Liverpool, Merseyside L21 0DB

Inspection dates

28 February–1 March 2018

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes did not meet the government's current floor standard in 2017. Current pupils' progress remains variable, including in English, mathematics and science.
- Leaders do not consistently and effectively monitor, evaluate and refine improvement plans.
- Subject leadership requires further improvement, including in English, mathematics and science.
- The quality of teaching is too variable between and within subjects and year groups, including in English and mathematics.
- Teachers do not routinely set pupils work which closely matches their ability, especially the most able and those in Year 7.
- Leaders have not used additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively.
- Pupils' attendance is improving but it remains below average. Persistent absence is above the national average.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are variable. A significant minority of pupils engage in low-level disruption where teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour do not match those set by senior leaders.

The school has the following strengths

- Recent appointments have strengthened senior leadership. Consequently, leaders have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. They are aware of the challenging circumstances that the school faces but are clear and uncompromising in their high expectations for pupils.
- In some subjects, including history and modern foreign languages, pupils are taught well and make good progress.
- Leaders manage and use the funding provided for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities effectively.
- Senior leaders' actions taken to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are having a positive impact.
- Leaders manage the Year 7 catch-up funding effectively. Most pupils who enter the school with lower levels of literacy or numeracy than others make strong progress and attain age-related expectations in these aspects.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum meets pupils' needs. Pupils enjoy the wide range of activities on offer outside the normal school day.
- Pupils, including those in Year 7, are positive about the school. They describe it as a safe place and would recommend it to others.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' outcomes, especially in English, mathematics and science
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders monitor, evaluate and refine improvement plans regularly and rigorously
 - strengthening the effectiveness of subject leadership, including in English, mathematics and science
 - ensuring that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively, so that these pupils attend regularly and make progress in line with that of others nationally
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - removing inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across a range of subjects, including in English, mathematics and science.
 - ensuring that pupils, especially the most able and those in Year 7, are routinely set work that closely matches their ability, so that they make the progress they should
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - further improving pupils' attendance, so that it is at least average
 - eradicating inconsistencies in pupils' attitudes to learning.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to ascertain how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The principal took up post as sole principal in May 2017, following restructuring of the school's senior leadership team. He had previously worked at the school alongside another principal. Consequently, he knows the school well and has 'hit the ground running'. He and other senior leaders are under no illusion about the challenges that face the school. Their ambitions for pupils' education and life opportunities are high and unwavering.
- Senior leaders are forthright in describing the outcomes of pupils that have taken their Year 11 examinations previously as, '...not good enough'. In 2017, the progress that pupils made did not meet the government's current floor standards. Senior leaders' have already demonstrated their capacity to make the improvements that the school needs. For example, their work to improve teaching and pupils' progress has secured improvement recently. However, as leaders accurately recognise, variability remains.
- Leaders' earlier actions to ensure pupils experience a good-quality education have not been consistently effective. Leaders are accurate in identifying the priorities for improvement, but their plans have not been monitored, evaluated and refined regularly or precisely enough. As a result, improvement has been insecure and inconsistent. Some more recent plans, especially those led by the new principal and chief executive officer, are more robust, but the effectiveness of leaders' actions remains variable overall.
- Subject leadership varies in its effectiveness. At its best, such as in modern foreign languages, pupils are taught well, enjoy learning and make strong progress. In these areas, teachers routinely uphold the high expectations set by senior leaders. Subject leadership in other areas, including in English, mathematics and science, requires improvement because these strengths are not as much in evidence in those areas.
- Senior leaders are more outward-looking in their plans to improve the quality of education than was the case previously. Teachers, including those who are newly or recently qualified, say senior leaders have established a culture of professional development and this leads to improvements in their teaching. However, school leaders say further steps are required. Consequently, trust leaders, including the trust's school improvement partner, have plans in place to strengthen the links between the schools in the organisation. As a result, staff will be more regularly exposed to strong practice and experience from elsewhere.
- When meeting with inspectors, school leaders demonstrated a secure understanding of the characteristics of effective teaching. Leaders' recognise aspects that need to improve, especially the level of challenge regularly provided by the work that teachers set for the most able pupils.
- The school has a larger-than-average proportion of disadvantaged pupils. In 2016 and 2017, these pupils made significantly less progress than others nationally. As a result, senior leaders have recently taken steps to re-evaluate the leadership of this aspect of the school's effectiveness. Consequently, the school's use of the additional funding for current disadvantaged pupils is more effective than it was. However, despite

improvements, disadvantaged pupils' attendance is lower and their progress slower than that of other pupils nationally.

- School leaders manage and use the funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities effectively. In most cases, the support these pupils currently receive is well matched to their specific requirements. They follow a broad and balanced curriculum and make good progress overall.
- Leaders use the Year 7 catch-up funding effectively. Pupils receive a range of support which matches their literacy and/or numeracy requirements. Consequently, most of these pupils make good progress and catch up with their peers. Inspectors listened to the reading of a group of Year 7 pupils who joined the school with lower-than-average levels of reading. These pupils read confidently and said they enjoy reading.
- Senior leaders ensure that pupils have access to an aspirational, broad and balanced curriculum which matches their needs. Pupils follow a range of academic, arts, technical and sporting subjects at key stage 3. The choice available to pupils at key stage 4 is designed to prepare them well for the next stage of their education. Options include biology, chemistry, physics, Chinese, Spanish, drama and music. A broad and rich range of cultural, creative and sporting activities takes place outside lessons. Pupils say they enjoy these and attend regularly.
- Leadership of careers education is effective. The impartial advice provided means that, despite many pupils attaining lower examination outcomes than they should, pupils value education and almost all of them move on to post-16 education, training or employment.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Leaders ensure that pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain and develop a strong sense of community. Pupils have a clear understanding and knowledge of fundamental British values, including their and others' rights and responsibilities.

Governance of the school

- Governance has been strengthened by recent appointments. A new chief executive officer was appointed to the Heath Family (North West) Multi-Academy Trust in September 2017. As a result, governors have an accurate view of educational standards in the school. Governors describe pupils' examination outcomes in 2017 as, 'not good enough'. Governors say the positive steps made recently to improve educational standards at the school need to be sustained and widened, to ensure consistently strong practice.
- Those responsible for governance have reviewed their vision for the school since September 2017. The vision maintains the previous focus on care for pupils but provides more clarity in the expectation of strong academic progress for them. Governors' share this vision with all involved at the school. It has been a cornerstone of the school's recent improvements.
- Governors have not previously been effective in ensuring that school leaders use the additional funding provided to support disadvantaged pupils effectively.

- Those responsible for governance have specialist knowledge of financial management, school administration and safeguarding. Governors manage the school's financial affairs effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders maintain good-quality safeguarding records. There are systematic procedures for checking the backgrounds of staff when they are appointed.
- Staff, including non-teaching staff, are vigilant in identifying potential risks to pupils such as gang- or drug-related dangers, radicalisation, bullying and pupils' mental well-being. Staff members' and pupils' awareness of potential risks is regularly maintained and kept up to date. There is an effective culture of safeguarding at the school.
- School leaders work effectively with parents and carers and external agencies, and act swiftly when required. Checks made by inspectors demonstrated that referrals are followed up in a robust manner and that record-keeping is effective.
- Most pupils, parents and staff say that pupils are safe and looked after well. Leaders ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of the risks which might affect them and how to keep safe, including online. Pupils know to whom they should report concerns and how to do this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders, school improvement partners and the chief executive officer of the trust have an accurate view of the recent and current quality of teaching. Their work to eradicate inconsistencies in the quality of teaching is having a positive impact. However, they readily accept that their work to eradicate weaker teaching is not yet complete and that teaching requires improvement.
- The quality of teaching is variable across and within subjects, and across year groups. For example, teaching is generally strong in history, Chinese and Spanish, but requires further improvement across other subjects, including in mathematics and science. Despite effective support from the school improvement partner to improve the quality of teaching in English, its quality still varies. Pupils in Year 7 do not consistently attain the standards they should. This is because teachers do not routinely use the information provided from Year 6 test results to set work to match pupils' ability, especially in English and mathematics.
- Teachers do not routinely use the assessment information they have about pupils' performance, especially that of the most able pupils, to set work that ensures pupils' good progress. As a result, these pupils are often set the same work as their peers, which does not challenge them sufficiently. Consequently, these pupils do not reach the high standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers regularly use questioning to assess and secure pupils' knowledge and understanding. In some subjects, including Chinese and Spanish, teachers' questioning is especially effective. They use their strong subject knowledge to encourage pupils to

think and reason deeply. Consequently pupils, including the most able, make strong progress.

- Teachers use different techniques to inform pupils about how to improve their work across a range of subjects, in line with the school's assessment policy. In the most effective teaching, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to make it clear to pupils what they need to do to improve. Pupils make alterations and clarify their misunderstandings, for example when writing or speaking.
- School leaders' assessment systems help them monitor and evaluate pupils' progress effectively. Leaders identify and support those pupils who are falling behind. The actions leaders have put into place to support pupils who have fallen behind, including those in key stage 4, are helping these pupils to catch up with their peers.
- Year 7 pupils routinely read at a standard in line with others of their age nationally. They understand texts suitable for their age and are able to interpret these confidently and accurately. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are strong. Inspectors saw effective examples of teachers regularly tackling pupils' misconceptions in spelling, punctuation and grammar. This matched leaders' views about this aspect of teaching. Pupils write at length across a range of subjects, which accounts for strengths in this aspect. However, the most able pupils are not regularly required to write at the highest level.
- Most teachers manage pupils' behaviour successfully. However, pupils do not engage as well as possible in their learning when they are not set work that challenges or interests them.
- School leaders have recently introduced systems to monitor the homework teachers set. This has been effective. Most pupils and parents say that homework is set regularly and the work is of an appropriate standard.
- School leaders provided inspectors with examples of the reports they send home to parents in key stage 3 and key stage 4. These documents contain information about pupils' recent outcomes. Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey Parent View said that they receive valuable information from the school about their child's progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The school has a strong tradition of placing great value on pupils' personal development, safety and welfare. The pupils whom inspectors met during the inspection spoke positively about their school. They say that they are known and valued as individuals. Pupils say they are well supported by staff and would recommend the school to others.
- There is low-level disruption in lessons when the work pupils are set does not match their needs or when the teachers' expectations of their behaviour are not high enough. In these cases, pupils do not routinely demonstrate strong resilience, and aspects of their personal development require improvement.

- Pupils regularly learn about fundamental British values and other faiths and cultures. They provided effective examples to demonstrate how they respect and value differences and tolerate views different from their own. Pupils are adamant that racism and homophobia have no place at the school.
- Most pupils and parents say bullying is rare at the school. When bullying does take place, pupils say they know how to report it and are confident it is dealt with effectively by school staff.
- Pupils are taught and reminded how to identify dangers and remain safe online. Their online safety is further supported by safety checks, including filtering systems across the school's computer network.
- Leaders' plans to support the transition of pupils from primary school have been strengthened recently. Staff visit primary schools to meet pupils and gather information that will support their transition to secondary school. They share pastoral information effectively, so that staff are aware of pupils' requirements before they join the school. This includes pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The Year 7 pupils with whom inspectors spoke were positive about the school. They said that they settled quickly, felt safe and are happy at the school.
- School leaders take seriously their responsibility for pupils' mental and physical health. For example, the healthy choices that are available in the school canteen are varied and cater for a range of dietary requirements. As a result, these meals are popular with pupils. Pupils' emotional well-being is kept in sharp focus. Leaders ensure that staff are vigilant in identifying signs that a pupil's emotional well-being may be at risk. Leaders provide or direct these pupils to a range of services to support and meet their needs.
- The school provides effectively for the personal development and welfare of the very small number of pupils who attend alternative provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- School leaders have recently strengthened the management of their actions to improve pupils' attendance, which had previously been stubbornly low. As a result, pupils' attendance is starting to improve, including that of disadvantaged pupils. However, it remains below the national average. School leaders provided inspectors with examples of the improved attendance of a group of pupils who had previously had poor attendance. Despite these positive signs, leaders recognise that pupils' above-average persistent absence requires further reduction.
- Inspectors found pupils to be confident and courteous. Pupils' relationships with peers and staff are generally positive. Pupils treat the school environment with respect. At break, lunchtime and change of lessons, they generally move around the school in an orderly manner. In a minority of cases where pupils' conduct becomes over-exuberant, staff are effective in supporting good order.
- School leaders manage effectively the attendance, behaviour and safeguarding of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes in 2017 were below the government's current minimum floor standards.
- Inspectors' analysis of pupils' current work and leaders' information about their attainment and progress showed pupils' progress is better than was the case previously. Pupils' progress requires improvement because despite recent improvements it is variable, including in English, mathematics and science.
- In 2017, the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils were significantly lower than those of other pupils nationally across a broad range of subjects. Work seen by inspectors shows that the differences in attainment between current disadvantaged pupils and others are diminishing. The progress disadvantaged pupils make shows improvement in some but not in all subjects.
- The progress the most able pupils make is not as fast as possible. In 2017, their attainment across a range of subjects was often weaker than those of others of similar ability. The work seen by inspectors shows that the most able pupils currently demonstrate stronger progress in more areas than was the case previously, including in Chinese and Spanish. Despite this, too much variation remains, and these pupils do not routinely make good progress.
- The progress Year 7 pupils make requires improvement. Teachers do not consistently and effectively use information from primary schools and from the Year 6 test results to enable pupils to make fast enough progress, including in English and mathematics.
- The progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is usually strong. Staff know these pupils well. Consequently, the support and tasks they provide are well matched to the pupils' needs.
- Leaders monitor robustly the progress of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision to ensure that such pupils are learning well. Accordingly, these pupils generally make good progress and move on successfully to their next steps in further education, employment or training.
- The proportion of pupils who progress to further education, employment or training is in line with the national average. Pupils benefit from the broad and balanced curriculum and strong careers guidance provided by the school. As a result, despite pupils not regularly making good progress in the past, most of them value further study and have attained the threshold qualification requirements to follow the post-16 courses of their choice.

School details

Unique reference number	141694
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10042423

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

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	688
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Dr Peter Cook
Principal	Robert Rogers
Telephone number	01512143434
Website	www.litherlandhigh.com
Email address	admin.litherlandhigh@schools.sefton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well below the national average.
- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils at Impact Sefton Secondary Pupil Referral Unit, Oakfield Pupil Referral Unit and The Pinefield Centre.
- The school is part of the Heath Family (North West) Multi-Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings took place with school leaders, teachers, the chief executive officer and the school improvement partner of the Heath Family (North West) Multi-Academy Trust, members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority.
- Discussions were held with pupils to gather their views on various issues, including safeguarding, bullying, behaviour, teaching, careers guidance and the curriculum.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation such as the school’s self-evaluation, the school’s improvement plan, the school’s assessment information, the school’s pupil premium plan, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance and behaviour records and safeguarding documentation.
- Inspectors considered 23 responses to the Ofsted online parent questionnaire Parent View, 51 responses to the Ofsted online pupil questionnaire and 32 responses to the Ofsted online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors conducted learning walks and lesson observations across a range of subjects and year groups. They were accompanied by school leaders on some of these observations of teaching and learning.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work in pupils’ books by undertaking a work analysis with school leaders.

Inspection team

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Jane Eccleston	Ofsted Inspector
Shane Ierston	Ofsted Inspector
Rochelle Conefrey	Ofsted Inspector

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