

South Wirral High School

Plymyard Avenue, Eastham, Wirral, Merseyside CH62 8EH

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2019

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
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leadership is not fully effective. Some leaders have an overgenerous view of the impact of their actions.
- Governors do not bring enough support or challenge to the work of the school's leaders.
- There are weaknesses in the school's curriculum. Pupils are not consistently provided with opportunities to learn at greater depth.
- Until recently, leaders' use of the funding provided for disadvantaged pupils had not improved their progress.
- Leaders do not fully ensure that pupils develop their literacy skills across the curriculum. This limits pupils' progress in some subjects.
- The leadership of teaching has not had sufficient impact on its quality.
- The quality of teaching across departments varies. Despite recent improvements, it is most mixed in mathematics and science. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress in these subjects.
- Some pupils behave poorly around the school and in mathematics and science lessons.
- Pupils' attendance overall is average but disadvantaged pupils do not attend school as frequently as their peers.
- Sixth-form leaders have not been fully effective in embedding good teaching of academic courses. As a result, students, especially the most able, do not make good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Despite budgetary and staffing difficulties, which are now being addressed effectively, the headteacher has raised the expectations of staff and pupils. He has made improvements to the quality of education in the school since he took up post.
- Pupils learn well and make good progress across a range of subjects, including English. Teaching in mathematics and science is improving.
- Students in the sixth form make consistently strong progress in vocational subjects.
- Staff take the time to know and care for pupils well. Pupils are taught to respect themselves and others.
- Leaders have taken effective action to provide good careers information, education, advice and guidance (CIEAG) for pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - strengthening the curriculum so that pupils are consistently provided with opportunities to learn with sufficient depth
 - taking effective action to develop strategies by which all subjects contribute to the development of pupils' literacy skills
 - making more effective use of the extra funding provided for disadvantaged pupils so that they make good progress
 - accurately evaluating the impact of actions to improve the quality of teaching
 - ensuring that governors challenge school leaders to make the improvements required to provide pupils with a good quality of education.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, especially in mathematics and science, by ensuring that teachers consistently set work which stretches pupils' thinking, knowledge and skills.
- Improve progress by ensuring that pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, consistently receive the support and challenge needed.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - increasing the attendance of disadvantaged pupils
 - more effectively improving attitudes to learning and conduct around the school of the minority of pupils who misbehave.
- Ensure that teaching on A-level courses is consistently effective so that students, especially the most able, make good progress.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not been fully effective in overcoming the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. The headteacher was appointed just before that time. His efforts to improve the school's weaker aspects and secure a good standard of education have been hampered by a legacy of budget deficit, turbulence in staffing and difficulties in recruiting enough teachers and leaders of a high enough quality. This has especially been the case in mathematics and science where, until signs of improvement recently, pupils' progress has been below average for too long.
- Despite these difficulties, the headteacher and other leaders have successfully raised expectations and brought about some momentum of improvement at the school. Although improvement has been uneven, the improvements made have been achieved in spite of the challenging circumstances which the school has faced. These leaders demonstrate the capacity to improve the standard of education at the school further. They do all they can to get to know pupils well in order to enthuse them about their education. Good teaching is commonplace in English, the visual and performing arts and technical subjects. The mathematics and science departments are fully staffed with subject specialists and there have been recent improvements in teaching. Recently appointed faculty leaders are tackling pupils' weaker progress in the subjects which they are responsible for with some, but mixed, success.
- The headteacher and some other leaders have a clear understanding of the challenges which the school faces in order to further improve the standard of education which it provides. However, some other leaders, including some senior leaders, have an overgenerous view of the positive impact of the actions which they have put into place to overcome the challenges which the school faces. As a result, in these cases, improvement plans are sometimes not fully effective.
- The staff training and support programme which leaders have put into place to secure consistently good teaching across the range of subjects has had mixed success. The quality of teaching remains variable across subjects and, in some areas, is not as strong as some leaders believe. As a result, these leaders do not have a fully accurate picture of the quality of teaching with which to plan next steps effectively.
- Leaders, including the recently appointed faculty leaders, have acted with varying degrees of success to strengthen the curriculum. Although this has led to improvement overall, the impact of change varies across subjects. In both key stages 3 and 4, pupils study a range of subjects, including visual and performing arts, technology and academic subjects. They learn well in those areas where the curriculum provides new, challenging and exciting opportunities, such as art, drama and English. At other times, for example in mathematics and science, the curriculum does not provide these opportunities often enough. Notably, it does not include enough detail and opportunity for pupils to learn with fluency and with sufficient depth. As a result, pupils of all abilities do not learn so effectively and eagerly and so do not make good progress.
- The focus of leaders on improving pupils' literacy across the curriculum since the last inspection has not been fully effective. Some senior leaders do not have a clear enough grasp of the uneven picture of pupils' standards of literacy across subjects. As a result,

the strong levels of literacy in some subjects are not replicated elsewhere. Some subjects, notably English, art and drama, consistently give attention to pupils' literacy skills. As a result, pupils of all abilities speak, read and write with growing accuracy and fluency in these subjects. This underpins pupils' strong progress in these areas. They are confident in grappling with challenging texts and express their views and learning to a high standard in their speaking and writing. However, in other subjects, pupils have a more mixed experience. They do not consistently receive the opportunities to practise and enhance their literacy at a high enough level, so they do not make the good progress seen elsewhere. In addition, the actions taken to support those with lower-than-average levels of literacy and numeracy to catch up by the end of Year 7 are not fully effective.

- Leaders take the time to plan a wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. They ensure equal opportunity for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, these pupils participate fully in, and benefit from, these activities. The programme of activities broadens pupils' experience and expertise through their involvement in wider academic, cultural, artistic and sporting interests. Pupils respond effectively to opportunities provided to support charities and recognise their role in helping others.
- The CIEAG programme is fully effective. Leaders' plans ensure that, throughout key stages 3 and 4, pupils receive good-quality information and independent advice which meet their requirements. As a result, almost all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, move on to appropriate next steps in education or employment.
- Leadership of the funding for disadvantaged pupils has recently been reviewed. Although the use of funding is currently not fully effective, there has recently been some success in aspects where there had been little significant improvement since the last inspection. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance was poor at this time, which leaders believe was a key barrier to their good progress. Leaders have introduced effective systems to monitor and support pupils' good attendance and other aspects of their education. More disadvantaged pupils now attend school regularly than previously, although still not as regularly as their peers. As a result, although disadvantaged pupils make better progress overall than previously, it is not consistently strong.
- Leadership for pupils with SEND has been reviewed since the last inspection and is good. These pupils' pastoral needs, including those with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, are met effectively. The regular attendance of pupils with SEND, which was a weakness previously, has been positively transformed. Staff work closely with the pupils' primary schools to ensure that their pastoral, care and academic requirements are known and acted upon by staff when they enter Year 7. This information and the relevant training are regularly and effectively updated by SEND leaders. As a result, pupils with SEND are supported well at the school.

Governance of the school

- Governance is not fully effective. Governors' efforts to strengthen their capacity to bring about improvements at the school since the last inspection have had limited impact to date. Governors' work to support and challenge senior leaders in order to secure consistently good teaching and outcomes has had mixed success.

- However, in the last 18 months, the appointment of new governors has added educational experience to the governing body. This has resulted in an improved picture in this area overall. More governors have a sharper understanding of the priorities for improvement and their responsibilities to help achieve these.
- Governors' financial management has not been fully effective. However, it has strengthened recently. Appointments of governors have been made which add experience in this area. The local authority also provides additional support. However, despite a more stable picture now, the school's financial deficit over time has hampered the headteacher's efforts to achieve a good standard of education since the last inspection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders maintain effective, good-quality safeguarding records. They have systematic procedures for checking the backgrounds of staff when they are appointed.
- Leaders are aware of the risks which pupils face, including outside school. Staff take the time to know pupils well, and to provide for their safety and well-being effectively. All staff are trained in identifying potential risks to pupils. This includes risks of drug- and gang-related crime and radicalisation.
- School leaders' work with external agencies and parents and carers is effective. Leaders have gone to some lengths to establish relationships with a range of agencies in order to meet the requirements of pupils. They act swiftly, when required, to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Referrals are made to, and followed up with, external agencies as appropriate.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the risks which might affect them and how to keep safe, including when online and using mobile devices. They know to whom they should report concerns and how to do this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies across subjects. Pupils are consistently taught well and learn effectively in English, performing arts and technical subjects. In these subjects, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress continue to improve because subject leaders and teachers have high expectations and are mindful of pupils' academic needs and interests. In these subjects, leaders and teachers have refined the curriculum so that it engages pupils of all abilities through regular opportunities to think deeply and express their learning and views in a sophisticated way.
- Overall, the quality of teaching has improved this year in modern foreign languages. The most effective teaching regularly provides pupils of all abilities with opportunities to review and acquire new vocabulary and skills. They apply and embed their learning in varied and complex activities, which interest and engage them. As a result, they make strong progress. However, these strengths are less evident at other times. In geography, history and religious studies, teaching is effective overall. Pupils successfully develop their knowledge and skills over time.

- In mathematics and science, despite some clear signs of recent improvement, the quality of teaching is variable. Teaching in these subjects does not meet the higher standards seen elsewhere, especially in English, art and drama. However, teachers benefit from the systems and support provided by the recently appointed faculty leaders and the strengths which exist in some areas of the departments. As a result, although the quality of teaching is not consistently good, there is a momentum of improvement.
- In the weaker subjects, teachers set tasks which do not challenge pupils of all abilities sufficiently. In these cases, they do not use the assessment and other information available about pupils' learning to set work which matches their interests and needs. Pupils are not provided with opportunities to think deeply enough and respond with detail, fluency or creativity. However, in other subjects, such as art and drama, pupils make good progress. They welcome and benefit from the opportunities which they are provided with to grapple with complex ideas and activities.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge. When they use this to engage pupils in challenging and interesting activities, for example in English and art, pupils learn well. In these cases, teachers ask pupils questions which provide them with opportunities to reflect upon their learning and respond with accuracy and detail. These teachers also encourage pupils to ask questions and explore new ideas. The positive attitudes to learning of these pupils extend their progress because they are confident enough to experiment with new ways of doing things, even if their initial attempts do not go to plan. However, these strengths are less evident where teaching is weaker. In mathematics and science, where the quality of teaching is variable, teachers do not consistently use their subject expertise to enthuse pupils or encourage them to apply their learning creatively. This restricts pupils' learning.
- Additional training and a sharpened focus insisted upon by the headteacher and other leaders on improving the academic progress of pupils with SEND have improved teachers' skills in supporting and challenging these pupils. This is especially the case in those subjects where teaching is consistently strong, such as art. In these areas, the interests and needs of pupils with SEND are fully addressed. As a result, they learn well and make strong progress.
- Most pupils and parents say that they are satisfied with the homework that pupils are set. They say that it is set regularly and at the correct level.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The work of leaders, including the headteacher, to provide a tolerant and nurturing community is a strong feature of the school. The headteacher has introduced clear standards regarding bullying, especially prejudicial bullying, including any which is homophobic or racist. As a result, pupils who spoke to inspectors say that bullying is rare, and that staff deal with it effectively. Inspectors checked bullying records, which show that incidents of bullying are followed up and resolved effectively. Pupils are

supported effectively in school to keep themselves safe from the risks of bullying and exploitation when using social media.

- Senior leaders and others take the time to encourage pupils' positive interactions with one another and adults. As a result, pupils say that they are happy at school. They mix, play and pursue their own interests at break and lunchtime, including in activities which are organised by leaders. In lessons, they are confident in asking questions and expressing their views. They listen to others politely. Only on rare occasions is this not the case. However, the effective relationships between staff and pupils quickly restore pupils' positive habits.
- Most pupils are polite and wear their uniform with pride. They demonstrate positive and aspirational attitudes and have high expectations for their futures.
- Pupils say that staff are approachable and considerate of their emotional and physical well-being. The support services provided by leaders are wide-ranging and meet pupils' requirements.
- The work which leaders have introduced to support pupils in valuing people's differences and other faiths and cultures is effective. Pupils understand the rights of all. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a positive feature of the school's curriculum. Their learning, including in assembly time, tackles and explores a range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects and helps develop their approach to relationships and to understand their responsibilities and role in modern Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons and respect their teachers and one another. These pupils take pride in their work and are keen to learn well. However, there are other occasions, especially in mathematics and science lessons, when some pupils lose concentration or produce work which does not meet the good standard seen elsewhere.
- Although the conduct of many pupils around the school is positive, the conduct of some does not match the higher standard set by others. Many pupils move around the school in an orderly manner at breaktime, lunchtime and at the change of lessons. These pupils arrive punctually at lessons. They value the efforts of leaders to treat the school environment with respect and do not leave litter lying around. However, a smaller number of pupils are less orderly. They are slow to move to lessons and leave litter around the school.
- Most pupils say that they enjoy being at the school and they would recommend it to others. As a result, they attend regularly. The sharpened focus of leaders on improving the attendance of pupils with SEND since the last inspection has been effective. However, despite a recent upward trend, the attendance rate of disadvantaged pupils is below that of their peers.
- Leaders manage effectively the attendance, behaviour and safeguarding of pupils who attend alternative provision.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Overall, recent examination results for pupils leaving the school have been broadly in line with national averages. However, there has been too mixed a picture across subjects and for groups of pupils. Pupils' results have been in line with those of others nationally in English, art, drama and technical subjects. However, they have been weaker in modern foreign languages, mathematics and science. Over time, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND have made weaker progress than others.
- Evidence in pupils' books shows that areas where outcomes were previously strong are now even better. Pupils make good progress in English, art and drama. Some aspects which have been weaker previously, such as the progress of pupils in modern foreign languages, are improving because of more effective teaching. However, despite these strengths, progress in other subjects is not consistently good. The weaknesses are especially apparent in mathematics and science.
- Despite the headteacher's sustained efforts to provide an effective learning experience for pupils in mathematics and science, these have had limited success. This is due, in part, to the difficulties in appointing and retaining effective teachers over time. However, there is an improving picture in this aspect, with both subjects now fully staffed with subject specialists. Despite this, the quality of teaching in mathematics and science varies currently and too many pupils lack sufficient depth of knowledge and fluency in their learning to attain the standard of which they are capable.
- The progress of pupils of all abilities varies. In those areas where the curriculum matches the interests and needs of pupils, such as in English, art and drama, they are provided with opportunities to think deeply and learn well. However, where these strengths are not consistently seen, such as in mathematics and science, the progress of pupils, including the most able, suffers.
- The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator takes effective action to support the learning of pupils with SEND. The information provided for teachers about these pupils is detailed. It is updated and supported by staff training. As a result, teachers know these pupils well. They are clear about their responsibility to meet pupils' emotional, physical and academic needs in equal measure. This has had a positive impact on the progress of pupils with SEND and they now regularly make strong progress, especially in English and the visual and performing arts.
- Evidence from pupils' work shows that, despite an upward trend overall, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is too mixed. Where teaching is routinely good, such as in English, many disadvantaged pupils make strong progress. In mathematics, disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than previously. This is especially the case for those disadvantaged pupils who attend school regularly. However, despite these recent improvements, disadvantaged pupils do not make good progress overall.
- Leaders monitor effectively the quality of education for pupils who attend alternative provision. They ensure that these pupils benefit from an appropriate curriculum that prepares them effectively for the next stage in their education.
- A high proportion of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or with SEND, move on to the courses of their choice, which provide appropriate next steps in education or training after they leave the school.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- In the 16 to 19 study programmes, there is a disparity in students' progress across the courses which they follow. Students' progress varies markedly between the academic and vocational courses which are offered. Students, including the most able students, do not make consistently good progress on academic courses. However, on vocational courses, students make the progress of which they are capable, including those who are disadvantaged and the most able.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement on some of the academic courses which students follow, especially for the most able students. In these cases, teachers do not consistently set work that challenges students to think deeply enough. Therefore, they struggle to attain the highest standard. However, teaching is effective on vocational courses, so students learn well.
- Leaders have not been fully effective in overcoming the weaknesses noted at the last inspection. However, despite current weaknesses in teaching and the progress of some students on academic courses, there is an improving picture overall. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the current quality of provision and their actions are having an impact on improving teaching and progress, for example in geography. Leaders have been effective in securing better guidance for students who plan to join the sixth form so, overall, fewer leave part way through their courses than was the case previously. Leaders have further developed and sustained an effective vocational curriculum, from which students benefit. They routinely complete these courses and move on to aspirational next steps in education and employment.
- Most students who resit GCSE English and/or mathematics make good progress. Many are successful in improving their grades, especially in English.
- Checks made by inspectors found that safeguarding is effective in the sixth form. Students are well prepared for adulthood. They are supported well in managing risk and looking after their own welfare.
- Leaders have put effective systems and support in place, which secure students' good attendance and behaviour.
- Students benefit from the activities which leaders provide to broaden their study programmes. Leaders ensure that opportunities for students' personal development and work-related learning form an integral part of their curriculum experience. These aspects of the curriculum meet the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes and make a strong contribution to their wider development.
- Sixth-form leaders are effective in providing CIEAG to support students' next steps in education and employment. The links with local universities are a positive example of students being encouraged to move on to aspirational destinations. As a result, they move on to relevant courses or employment. This includes higher education and, in those cases where the most able students attain the strong grades of which they are capable, a growing proportion attend Russell Group universities.

School details

Unique reference number	105107
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10087812

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

Type of school	Secondary modern (non-selective)
School category	Foundation
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	880
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Barker
Headteacher	Simon Goodwin
Telephone number	0151 327 3213
Website	www.southwirral.wirral.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@southwirral.wirral.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 February 2017

Information about this school

- The school is a non-selective school within a selective local authority.
- The school is an average-sized secondary school and has more boys than girls.
- Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their home language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average but the proportion of pupils who have an EHC plan is below average.

- A small number of pupils are educated through off-site provision at Cornerstones, LivAva Training Academy, Maritime Engineering College, WRAP and Utopia Project.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings and telephone conversations took place with school leaders, teachers, governors, the school improvement partner and a representative of the local authority.
- Discussions were held with pupils from all year groups to gather their views on a variety of issues, including safeguarding, bullying, behaviour, teaching and the curriculum.
- Inspectors examined a range of the school's documentation, such as the self-evaluation and improvement plan, assessment information, the pupil premium plan, attendance, bullying and behaviour records and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of 56 staff survey responses, 42 responses to the pupils' survey, 81 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and 48 written responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school and scrutinised pupils' work in a range of subjects and year groups. They were accompanied by school leaders on some of these observations.

Inspection team

Stephen Ruddy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Nell Banfield	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Wood	Ofsted Inspector

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