

Inspection of Lowton Church of England High School

Newton Road, Lowton, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 1DU

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Lowton High School are happy and keen to learn. They achieve well and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Staff have positive relationships with pupils. Pupils trust adults to listen to any worries that they may have. Leaders deal effectively with any incidents of bullying. This helps pupils to feel safe. Pupils are proud of their achievements and regularly celebrate receiving praise points and awards.

Pupils respond well to leaders' high expectations for their conduct. They behave well in lessons and around school. Pupils and staff have noticed the considerable improvement in behaviour that means they can typically learn without interruption.

Pupils are proud to take on leadership roles, such as being student ambassadors. They enjoy trips and visits which enhance their learning. For example, as part of their art and design curriculum, pupils visited a theatre to learn about set design. Pupils also take part in extra-curricular sports clubs.

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

Leaders and governors have brought about transformative improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils now enjoy a good quality of education. This is because leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum, from Year 7 to Year 11, that ensures pupils can and do achieve well.

In most subjects, leaders have thought carefully about the important knowledge that pupils need to learn and the order in which this should be taught. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and present information clearly. In these subjects, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), know and remember more. However, in a small number of subjects, leaders' curriculum thinking is not as well developed. This hinders how well some pupils learn.

Teachers typically carry out useful checks on pupils' learning. They use this information well to identify and address any gaps in pupils' knowledge. In subjects that are less developed, teachers are not as clear about what they should check to make sure that pupils have learned all that they should. At times, this leads to misconceptions and gaps in pupils' learning.

Leaders have effective systems in place to identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers are well trained to meet the needs of these pupils. They adapt their delivery of the curriculum so that pupils with SEND enjoy success and achieve well. Leaders work productively with external partners to secure the specialist support that some pupils with SEND require.

Leaders have ensured that there is a clear programme in place to help pupils who are still at the early stages of learning to read. This is helping these pupils to catch up and access the curriculum more readily than they did in the past. Reading for pleasure is encouraged throughout the school.

Pupils typically behave well in lessons and across the school. They understand the rewards and sanctions that are in place to support good behaviour. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. This means that classrooms are calm and purposeful.

Leaders have carefully designed a curriculum that enhances pupils' personal development. Most pupils talked knowledgeably about many topics, including healthy relationships, equality and how to stay safe. Pupils celebrate diversity. They feel comfortable to be themselves. They respect differences between people. However, they are less able to develop their interests and talents fully. This is because the number and range of extra-curricular clubs and activities on offer are limited.

Pupils value the careers advice and guidance that they receive. They appreciate the opportunities to hear about different career pathways, including apprenticeships. They feel well supported to make decisions about their next steps.

Governors are committed to the ongoing development of the school. They are knowledgeable about the education that is provided. They use this insight effectively to provide challenge and support for leaders.

Staff value the training and support that leaders provide. They know that they will be listened to if they raise any concerns about workload. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture across the school. Leaders have a clear understanding of current and local risks for pupils. They use this knowledge to ensure staff receive regular training. Staff at all levels know how to identify and report concerns. Leaders are quick to ensure that pupils receive the help that they need, including from external agencies. The school has built effective relationships with a number of local agencies to ensure a collaborative approach to safeguarding.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in the local community and when working online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders are still in the process of refining what pupils will learn and when. This hinders teachers from checking that pupils have learned what they should. Consequently, some pupils do not build on their prior learning as well as they could. Leaders should finalise their curriculum thinking so that all teachers know exactly what pupils must learn and in what order.
- Some pupils do not have the chance to develop their interests and talents. This is because there are a limited range of extra-curricular opportunities available. Leaders should consider the wider opportunities that they provide so that pupils can nurture their interests and talents fully.

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	137783
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10268240
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	785
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rosemary Johnston
Headteacher	Kieran Larkin
Website	www.lowtonhs.wigan.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 July 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders use three registered alternative providers and one unregistered alternative provider for a small number of pupils.
- This is a Church of England school in of the Diocese of Liverpool. The last section 48 inspection took place in February 2020.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 11 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued 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, subject leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector met with two representatives of the local authority. The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the Diocese of Liverpool and a representative from the Diocese of Manchester.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, English, history, physical education and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils from Years 7 to 11 about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation document, leaders' improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders of the alternative provision that is used by the school.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and scrutinised the single central record. Inspectors considered leaders' safeguarding processes and procedures. Inspectors discussed matters relating to safeguarding with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Eleanor Overland, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Rebecca Sharples	His Majesty's Inspector
Claire Hollister	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
Scott Maclean	Ofsted Inspector

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