

The County High School, Leftwich

Address: Granville Road, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 8EZ

Unique reference number (URN): 138743

Inspection report: 2 June 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ● ●
Expected standard	● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✔ **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders are relentless in making sure that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive the support they need. Working closely with local primary schools allows leaders to put help in place from the start of Year 7. From then, leaders track the learning and wellbeing of pupils carefully. When necessary, leaders provide new or additional help so that the barriers to pupils' learning and wellbeing are consistently reduced. Leaders also work closely with other professionals, including alternative provisions, to make sure that the support in place is appropriate and effective. As a result, pupils who find learning difficult, and those facing other challenging life circumstances, are able to make progress towards their ambitious individual targets.

Staff and leaders understand the challenges that disadvantaged pupils face. Additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is used to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are supported with their learning and personal development. This is done through additional tuition as well as extra opportunities for pupils to broaden their view of the world.

Leaders carefully monitor and support pupils known, or previously known, to social care. Staff work closely with the local authority's virtual school. This helps to ensure these pupils thrive.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders, including governors and trustees, know the school very well. They identify its strengths and understand the priorities. Together, they make astute plans to address these priorities. As a result, the school is making rapid progress towards fulfilling leaders' high ambitions for the school. Leaders have made notable improvements in the quality of the curriculum, teaching and attendance for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders are not complacent. They have high expectations of pupils and of themselves.

Trustees and governors support and challenge leaders effectively. They understand their role in the school's continued improvement and take their responsibilities seriously, including their legal duties. Leaders, trustees and governors also value the wider staff team. They consider staff views when making decisions that affect them. As a result, staff feel valued and cared for. Leaders consider their workload carefully and provide support to help ensure that it stays reasonable. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Leaders have established a highly effective professional development programme. Staff collaborate with colleagues from other settings and share effective practice. This helps staff to keep developing their knowledge and skills. Staff value the protected time to develop their work. Leaders adapt the programme to reflect current priorities. In turn, this has a positive impact on how well pupils learn and achieve.

Leaders understand the importance of the community. They build positive links with local schools, employers and parents and carers. This work supports collaboration and improves

pupils' experiences. For example, it strengthens transition from primary school and enhances the school's careers provision.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

Leaders have designed a well-structured personal development and wellbeing programme. It ensures that pupils learn how to contribute positively to modern Britain. Pupils have opportunities to broaden their understanding of the world and develop new interests. They understand healthy relationships and know how to keep themselves safe, both online and offline. Pupils respect differences between people, including differences of opinion. They link these views to the law and to the democratic rights that everyone has. Pupils also develop an understanding of money management, which prepares them well for later life. Staff adapt how this knowledge is taught so that pupils at each age and stage of learning understand what it means for them.

Pupils profit from the broad range of clubs and activities that leaders provide. They enhance their learning about the world around them by visiting museums, they develop resilience and teamworking skills through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and learn the importance of service to others when they raise money for charities that matter to them. Parents, carers and other members of the community share their professional experience with pupils as part of a comprehensive careers programme. Pupils learn about a wide range of future choices and reflect on these experiences when considering their next steps in education, employment or training. These insightful encounters equip pupils to make well-informed decisions, helping them to move on successfully to an ambitious range of destinations.

Staff know pupils very well. This helps staff to ensure that the combination of experiences and opportunities that each pupil receives is tailored to their individual needs. For instance, staff provide highly effective pastoral support so that pupils learn about the importance of respect and tolerance in ways which are personally meaningful. Leaders remove logistical and financial barriers so that pupils can take part and benefit fully from all that the school offers. This helps pupils to thrive personally, socially and emotionally at the school.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Generally, pupils leave this school with above-average examination results. Disadvantaged pupils also attain positive results at the end of key stage 4. These outcomes allow pupils to move on successfully to their chosen next steps in education, employment or training.

Pupils build up secure knowledge of what they have been taught. Older pupils can articulate a deep understanding of complex ideas that reflect the positive impact of the curriculum and how well it has been taught. This is also true of disadvantaged pupils. Additionally, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities build their knowledge and understanding over time, making solid progress from their starting points.

The support to address pupils' gaps in reading, writing and number knowledge is effective. This allows pupils to better access their lessons and secures important knowledge for later life.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders closely monitor pupils' attendance and understand that, generally, pupils' attendance is close to the national average. However, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) sometimes do not attend as often as they should. Leaders understand the barriers that impede these pupils from coming to school regularly. Leaders put strategies in place to improve attendance, including bespoke timetables and home visits. These strategies have led to improvements, for example the rate of persistent absence has reduced. For pupils with SEND, these improvements are notable and reflect the leaders' inclusive approaches to attendance.

The school's clear rules and routines help to create a calm and respectful place. Pupils are polite and act responsibly, even when they are not under direct supervision. Lessons are rarely disrupted and most pupils show a keen attitude to their learning. Unkind behaviour, including bullying and discrimination, is also rare. When these incidents do happen, pupils trust staff to deal with them quickly and effectively.

Leaders have a belief of 'purpose over power' which ensures that pupils who struggle with their behaviour are given additional support. This teaches pupils how to better regulate their emotions and reduces occasions of repeated unwanted behaviours.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that pupils are taught important knowledge in each subject. The curriculum is organised well so that pupils build their understanding over time. Leaders regularly review the effectiveness of the curriculum. When appropriate, they make changes which further support pupils' learning.

Lessons help pupils to remember what they have been taught and then build on this prior knowledge. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding. Typically, teachers use this information to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Usually, this is done with precision. Teachers' clear explanations help pupils to access the carefully designed tasks. This supports pupils to develop their knowledge well.

Teachers adjust lessons so that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, can generally access their learning in the most effective ways. The school's supportive culture helps pupils feel comfortable asking for additional help. This is particularly effective for pupils who struggle with their wellbeing. However, a small number of pupils sometimes do not get the specific support needed to benefit fully from their lessons.

Some pupils struggle with their knowledge of reading, writing or number. Leaders put support in place to secure these gaps in knowledge. This includes extra help in class as well as additional specialist support, when necessary.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are proud to attend this safe and supportive school. Staff know pupils well and regularly check on their wellbeing. Pupils appreciate this and they are comfortable sharing any concerns or worries. They know that staff will help them. Pupils' respect for one another means that bullying and unkind behaviour are rare. Pupils know that if they do happen, staff will address the issue quickly. Generally, pupils attend well. Some groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not attend as often as they should, although this is improving.

The lessons and curriculum that pupils experience are well designed. This helps pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, to develop their knowledge over time. Most pupils approach their studies positively. Pupils with barriers to their learning or wellbeing usually get the support that they need. As a result, most pupils learn more as they move through the curriculum. They produce high-quality work. In national examinations, pupils generally attain very positive results.

Staff support pupils who face difficult circumstances in their lives by ensuring they have equal access to, and benefit from, the school's full offer. Pupils profit from a range of clubs, sports and other social activities. They demonstrate their creativity through musical theatre performances and contribute to the environment in the 'eco club'. Pupils have recently won a bid to develop the school's gardening area. Pupils learn about the world around them by participating in a range of trips and listening to guest speakers talk about their careers. Pupils respect and understand individual differences. This creates a school community that is welcoming for all.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to identify and tackle barriers to attendance so that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, have consistently high attendance.
- Leaders should continue to embed highly effective teaching across all subjects so that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, continue to achieve more highly.

About this inspection

This school is part of the Sir John Brunner Foundation, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Matthew Snelson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alan Redley.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with trust leaders, governors and school leaders during the inspection. They also held meetings with groups of staff and pupils. The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of 3 alternative provisions, including 2 that are unregistered.

Headteacher: Richard Warburton

Lead inspector:

Tom Theobald, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Liz Kelly, Ofsted Inspector

Tracey Greenough, Ofsted Inspector

Stephanie Gill, Ofsted Inspector

Karen Parker, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 2 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,048

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,050

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

15.84%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.44%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

9.73%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	57.6%	45.4%	Above
2023/24 (final)	61.3%	45.9%	Above
2022/23 (final)	64.0%	45.3%	Above

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	51.9	46.1	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	53.7	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	54.8	46.3	Above

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.60	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.33	-0.03	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	16.7%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	16.7%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	34.6%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	30.1	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	31.2	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	36.3	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.84	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.73	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	16.7%	53.1%	-36.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	16.7%	53.1%	-36.5 pp
2022/23 (final)	34.6%	52.4%	-17.8 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	30.1	50.4	-20.3
2023/24 (final)	31.2	50.0	-18.8
2022/23 (final)	36.3	50.3	-14.0

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.84	0.16	-1.00
2022/23 (final)	-0.73	0.17	-0.89

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	93%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	96%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	96%	94%	Average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	7.6%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	7.7%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	7.9%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	18.4%	23.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	19.9%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	19.7%	26.5%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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