

# The County High School Leftwich

Granville Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 8EZ

**Inspection dates** 8–9 March 2016

**Overall effectiveness** **Outstanding**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- The principal inspires her staff to work tirelessly for the interests of all pupils in their charge. She instils a clear vision to all staff of 'achievement for all'. Pupils' achievement is at the heart of all her actions.
- The close-knit leadership team has nurtured outstanding leadership across the school at all levels. All leaders play a pivotal role in ensuring that pupils achieve to the best of their ability. Leaders are quick to identify any areas of underperformance and deal with these effectively. Cohesive teamworking ensures that 'no pupil is overlooked.'
- Leaders' ambition and drive have been instrumental in the consistent improvement in examination results. Pupils' progress and attainment are outstanding. They thrive and flourish in the school and make excellent progress across a wide range of subjects, whatever their circumstances.
- Middle leaders pursue excellence. They are highly skilled and knowledgeable. They drive high expectations within their subject areas and build an ethos of collective responsibility. All staff feel fully accountable for the progress of all pupils.
- The governing body provides exemplary challenge and support. Governors are highly experienced and dedicated to improving the life chances of all pupils.
- Reading is successfully promoted and embedded across the school to heighten pupils' literacy development.
- Leaders establish outstanding links with local primary schools and ensure that pupils entering the school in Year 7 are highly prepared. The transition is seamless and supports pupils' continued achievement.
- Teachers expertly tailor high-quality lessons that intrigue and interest pupils. Pupils display a thirst for learning and flourish with activities that are well matched to their needs and interests.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well planned and richly embedded across a broad and balanced curriculum. Consequently, pupils feel well prepared for their next steps in education and for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils display first-rate behaviour in classrooms and around the school. They are polite, friendly and courteous to each other. The school is a harmonious place to learn and consequently pupils' attendance is high. However, there is still a need to work with some parents to improve the attendance and achievement of a few pupils.
- Pupils feel very safe and cared for in an exceptionally supportive and well-led environment. Pupils' academic success and personal welfare are equal priorities for all staff. The work that the school does to keep its pupils safe is exemplary.
- Learning support assistants (LSAs) are highly skilled and work in close collaboration with teachers to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils receive first-rate support and achieve well.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Make sure the strategies employed by leaders to engage hard-to-reach parents are followed through and have a positive impact on pupils' attendance and achievement.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The principal is passionate about the pupils in her care and has an unwavering focus on ensuring that all staff work collaboratively to ensure success for them all. She quietly and resolutely drives change across the school using her highly skilled leadership team.
- All leaders have a very accurate view of their own performance. A strong development plan supports leaders' next steps in school improvement. The systems to ensure that there is continued improvement are very strong.
- Leaders foster a family approach across the school, which staff and pupils embrace. This has created an exceptionally positive ethos and strong climate for learning. As a result, pupils' progress and behaviour are outstanding and they show impressive attitudes to their learning.
- All leaders have a very accurate view of the quality of teaching and the performance of pupils. Robust and accurate systems are used to monitor teachers' and pupils' performance. Leaders check on pupils' progress regularly, observe teachers in lessons and take swift action if there are any signs that a pupil is off course to meet their target grades. Pupils identified as needing additional support use an area of the school (the Study Zone) after school hours to ensure that they catch up with learning.
- Leaders ensure that staff pursue excellence in teaching. There is a strong focus on professional development. Staff work together in 'teaching and learning communities' to ensure that strengths are shared across the school. This has allowed teachers to develop strong skills and accelerate learning so that pupils make rapid progress.
- The rigorous monitoring of teachers' performance, including that of the principal, ensures that all staff are held to account for pupils' achievement. High-performing teachers who achieve and exceed their targets are rewarded financially.
- Subject leaders are confident, strong and proactive and they use their strong subject knowledge to plan and prepare for curriculum development and change. They conduct frequent and accurate checks on teachers' assessment of pupils' work to ensure that they have an accurate picture of achievement. They lead their teams, monitor the quality of teaching rigorously and use their expertise to develop the capabilities of teachers in their charge. A comment by a member of staff on the online survey conducted by inspectors typified the views of many: 'I enjoy working at this academy and feel that my department has a strong sense of collaboration and team work.' Leadership of English, mathematics and science is charismatic and particularly strong due to the winning combination of highly driven and passionate leaders, who have strong subject knowledge and a clear understanding of how pupils learn.
- Learning leaders provide outstanding pastoral support to all pupils to ensure that they achieve well. They maintain a keen eye on pupils' academic achievement and work collaboratively with subject learning leaders to ensure that pupils' needs are addressed. Pastoral leaders effectively deploy other key staff across the school to support pupils' development and remove barriers to learning. For example, educational support workers are prudently used to help identified pupils by providing additional emotional and social support through counselling and home visits.
- The special educational needs coordinator ensures that LSAs are highly effective in supporting identified pupils in the classroom. Potentially vulnerable pupils are supported very effectively and achieve well in the school.
- The curriculum offers a rich learning experience for pupils. It is constantly evaluated by leaders to ensure that it reflects pupils' interests and aspirations. The school actively encourages all pupils to try and learn a language. Some pupils receive 'enhanced learning' through additional lessons in curriculum time; these are highly valued because of their positive impact on progress. During these lessons, key aspects of English and mathematics are reinforced alongside other subject learning. A small number of pupils elect to attend Mid Cheshire College to learn on vocational courses, including childcare and construction. The curriculum supports the most-able mathematicians, who sit their GCSE early, to achieve a very high success rate. Early entry mathematicians follow a further mathematics qualification in Year 11. This approach strongly supports their next steps towards mathematics at A Level.
- All pupils follow a citizenship curriculum which fosters a well-rounded understanding of life and incorporates and promotes British values. For example, Year 7 pupils explore the issues of bullying through a unit of work linked to Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and Year 11 pupils explore the issues of Islamophobia and the discrimination surrounding Islam.

- Literacy is expertly embedded across the curriculum, and also threaded into tutor times with regular extended writing opportunities and a clear focus on spelling, punctuation and grammar. For example, during a form time, pupils keenly developed their oracy skills and written responses to their teacher's question, 'Would life be better if television had not been invented?'
- The school's library is highly valued by pupils and is a hive of activity. The forward-thinking librarian is passionate about promoting reading and uses her extensive knowledge to ensure that a good range of books of different genres is available to lure in avid readers. The librarian tracks and monitors pupils' reading habits closely and she responds and celebrates improvements in them. All pupils in Years 7 to 10 follow a well-organised reading programme that entices eager readers and encourages others to read widely and often. Annual author visits and frequent competitions and rewards ignite a thirst for reading. The school provides a free book for all Year 7 pupils to celebrate the importance of reading.
- The school forms strong links with primary schools and establishes particularly positive relationships with pupils in Years 5 and 6. A wide range of rich, well-organised programmes are provided, which ensures that pupils are well informed and have any uncertainties dispelled before their arrival in Year 7. Primary pupils make regular visits to the school to engage in a range of activities led by staff, including dance, physical education, science and technology. Older pupils support new arrivals; they are keen to care and nurture them into the school. For example, current Year 7 pupils created a 'frequently asked questions' video to ease new pupils' transition to high school.
- Leadership of careers is expertly led and delivered through the 'education for life' programme provided in Years 8 to 11. All pupils access personal interviews and are provided with highly detailed action plans to ensure progression pathways are clear and appropriate. In 2015, all pupils leaving the school continued in their education or took up employment or training.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The governing body provides a high level of challenge and support to the principal and senior leaders. Governors recognise the transforming leadership that the principal provides and they too raise the bar in ensuring strength in accountability and challenge.
  - Governors are highly skilled and have immersed themselves in the life of the school. They make frequent visits and are well known by staff and pupils. They recognise that the school and teachers are high performing but continue to provide challenge. In their own words, 'We don't want to leave any child behind.'
  - Governors are very well informed about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching within the school. They have established well-organised committees as appropriate platforms for leaders to provide a great deal of high-quality information. They ask astute questions, and support and challenge leaders well.
  - Governors have a deep and accurate understanding of school life and ensure that they are active participants in continual improvement. They work with leaders towards further improvement and follow their own action plans to develop themselves as leaders. For example, governors are preparing to increase their knowledge of the 'Progress 8 measure', against which secondary school performance will increasingly be evaluated.
  - Governors manage the school's resources very well and have excellent controls and procedures to ensure good financial planning, probity and sustainability.
  - Governors pay close attention to the school's work on safeguarding. They are well informed about the strength of the school's procedures and they ensure that a culture of keeping pupils safe is thoroughly embedded across the school.
  - Governors recognise that staff across the school often 'go the extra mile' to secure pupils' achievements. They value the commitment of the school staff and keenly oversee teachers' performance to ensure that performance awards related to pay are thoroughly checked and reviewed.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The care and protection of pupils is a very high priority in the school. Leaders make sure that all staff are trained in child protection and have also ensured that staff know how to identify and respond to pupils who are at risk of being radicalised. There are strong systems in place to make sure staff and visitors are vetted to be able to work with pupils: procedures are fully in place and leaders and governors fulfil their statutory duties very effectively.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teachers have very high expectations of all pupils and this has manifested a culture geared towards success and excellence in achievement throughout the school. Pupils' books contain effective, well-organised and methodical notes and extended writing. Mathematics teaching encapsulates the frequent and effective approach of learning through problem-solving, and pupils' reasoning skills are regularly developed in lessons. Pupils reported to inspectors that, 'Teachers know their work well and are good at putting this across to us'.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is generally extremely high. Assessments are frequent and used by teachers to make checks on pupils' understanding and progress. Many pupils value their assessment folders and use the precise feedback they contain to make improvements in their understanding and learning. Assessment is particularly strong in English, mathematics and science.
- Strong teaching over time is resulting in high levels of progress in both key stages and all subjects in the school and for all groups of pupils. The school achieves standards at GCSE that are much higher than those found nationally.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They plan expertly and inspire pupils in their care through their lively and interesting teaching. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and they build strong relationships with pupils. Consequently, pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and show pride in their work.
- The best teachers skilfully question pupils, insisting on rigorous and extended responses. This ensures a deep understanding, and makes sure that misconceptions are dispelled.
- Pupils are immersed in their learning when in their lessons. For example, a lesson on a computer programming language allowed pupils to purposely create hidden pitfalls in programming that would need identifying by their peers. This approach resulted in high engagement and interest from pupils, and allowed pupils to apply their understanding and learning.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability, and those who are more vulnerable, are well known by their teachers. The teachers prepare effectively and collaborate with LSAs, who provide additional support and guidance using their own specialist knowledge. This ensures that pupils' needs are met and progress is not halted. For example, LSAs support learning in language lessons by speaking in French and role modelling the importance of building vocabulary and confidence in speech.
- Homework is used to reinforce learning outside the lesson. The school promotes the use of internet sites with pupils to further support their learning. The school uses its own internet learning platform to provide pupils with access to online support materials. It also promotes interactive revision websites that pupils enjoy using.
- Pupils value the use of form time to reinforce literacy and reading, and enjoy their learning when teachers use the internet news online to raise awareness of current affairs. This approach develops high-quality discussions and builds confidence in pupils' oracy in the classroom.
- Teachers provide useful feedback to pupils about their written work, and pupils respond consistently to teachers' marking because they value its importance. Pupils have a strong desire to improve and achieve in nearly all lessons. Strong incisive teacher feedback is of high quality and a major factor in pupils' rapid progress. It informs pupils of how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve and reach the targets set for them.
- The teaching of literacy, numeracy and reading is an important focus across the school. Leaders ensure that numerous opportunities are developed across the curriculum. For example, pupils can access a lunchtime creative writing club, 'creative café', to accelerate and develop their creativity in writing. Many whole-school approaches are highly effective and have an excellent impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- The school provides timely and robust information to all parents regarding pupils' behaviour and progress. Parents are also provided with many opportunities to visit the school and meet teachers. For example, all year groups have an information evening in the autumn term to inform parents about the year ahead for their child.
- Pupils fully embrace and engage in the life of the school and are keen to take part in extra-curricular activities and sporting events. Teachers take every opportunity to encourage pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, social opportunities are well organised and promoted, and pupils proudly represent their school in football, hockey and athletics. The school band is a popular musical activity for over 90 pupils.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils genuinely enjoy their school and have a strong desire to learn. All groups of pupils get on well together and there is no intolerance or discrimination. Pupils show a great respect for each other and their teachers and wish to contribute positively to their learning community. This positive attitude has a strong and powerful influence on their learning.
- Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. For instance, they learn about justice, democracy and respect for others in lessons and assemblies. Teachers ensure that pupils are taught about key moral and social issues through the curriculum. Pupils understand about all forms of bullying, including bullying related to racism, discrimination and homophobia. Pupils typically show a sensitivity towards issues of a spiritual, moral, social or cultural nature. They reflect on their learning and accept and accommodate the rights and values of others.
- Bullying is rare and pupils say that, should it ever occur, they know staff will deal with it swiftly and robustly. Pupils have a thorough understanding of all types of bullying. Logs that record any incidents of bullying show that these are rare and appropriate actions are taken by leaders. Governors also make diligent checks on bullying logs frequently throughout the year.
- The school has an established tradition of frequently supporting charities. For example, pupils are able to demonstrate their social responsibility by raising funds and awareness of causes including Water Aid, Macmillan Cancer Care, Children in Need and a local hospice.
- Leaders within the school judiciously form strong relationships with the local police. These links provide information on current local issues that can be addressed in the school through form tutors.
- Pupils relish opportunities to develop their leadership and take on further responsibilities through the pupil council, sports teams or by taking a leading part in after-school activities.
- Parents, pupils and staff have very positive views about the standard of teaching, leadership and behaviour in the school. Parents value the work of the school: the overwhelming majority of those who completed the Ofsted online survey would recommend the school.
- Pupils who are educated at off-site provision have their attendance and welfare checked on a regular basis and make the progress expected of them.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The calm, safe atmosphere across the school is cultivated by leaders and teachers. Leaders encourage pupils to make the right choices in their behaviour. The vast majority of pupils show exemplary conduct. They open doors for each other and promote positive values of respect and tolerance. Inspectors saw pupils being sensible in social areas, and breaktime and lunchtime were calm and controlled.
- Pupils are highly supportive of each other and display strong learning habits in the classroom. They arrive to lessons on time and are prepared to work hard, rising to the challenges on offer. Disruption in lessons is extremely rare. Pupils say that behaviour in lessons is very good.
- Pupils adhere to the school's rules in an exemplary way: no disruption to learning was witnessed during the inspection. Leaders have clear systems to address the infrequent poor behaviour in lessons. On the rare occasions when pupils are removed from lessons, they are placed in a well-managed, purposeful learning room. Pupils complete reflective and restorative work and re-enter lessons. There are very few repeat offenders.
- Attendance continues to improve and persistent absence is well below average. The school deploys a number of strategies to ensure that attendance is celebrated and poor attendance is tackled swiftly. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs or disability has rapidly improved. However, further strategies to engage hard-to-reach parents are not always followed through.

## Outcomes for pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' attainment in a wide range of subjects is well above national averages. The school achieved exemplary attainment in 2015. This was noted by the government's Minister of State for Schools as being one of the 100 highest in non-selective, state schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils attaining five GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is

consistently exceptionally high. Pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science was significantly above national figures in 2015, replicating a year-on-year trend of outstanding progress.

- In 2015, the proportion of pupils attaining the English Baccalaureate was over double that found nationally.
- In 2015, at the end of key stage 4, the proportions of pupils who made expected and better than expected progress in English and mathematics were well above national figures. Pupils also made significantly better progress than the national average in English literature, mathematics, additional science, art, French, information and communication technology (ICT), music, physics and religious studies. Current school information indicates that this positive trend is set to continue.
- Disadvantaged pupils do well and consistently achieve standards that are equal to or better than those of all pupils nationally. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils are set to make more progress than their non-disadvantaged peers nationally. Leaders and teachers are sharply focused on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Work to improve outcomes for pupils has a high profile and is conspicuously successful. However, strategies to engage some parents in raising their children's progress further are not always followed up.
- Pupils who have special needs or disability typically make good progress. This is because teachers take every opportunity to help these pupils to develop their personal as well as their academic skills. Teachers have high expectations of their achievement and provide well-targeted support for these pupils.
- The proportions of pupils gaining the higher A\* and A grades has risen and is above the national level in English and mathematics because of high expectations, excellent teaching and strong personal motivation to succeed. Other subjects that achieved high A\* and A grades above national expectation include additional science, biology, chemistry, physics, core science and religious studies.
- Information provided by the school demonstrates that in 2016 pupils are on track to match, and potentially exceed, the outstanding pupils' attainment and progress seen in 2015.
- In key stage 3, a high proportion of pupils are meeting or exceeding their targets. Across the school, in every year group, standards are exceptionally high and pupils' progress is rapid across a large majority of subjects. Leaders track pupils' progress and ensure that support programmes are used effectively and in a timely manner. Leaders are quick to identify pupils in need of additional support and ensure that remedies are effective and pupils' progress is back on track.
- Pupils receive very effective careers education, information, advice and guidance. Many pupils continue their studies in the local sixth form and also in the local further education college. A small number of pupils complete successful apprenticeships. Consequently, all pupils are in appropriate education, employment or training.
- Reading is highly regarded by staff and pupils across the school. Many pupils develop a high level of reading and comprehension skills due to the dedicated and continuous focus on reading. A wide range of activities is embedded to ensure that high aspirations are maintained and a deep pleasure for reading continues from Year 7 to 11. Pupils who have read over a million words during a school year belong to a select group and have their names displayed on the library 'millionaires board'. Pupils with low literacy levels receive well-structured support and consequently make leaps in progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138743
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	10011076

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	967
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Chris Penter
<b>Principal</b>	Julie Brandreth
<b>Telephone number</b>	01606 333300
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.leftwichhigh.com">www.leftwichhigh.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@leftwichhigh.com">admin@leftwichhigh.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6–7 July 2011

## Information about this school

- The County High School Leftwich is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- The proportion of pupils who have special needs or disability is well below average.
- Almost all the pupils are White British.
- A few pupils in key stage 4 attend part-time vocational courses at Mid Cheshire College.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision at The Bridge Short Stay Academy, a pupil referral unit.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.



## Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the principal, vice-principals, members of the senior team, middle leaders, the chair of the governing body and governors. Inspectors also spoke by telephone to an officer from the local authority and with members of staff from all external educational provision.
- Inspectors observed learning in a wide range of lessons across all year groups, including observations with senior leaders. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and talked to them about it.
- Inspectors observed the pupils at form time, in class, in the library and at informal times throughout the school day. Inspectors also made visits to the school's internal inclusion unit.
- Inspectors formally interviewed a number of pupils and spoke to a range of pupils informally at break and lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with qualified teachers, including teachers who are newly qualified, and those undertaking training at the school.
- The inspection team observed the school's work; scrutinised data about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance; scrutinised pupils' work; looked at documents used by leaders to check the school's work; reviewed minutes of meetings of the governing body; and viewed records relating to the monitoring of teaching. During the inspection, detailed consideration was given to policies and practices relating to safeguarding and also how the school prepares its pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Inspectors took account of the 74 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as data from the school's own parental surveys. Inspectors also spoke to one parent by telephone and considered one email received from a parent. They also considered the responses to the staff and pupils' online questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Dawn Platt, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Claire Hollister	Ofsted Inspector
Marcia Harding	Ofsted Inspector
Annette Patterson	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Birchall	Ofsted Inspector

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