

Inspection of Litherland High School

Sterrix Lane, Litherland, Liverpool, Merseyside L21 0DB

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 January 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel happy, safe and valued at Litherland High School. They said that staff know them well. Staff take time to find out what pupils are interested in and what matters to them. For example, staff involve pupils in key decisions about the running of the school. Pupils are confident that their thoughts and ideas will be listened to and acted upon. They are proud to attend this school.

Around the school, pupils behave calmly and sensibly. They are respectful to staff and visitors. In lessons, most pupils behave well. Pupils appreciate the systems in place such as 'Livo Listens' to report any concerns or worries that they have. Pupils said that staff deal with incidents of bullying and other unkind behaviours really well.

Pupils benefit from a well-thought-out personal development curriculum. Many pupils enjoy the extra-curricular clubs on offer, such as various sporting activities and the music club. Pupils described the leadership roles available to them which they enjoy carrying out.

During their time in school, pupils do not progress through certain aspects of the curriculum as well as they should. As a result, they do not achieve equally well across subjects. However, leaders' recent improvements to curriculum thinking are enabling pupils to learn more than they did previously. Staff's expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are increasing.

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

Leaders and governors are steadfast in their mission to ensure that Litherland High School is at the heart of the local community. They are steadily building a strong culture of trust and respect among staff, pupils and parents and carers. In response, most pupils strive to behave well, and they make their teachers proud of them. They enjoy school and are motivated to attend.

Senior leaders have designed a curriculum structure that provides pupils of all ages with access to a suitably broad range of subjects. Furthermore, they are in the process of developing subject curriculums that focus on pupils acquiring a rich body of knowledge.

In the main, subject leaders have made sensible decisions about the order in which to teach new topics. Where appropriate, they have taken decisive action to adjust the curriculum to tackle knowledge deficits among pupils caused by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In some subjects, subject leaders have thought through carefully the essential knowledge that they want pupils to learn. They have identified the most successful ways of helping pupils build up this knowledge. As a result, teachers of these subjects present and deliver the curriculum skilfully.

In several other subjects, leaders' curriculum thinking is imprecise. In these subjects, some teachers are unclear about exactly what it is that pupils need to learn within each topic. In addition, the activities teachers choose to deliver the curriculum are not always suitable or delivered in a way that helps pupils to learn effectively. Consequently, across the school, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not achieve equally well in all subjects.

Leaders have put in place a whole-school system so that teachers can assess where pupils are in their learning. Nevertheless, some teachers are not clear about how this system works. They have not had the training that they need. Some teachers are not fully aware of what pupils know and can do. In addition, they do not act swiftly enough to diagnose and address misconceptions in learning. As a result, some pupils continue to make mistakes. They have an insecure grasp of the knowledge they have been taught.

Leaders have introduced various ways to encourage pupils to read for pleasure. In addition, leaders accurately identify those pupils who are behind with their reading. However, leaders do not have a sufficiently coherent strategy to help these pupils catch up as quickly as they should. Some pupils remain unable to read with accuracy and fluency or access aspects of the wider curriculum.

Leaders accurately identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. They share helpful information with teachers. Increasingly, teachers use this information to make successful adaptations to the delivery of the curriculum for pupils with SEND.

Leaders have made pupils' personal development programme a high priority. It is carefully crafted to meet their needs. This programme has made a significant contribution to pupils' understanding of healthy relationships, discrimination and well-being. Pupils spoke highly about the quality of their careers education, information, advice and guidance programme.

Governors and senior leaders have appropriate systems in place to check the quality of education that pupils receive. However, some subject leaders are not using these systems effectively enough. As a result, leaders and governors have an incomplete picture of the quality of the curriculum that pupils receive.

Staff said that leaders operate an 'open door policy'. They are confident that leaders have taken steps to support them with their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide effective training to staff and governors. Staff act swiftly and appropriately when they have any safeguarding concerns.

The safeguarding team is proactive in identifying vulnerable pupils and those pupils who are at risk of harm. They work effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the timely support that they need.

Pupils are confident to talk to staff if they have any safeguarding worries or if they are concerned about a friend. Pupils receive regular guidance and information through assemblies and their personal, social and health education programme in order to learn how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers have not thought carefully enough about the most appropriate activities to deliver the subject content. In addition, leaders have not ensured that some teachers have sufficient expertise to deliver activities well. This means that pupils do not achieve as highly as they should. Leaders must ensure that teachers select the most appropriate activities so that pupils build a rich body of knowledge over time. In addition, teachers should receive further training to build their subject expertise. This is in order to improve how successfully they deliver the curriculum.
- Currently, some teachers do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of leaders' assessment systems. As a result, they are unable to use these assessment systems consistently well to identify the knowledge that pupils have learned or to address misconceptions and/or knowledge deficits. Leaders must ensure that they review their approach to assessment. This is so that teachers can use it effectively to help pupils learn and embed new subject knowledge. Leaders should provide teachers with training and support as necessary.
- Across the school, there are a number of pupils who are behind with their reading. They do not read as accurately, fluently or often as they should. This prevents them from learning and progressing through the curriculum as successfully as they should. Leaders must plan, and put into action, a comprehensive and coherent reading strategy. This is to help pupils to catch up quickly, become avid readers and achieve well across the curriculum.
- Subject leaders are not using senior leaders' systems effectively enough to judge the quality of subject curriculums. As a result, leaders, including governors, do not have a sufficiently accurate understanding of how successfully the curriculum is helping pupils to learn. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders receive suitable training so that they are equipped to check on the quality of the education provided to pupils. Subject leaders must also use the information that they obtain to make any necessary adjustments to the curriculum and its delivery.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	141694
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10211683
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	643
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Stevenson
Principal	David Yates
Website	www.litherlandhigh.com
Date of previous inspection	28 February and 1 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Litherland High School is part of The Heath Family (North West) Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school is smaller than the average-size secondary school.
- Since the previous inspection, a new principal has been appointed.
- The school makes use of a small number of registered alternative providers.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this 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.

- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: art and design, English, history, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, spoke with pupils and teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also reviewed aspects of the curriculum in design and technology, geography and Spanish.
- Inspectors met with the principal, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and teachers. The lead inspector also spoke with the school improvement partner.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of The Heath Family (North West) Multi-Academy Trust. They also met with representatives of the local governing body, including the vice-chair of the local governing body. Inspectors considered the minutes of several local governing body meetings.
- Inspectors checked safeguarding procedures, including the checks made on staff. Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, governors, staff, pupils and parents to discuss wider aspects of safeguarding. They scrutinised a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. They also considered survey responses from staff, parents and carers and pupils around safeguarding. An inspector also checked the arrangements for pupils attending alternative provision.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including that relating to the curriculum, pupil's behaviour, improvement plans and the self-evaluation summary.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their programme of wider personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility. An inspector also met with a small group of parents to discuss aspects of the school's provision.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Alyson Middlemass, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christine Veitch	Ofsted Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Wood	Ofsted Inspector

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